

culine and virile men who put the interests and the advantage of the public good before their own.

Source: *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, volume IX, Berlin, 1848, pp.216-17.

Section 2 Frederick and war Document 7

Frederick II on war

Published treatise (in French), *The 'Anti-Machiavel, or Refutation of Machiavelli's "The Prince"*, 1740
 I ask: what can be the motive that makes a man seek to aggrandize himself? What can be his reason for plotting to base his power on the misery and destruction of others, and how can he believe that he will make a name for himself by merely making men unhappy? A monarch's fresh conquests do not make his existing possessions any richer; his peoples gain nothing from them, and he deceives himself if he imagines that they will make him any happier.

War is so rich in misfortunes, its outcome is so uncertain and its consequences are so disastrous for a country, that rulers can hardly reflect too long before embarking on it. I say nothing of the injustice and violence that they do to their neighbours, but confine myself to the miseries which fall directly upon their own subjects. I am convinced that if kings and rulers had a true picture of the people's sufferings, they would not be unmoved by them. But they lack the imagination to form an objective idea of the evils from which their status shields them. A ruler should be made to realize that his burning ambition sparks off all the fatal consequences to which war is prone: the taxes that cripple the people; the levies that deprive the country of all its young men; the epidemics that sweep through armies, where so many die in misery; the murderous sieges; the still crueller battles; the wounded, whom the loss of some limb deprives of the only means of subsistence, and the orphans, from whom the enemy fire has snatched those who braved the dangers and sold to the ruler their lives and their sustenance. So many men, useful to the State, cut off before their time! Never was there a tyrant who committed such cruelties in

cold blood. Rulers who wage unjust wars are crueller than they. They sacrifice to their impetuous passion the happiness, health and the lives of an infinite number of men, whom it was their duty to protect and make happy, instead of so recklessly exposing them to everything that humanity has most to fear. It is therefore certain that the world's rulers cannot be too prudent and cautious in their actions, and cannot be too careful for the lives of their subjects, whom they should not regard as their slaves, but as their equals, and in a certain sense, as their masters.

Source: 'La réfutation du Prince de Machiavel', edited by C. Fleischauer, in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, volume V, Geneva, 1958, pp.180, 352-5.

Document 8

Frederick II on war

Letter from Frederick II to Electress Maria Antonia of Saxony (in French), 8 March 1766

Certainly, Madam, no society can exist without justice. Do unto others what you would have them do to you; this principle embodies the whole of virtue and Man's duties towards the society in which he lives. That is the basis of that Public [International] Law so well known in the German universities, but which is nearly always crushed by the law of the heavy guns. Thus, Madam, men's reason and their passion are constantly opposed to each other, and what the one sets up, the other knocks down. As for those, Madam, who are in charge of government, I think one should hear them before condemning them. I certainly do not regard these people as despots; if they are, it is only when they abuse their position. Their position places them in charge of society, and their basic duty is to further to the utmost of their ability the interests of that nation, that is to say, to maintain the security of its possessions, which is the first right of every citizen; next, to protect it from the designs of neighbours who seek to harm it, and lastly to defend it against enemy aggression. Now, Madam, put the mildest and most impartial man in charge of this task, and you will agree that in order to discharge his duties, he must act in a different way from that which his natural incli-

⁸ Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1519) advocated expediency over morality in statecraft. Frederick's *Anti-Machiavel*, corrected and polished by Voltaire, was published a few months before Frederick's first invasion of Silesia.