

# Lao-tzu, machiavelli, and the american government

Government



Lao-Tzu's "Thoughts from the Tao-te Ching" and Machiavelli's "The Qualities of a Prince" both have the ultimate goal of making better leaders. The tactics that each writer chooses to present as a guide for the leader are almost opposite of each other. Today's American government would benefit from a combination of the two extreme ideas. Lao-Tzu's laissez-faire attitude towards the economy, as well as his small scale, home defense military is appealing to a liberal person.

Machiavelli's attitude towards miserliness and lower taxes, while being always prepared for war, would appeal to a conservative person. The writers are in agreement on some issues, such as taxes, but other ideas, such as government involvement in the everyday lives of citizens are completely opposed to one another. Lao-Tzu believes in moderation and small government. He states that a leader should stay within his country and govern his people only. Lao-tzu and Machiavelli are political philosophers writing in two different lands and two different times.

Lao-tzu was an ancient Chinese philosopher from 6th century BC, the author of Tao-te Ching, and Machiavelli was an Italian philosopher who lived 2000 years after Lao-tzu's time, author of Prince. They are both philosophers but have totally different perspective on how to be a good leader. While both philosopher's writing is instructive. Lao-tzu's advice issues from detached view of a universal ruler; Machiavelli's advice is very personal perhaps demanding.

Both philosophers' idea will not work for today's world, because that modern world is not as perfect as Lao-tzu described in Tao-te Ching, and not as

chaotic as Machiavelli illustrated in Prince. In comparing and contrasting the governmental philosophies of the great thinkers Lao-Tzu and Machiavelli, I have found a pleasant mix of both of their ideas would be the best for America today. Lao-Tzu's laissez-faire attitude towards the economy, as well as his small scale military is appealing to my liberal side, while Machiavelli's attitude towards miserliness which causes low taxes appeals to the right wing.

These great thinkers contradict the popular saying " all great thinkers think alike. " They have several ideas, such as taxes, that are the same, while other ideas, like the involvement of government in citizens' everyday lives are totally opposite. I shall start with the ideas of Machiavelli, then move on to Lao-Tzu's, and finally a comparison and application into American life. Niccolo Machiavelli believes in a strong government. The leader should be strong and feared. I believe he gets this idea from the fear of God.