

# A Comparative Study on the International Political Thoughts of Han Feizi and Kautilya (Chanakya)

Xu Jin

## INTRODUCTION

China and India are the two ancient civilizations in the East, with long histories and splendid cultures. However, in recent times Western civilization has been dominant internationally, resulting in Eurocentrism. Eastern civilizations are being marginalized and excluded. The dominant theories of international relations—realism, liberalism, constructivism—are all based on the philosophy and history of the West. Today, however, Eastern states continue to rise, China in particular. It has become increasingly important to pay attention to and investigate the international political thoughts from the East.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have been drawing ideational resources from their own country's ancient political thought, with an aim to construct a theory of international relations from China's experience, and with some success.<sup>1</sup> Among the "Hundred Schools of the Sages" in China pre-Qin periods, the Legalist school has a leading figure named Han Feizi. Political realism is deeply rooted in his thoughts. His belief in the supreme role of power in diplomacy is still valuable for reference.

The ancient Indian political thoughts of Chanakya resurfaced at the beginning of the twentieth century, but then faded into the background. Recent years have witnessed a rediscovery of ideological value from the *Arthashastra*, and scholars have initiated in-depth studies on Chanakya. Both Han Feizi and Chanakya are considered political realists. Similarities and differences coexist in their international political thoughts.

While seemingly following different paths—China insisting on the path of peaceful rise and India seeking great power status—there have been occasional frictions between China and India over territorial disputes. The history, current status, and future development of Sino-Indian relations have also been the subject of ongoing research in the International Relations community. One approach to gaining a deeper understanding of Sino-Indian relations is to conduct a comparative study of the traditional ideologies and cultures of the two countries. China's Han Feizi and India's Chanakya are undoubtedly representatives of realism in ancient international political thought. The study of the two ideologies is conducive to promoting academic and cultural exchanges between China and India.

Hence, this paper attempts to compare the international political thoughts of China's Han Feizi and India's Chanakya. Their similarities and differences are explored, with an aim to consider the implications of such comparative research results on modern international relations.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the current academic research on Han Feizi's thoughts focuses on the rule of law, management, and human nature. There are only a few studies on Han Feizi's international political or diplomatic thoughts: Cai Xinde, "A Study on Han Feizi's Diplomatic Thoughts"; Sun Xuefeng and Yang Zixiao, "Han Feizi's Thoughts on International Politics"; Ye Zicheng and Pang Xun, "The Schools of Chinese Diplomatic Thoughts during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods and their Comparison with the West"; Ye Zicheng, *Chinese Diplomatic Thoughts during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods* (the book includes a chapter titled "Han Feizi's Power—Interests Matter the Most"). The prevailing view of these research results is that Han Feizi focuses on the realist world. He believes that human nature is seeking interests, as is the state. He emphasizes that the state can increase its capability through the rule of law, and that it should be tactful in its diplomacy.

There are more studies on Chanakya's *Arthashastra* outside China than in China. Among the latter are Wang Yan, "An Interpretation of the International Political Thoughts in the *Arthashastra*" and "The *Arthashastra* and the Roots of India's International Strategies"; Zhang Jincui, "The *Arthashastra* and the Classical Roots of Indian Foreign Strategies"; Jin Jie, "The Thoughts and Strategies in the *Arthashastra*"; and Liao Xuesheng, "What a Country the *Arthashastra* Describes." Most of these studies are based on the text of the *Arthashastra*. They provide interpretations of the international political and diplomatic thoughts in the *Arthashastra*, and analyze Indian foreign policies from their interpretations. Chanakya also highlights the realist world. He considers national interests as the core interests, and believes that states can do whatever it takes to pursue their interests. His

diplomatic thoughts include the circle of nations doctrine and the principle of sixfold diplomacy.

In comparative studies, there are scholarly articles comparing Chanakya with Machiavelli, such as Jin Haipeng's "A Comparative Study on the Political Thoughts of Chanakya and Machiavelli." There are also scholarly studies comparing Han Feizi with Machiavelli. But rarely are there studies comparing Han Feizi and Chanakya, and thus a study comparing Han Feizi's international political thought with Chanakya's presents a fresh perspective.

## 2. COMPARISON OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL THOUGHTS OF HAN FEIZI AND CHANAKYA

The international political thoughts of Han Feizi and Chanakya are scattered, respectively, in the *Complete Works of Han Feizi* and the *Arthashastra*. This essay initiates a comparative analysis of their international political thoughts in terms of background, political purpose, philosophical foundations, moral ideas, views of state relations, foreign policy, and war perspectives and strategies.

### 2.1 Background

The ideas of thinkers can be analyzed logically and with historical insights only by seeking to understand the thinkers' backgrounds, which is the soil out of which their ideas grow. This approach requires a clear understanding of the sociopolitical realities of their times.

Both Han Feizi and Chanakya were living in periods of great historic transition from slavery to feudal monarchy. At that time, numerous wars broke out. A state's primary goal was to ensure its survival, and afterwards to compete for hegemony. In order to promote unity, a state needed to centralize power and enhance monarchical rule. Han Feizi says, "A wise ruler will make the people under the rule his eyes and ears,"<sup>2</sup> and by doing so will be able to gather information. Han Feizi highlighted the power of a ruler to rule and to make decisions. He was living in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, and Chanakya was living in the Buddha's period in ancient India. Similar zeitgeists prompted both Han Feizi and Chanakya to construct their own systems of thought based on the political realities of the time. It was the brutal competition and the era of war that made them both focus on realistic material interests and national strength.

Han Feizi, as mentioned above, was living in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, from 280 BC to 233 BC. At that time, vassals contended for supremacy; wars of annexation broke out frequently; and states sought to change their laws to become stronger. It was a time of competition for power. In the *Complete Works of Han Feizi*, it says, "In the ancient times states competed in morality; in the middle times states competed in wisdom and strategy; and nowadays states compete in strength."<sup>3</sup> This means that, in ancient times, to win or lose, people

competed by morality; in the middle times, people competed by strategic wisdom; and in today's society, people compete by power. "A fundamental goal of states in that time is survival. After state survival is guaranteed, it is possible for a state to be the hegemon."<sup>4</sup> The base goal for a state is survival, and the highest goal for a state is hegemony. The slave-owning aristocrats from that society began to lose power, and the new landowning class became increasingly active.

Chanakya was living in ancient India in the fourth century BC, a century before Han Feizi. The goals of ancient India were warding off invasion by Alexander from Macedonia, the unification of India, and the establishment of a new dynasty. The ancient Indian society had a strict hierarchical caste system and a strong religious atmosphere. To some degree, the ancient India in which Chanakya lived was experiencing a much more difficult era than ancient China at that time. Therefore, the strength of a state appeared vital. The differences in their backgrounds due to the times they lived in contributed to the differences in their thinking.

## 2.2 Political Purpose

The political thinking of Han Feizi and Chanakya is closely related to reality. They did not write and theorize for the purposes of a book—they intended to help their own states and rulers to achieve certain political ends.

Against the common backdrop of frequent wars and competition for power, Chanakya and Han Feizi shared a common political purpose. Namely, they both wanted to ensure that national interests were protected and the state was empowered. For one thing, they aimed to ensure the survival of the state; for another, they wanted the state to prosper in order to be the hegemon. Han Feizi was a native of Han at that time. The country was in political turmoil domestically and foreign enemies surrounded the country. He wrote several times to the king of Han, asking him to adopt his political policies. Most scholars speculate that the *Arthashastra* was Chanakya's and others' synthesis and reflection of the empire's experience in waging foreign wars after it was unified. They also summarized the strategies for imperial governance.<sup>5</sup>

Han Feizi and Chanakya had different political purposes because of the different times that they were living. Han Feizi's political ideas were to rule by law, reform the country, win the war of annexation, and become a hegemon. The social life to which Han Feizi aspired was not the unworldly paradise depicted by Laozi and Taoism. The political reality of the time did not allow the fulfillment of this dream. The stabilization and unification of society could only be achieved by war.

Chanakya's political aim was to assist Chandragupta Maurya in fighting against Alexander's invasion and overthrowing the Nanda empire. Thus, a new dynasty could be established, which would become the empire of mainland India and conquer additional territories. In the *Arthashastra* he mentioned repeatedly the conquest of the "earth" or the conquest of the "quadrilateral earth." The earth appears to refer to the Indian subcontinent, south of the Himalayas.<sup>6</sup> Chanakya

was equally concerned with the well-being of the people. He thought that security and abundance of material wealth were the foundations for a powerful state.

### *2.3 Philosophical Foundations*

Complete philosophical foundations underpin all sets of political thoughts. Ideas grow from their philosophical foundations. Han Feizi and Chanakya's thinking was no exception. Consistent threads run through their thoughts. And those threads are the key to grasping their ideas comprehensively.

Both Han Feizi and Chanakya are characterized by political realism. Seeking power and profit are at the core of their thoughts. This is a conclusion deduced on the basis of humanistic theory. Both take a pessimistic view of human nature as evil, selfish, unreliable, and untrustworthy. Han Feizi described the relationship between parents and children: "Parents congratulate each other if a son is born. If it is a girl, they will murder her." "Both parents and children are calculative in their relationship."<sup>7</sup> "Husband and wife are not connected by blood. If they love each other, they stay close. Otherwise, they leave each other."<sup>8</sup> "The relationship between the monarch and the vassals is a direct exchange of interests. Their relationship is not father-and-son bloodline but trading relations. Vassals do their best to work for the monarch; and the monarch rewards them with big titles and handsome money." All the people in the court hope the monarch dies in order to gain more interests.<sup>9</sup> "The consorts, ladies, and princes form their interest group behind the emperor's back. They hope he dies early. Otherwise, they grab little power." They do not necessarily hate the emperor. Yet the death of the emperor is beneficial to their interests. Everyone from all walks of life think about their own interests.

Doctors suck the blood of the patients from their wounds. The poisoned blood is in their mouth. They do it not out of familial love, but for their own interests. A car-maker wishes everyone to be rich so he can sell his car. A craftsman makes enough coffins and he will wish other people to die young. Their motivations are not caused by the carmaker's kind heart and craftsman's cold blood but interests. If people are not rich, cars will not sell well. If people do not die, coffins will not sell well either. The intention is not to hate others, but the benefit lies in the death of others.

In short, Han Feizi believes that when it comes to one's own safety and interests, the first reaction of the human subconscious is to pursue one's own interests and avoid harm, to do what is beneficial for oneself and find solutions to save oneself. This is just human nature.<sup>10</sup>

Chanakya sees man as unreliable and untrustworthy, "a mixture of cowardice, folly, and villainy. Their nature makes them a victim of deceitful predators and tyrants."<sup>11</sup> However, the two also admitted the good part of humanity. Han Feizi recognized Confucius's benevolence, and Chanakya appreciated the altruism of human beings.

The philosophical underpinnings of the two ideas are also quite different. Han Feizi mainly started his logical argument from a theory about human nature, believing that humans tended to seek profit. “What people mostly want is the satisfaction in daily life. They are quite materialistic. They want to avoid danger and escape poverty.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the state represented by the monarch is also profit-seeking. Hence, the state should seek to build up its capability to protect the national interest. What is the national interest that the monarch protects? “It is hegemony. The biggest interest that a monarch can pursue is to compete for hegemony and become a hegemon.”<sup>13</sup>

Chanakya’s thought, on the other hand, is more complex. His thinking combines religious and nonreligious components. Chanakya used number theory, yoga, and breathing as philosophical foundations. He combined religious philosophy with *realpolitik*. Chanakya created his own set of moral ethics, inspired by religious and nonreligious philosophies. Among them, Samkhya and Yoga were religious philosophies and Lokayata was not. Chanakya instructed rulers to follow these ethical principles in order to rule righteously (or rule by the law of Buddhism). Thus, the law of Buddhism (moral ethics) in his thinking is more about “justice” than religion. Chanakya did not attempt to separate Buddhism (moral ethics) from his political thoughts and decisions. He paid more attention to the strengths of *artha* (material well-being) than *dharma* (moral ethics).<sup>14</sup>

#### 2.4 Moral Ideas

Another reason why both Han Feizi and Chanakya are considered political realists lies in their similar attitude toward morality. Morgenthau, the renowned classical realist, argued in one of the six principles of political realism that morality should not be above the national interests. Rulers must make decisions for the national interests by rational prudence. This coincides with the views of Han Feizi and Chanakya, both of whom defined morals in light of political reality. They did not blindly promote or abide by morality. At the right time, it was considered acceptable to defraud the enemy, use violence, secretly punish, and so on. Han Feizi attached more importance to the public interest, that is, the national interest. He believed that “the interests of the public” were more important than “the private interests.” A wise monarch must make a distinction between public and private interests:

The principle of being a wise ruler is that one must understand the difference between the public and private interests. He should uphold the rule of law and avoid personal favors. When this wise sovereign rules, his bureaucrats leave personal interests aside and protect public interests. When a crooked sovereign rules, his bureaucrats harm the public interests to protect their own interests.<sup>15</sup>

The moral views of Han Feizi and Chanakya are also different. Han Feizi had his greatest attachment to strength and held contempt for the role of morality. He believed that morality was not useful for politics and profit was the most

important. He was ruthless and did not care about the weaknesses and needs of other countries. Han Feizi's moral-free stance was based on his observation of a chaotic historical and realistic world. His conclusion from such observation was that politics should be independent from morality. He thought politics and morality were totally different things. In the game of competition between states, states win or die and there is no middle ground for morality. States have to use all means available to ensure their survival and strength. Han Feizi affirmed that ethical, aesthetic, and philosophical values issued from the moral concept of benevolence and righteousness, but he denied their political value. He supported a unified theory of law and virtue, but considered law above virtue and that virtue should supplement law. Han Feizi emphasized the importance of justice for the ruler and bureaucrats to rule the country:

Bureaucrats are clean, honest and impartial; they maintain justice. They protect public interest. Bureaucrats are corrupted and indulgent of his own desires; they secure interests for himself and his family. They protect their private interests. When a wise sovereign rules, bureaucrats leave personal interests aside and protect public interests. When a crooked sovereign rules, bureaucrats harm the public interests and protect personal interests.<sup>16</sup>

Han Feizi also opposed the hypocrisy of benevolence that had no political utility. "One should not be praised for preaching benevolence and righteousness. Otherwise it would be detrimental to social utility; and academicians should not be appointed in governmental positions. Otherwise, it will undermine the rule of law."<sup>17</sup> "Therefore, a wise monarch should do what is practical and beneficial, and ignore what has no practical significance. He does not need to preach about benevolence and morality and buy into what the so-called scholars say."<sup>18</sup> Han Feizi also defined what benevolence and righteousness was in his mind:

A true benevolent and righteous person worries about the chaotic situation in the world and suffering of the country. He is not concerned about his own low position and humiliation. Yi Yin thought ancient China was in chaos. He tried to be the cook of the then emperor Cheng Tang and get close to him. Thus, he would have the chance to be his advisor. Bai Lixi thought the Qin dynasty was in chaos. He tried to be a captive soldier under the Duke Mu of Qin and get close to him. Thus, he would have the chance to be his advisor. They both worried about the chaotic situation of the world and suffering of the country. At the same time, they were not concerned their own sufferings and humiliation. What they did was true benevolence and righteousness.<sup>19</sup>

Han Feizi believed that the key to ruling the country was to treat the people in a benevolent manner. "Being a benevolent ruler, is the key to face and tend the people."<sup>20</sup>

In Chanakya's opinion, force was not the first option for solving problems. Extremely immoral measures could be taken after other measures such as negotiation, mediation, economic inducement, etc., had all failed. He was

concerned about the relative capability of other countries. He was concerned about not only the pursuit of material enjoyment and worldly happiness but also the spiritual fulfilment and ultimate meaning of human life. The two pursuits were not in conflict. In chapter 6 of this volume, Deepshikha Shahi mentions that the comprehensive philosophical basis of Chanakya's *Arthashastra* goes beyond the boundaries of realpolitik (or political realism).<sup>21</sup> Chanakya's morality should not be understood as politics in opposition to ethics, which is a kind of Western dichotomous thinking. Rather, Chanakya's *Arthashastra* should be placed somewhere between realpolitik and moral politics.<sup>22</sup> He was employing immoral political means to achieve a moral goal—the welfare of the people. At the same time, Chanakya laid down a number of moral conduct codes for monarchs and advocated a wise and moral ruler for the country. In his opinion, it is most important for a monarch to learn self-control, which includes being free from lust, anger, greed, conceit, arrogance, and recklessness. He also asks the ruler to abide by other principles: “Keeping away from others’ wives, not coveting other people’s property, no killing, no daydreaming, be consistent, no lying, no extravagance, not contacting with harmful people, not indulging in harmful activities.”<sup>23</sup>

### 2.5 Views of State Relations

In terms of interstate relations, both Han Feizi and Chanakya believed that such relations were competitive and involved game-playing. The international environment is described thusly: the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. A state has to build up its own capability and be attentive to other states’ purpose and action. However, the two differ in the details. Han Feizi thought the competition between states was fierce. It was a zero-sum game: you win or you die; there is no middle ground. Therefore, he did not hold high expectations for interstate relations. He did not believe that alliances between states were reliable. At critical moments, big states often refuse to assist small states due to their own interests. A state’s priority is increasing its own capability. As long as it is powerful, it does not need to be concerned about other states.

The international environment, according to Chanakya, was following the “law of the fish.” It is a world where the big fish eat the small fish. So that the king should be the conqueror of the world in order to ensure the state’s survival. Only empires of great size and power, with no domestic instability, can contain the big fish and foreign invaders. He highlighted the importance of geopolitics. He forwarded the idea of “Mandala”—state circle theory to describe state relations. It refers to a series of circles where states are located. The closest neighbor to the state is the enemy; another state on the circle closest to the enemy is a friend, and vice versa. Chanakya found enemies and friends by geography. He was not hostile to other states blindly. His foreign policies were formulated according to realistic interstate relations.

### 2.6 Foreign Policy

In the opinions of both Han Feizi and Chanakya, the primary goals of foreign policy were to increase state capability, realize national interests, and conquer other countries. Both believed that the monarch should be the key figure in making foreign policy decisions. Both stressed the importance of conspiracies, strategies, and tactics. They advocated for the necessary deception of the enemy and appropriate war as one approach.

Variation exists in their foreign policy ideas, however. The core of Han Feizi's foreign policy thought is to rule by law in order to build a strong nation. He believed that ruling by law was fundamental to increasing the state's capability. The monarch should use rewards and punishment to govern the state. Ruling by law could increase the state's economic and military capability. "States would not be forever rich or strong, nor would they forever be poor and weak. Those who enforced the law are decisive and the nation would be rich and strong; those who enforced the law are irresolute and the nation would be poor and weak."<sup>24</sup> "A state that was strict with the rule of law would be strong, and a state that lacked the rule of law would be weak."<sup>25</sup> How strict the law was implemented directly determined the rise and fall of nations: "If a state is strict with its rule of law, it should be peaceful and powerful. If a state implements unjust law, it should be in chaos and poverty."<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Han Feizi believed that a state could solve its all international political problems by increasing its strength. Hence it did not have to be concerned about the strength of other states. "The mentality of interdependence will lead to blaming and complaining; however, the mentality of self-reliance will lead to success in a course."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it is most important for a country to rely on its own strength and achieve independence. It should not want to depend on another state. "To be invaded or not, it all depends on oneself. It is not a question for others. Self-reliance leads to no invasion. Why bother with others' strength or weakness? The only mistake is that a state does not seek to help itself but instead hopes for the goodness of its enemies. A state like that is lucky not to be invaded."<sup>28</sup> Thus, Han Feizi highlighted the importance of state self-reliance, not the function of diplomacy. In addition, Han Feizi did not trust state alliances. He considered them to be unreliable and even dangerous.

Bailing out small states is not necessarily beneficial. Instead, a state has to mobilize its army and make an enemy of big powers. Small states may still disappear after assisting them. Miscalculations can occur when attacking big powers. Once a state fails in its military adventure, the small state will be controlled by big powers. Sending an army then will be a military defeat. Retreating will lead to the fall of cities. One has not yet received the benefits from making alliances to save the small states but already saw the annexation of its homeland and defeat of its army.<sup>29</sup>

Chanakya valued the role of diplomacy and proposed a sixfold foreign policy. First, peaceful coexistence: it was possible for states to enter into agreements and

make commitments; second, war: states could invade others; third, neutrality: states could be indifferent and take no action; fourth, offense: states could attack others; fifth, alliance: states could seek assistance; sixth, double-edged policy: states could be friendly with one side yet at war with another. These six types of foreign policies could be used individually or in combination. Compared to Han Feizi, Chanakya's thoughts about diplomacy were more prudent and flexible. His thought was systematic and responsive to the changing circumstances. It encouraged states to actively handle relations with other states. Alliance is valued in his thought. If one's own state is at a disadvantage, it should seek help from others. In addition, it could advocate for peaceful coexistence.

### *2.7 War Perspectives and Strategies*

Both Han Fiezi and Chanakya placed great importance on force in their perspectives about war. They valued the meaning of war. They advocated the use of war at the right time. Both invented highly developed war strategies. As Han Fiezi says, "War effects the survival of states."<sup>30</sup> He adds that big powers are no exception to this rule:

If you win the war, you will secure your country and throne. And your army will be strong and your reputation will be established. And even if the same thing happens later, you won't be able to find bigger benefits more than this victory. Winning the war is for the long-term interests. If the war is not won, your country will be in jeopardy, the army will be weakened, the monarch will be killed and his name will be dust and ashes. You cannot even escape from immediate disaster if you lose. You will not be able to gain any long-term interest at all.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of war strategy, however, the two are different. According to Han Feizi, war could test whether a state had increased its capability. Only a success in war could guarantee the survival of states. In order to win a war, decision makers had to be cautious in making war decisions. Before making a decision about war, they must examine the situation carefully. They should not fight an unprepared war. To be more specific, first they should figure out the comprehensive power of the states. Second, they should determine the perfect timing to initiate a war. Third, they should fight to the degree that is justified. Also, both rewards and punishments should be clearly established. Han Feizi believed that humans tended to seek profits. He proposed to manage the army with clear rewards and punishments in accordance with human nature. "Governance for the world has to be based on human circumstances. Humans have the tendency to judge things good or bad. Hence rewards and punishment can be placed and prohibitions can be made. Finally, the rules to govern can be complete."<sup>32</sup> First, severe penalties should be imposed. Second, soldiers should be attended to. Lastly, one should be attentive to the strategy of war. When attacking the enemies, he should choose the weaker one first, then the stronger one. At times, he should deceive the enemy if necessary. He should use these tactics to take down the enemy.

According to Chanakya, decisions about war should be made based on the situation and interests. When peace and war have the same function, peace should be the choice. Neutrality should be maintained when it is believed that the enemy cannot harm you and at the same time you are not strong enough to destroy the enemy. The side with the better advantage should initiate the war if war is coming. If a state has the necessary means to attack, it should go on the offensive. A state could purposefully build peace with another state in order to wage war against the third.

### 3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CURRENT WORLD

From the comparison of Han Feizi and Chanakya, we can see that there are profound and rich international political thoughts embedded in the Eastern cultural traditions. Academic multiculturalism can be built by digging into and revitalizing Eastern ideas. Hence Eurocentrism can be avoided.

The ideas of Han Feizi and Chanakya still shed light on the reality of international relations today. We are more than two thousand years beyond the time of Han Feizi and Chanakya. The current international society is much different from their war-ridden societies with brutal state competition. Yet the security dilemma of the great powers, and zero-sum games, still exist and some of the less developed regions are still in turmoil. National interest is fundamental and paramount. It must be the starting point for all foreign policy. This is the commonsense reality for every state. The question becomes, How is morality now viewed? In the modern globalized world, human civilization is already highly developed. Is it still necessary to defend national interests through unethical means? The game of interests still remains the reality in international society. This game is played based on a state's capabilities and there is still incessant militarized conflict. Nevertheless, international norms and institutions keep developing. International cooperation based on economic interests and the benefits for solving global issues is also proceeding in an orderly manner. Where is the balance between *realpolitik* and moral politics? Which one carries the heavier weight? Are the realization of national interests and the pursuit for human peace and justice doomed by conflict? Undoubtedly, the way that we understand politics, ethics, and decision making has to be firmly grounded in the background and in reality. It should not deal in fantasy. For one thing, we need to think about political issues realistically, as Han Feizi did; for another, we need to be concerned about the well-being of the people, as Chanakya was.

### CONCLUSION

China and India, as two ancient civilizations, have accumulated rich histories and outstanding cultures. Han Feizi and Chanakya are two great political thinkers.

A comparative study of their international political thought reveals many similarities and differences.

Both Han Feizi and Chanakya are recognized as political realists. They placed great importance on realistic political interests and on the survival and strength of the state. Both believed that immoral means could be appropriately employed to achieve the national interests.

Both lived in a time of ceaseless wars and fierce competition. But each faced a different task: Han Feizi aimed to promote unification, whereas Chanakya purported to defend against foreign enemies and establish a new dynasty. Han Feizi deduced that states sought profits due to human nature's tendency to seek profits. He drew a clear line between politics and ethics and searched for the independence of politics from ethics. Chanakya synthesized and constructed his own philosophy, absorbing resources from religious and nonreligious ideas. He advocated for using immoral political means to achieve moral goals: accumulating wealth, protecting the people, and ensuring their well-being.

Both Han Feizi and Chanakya clearly found that the law of the jungle existed in state competition. Hence, they stressed the need to increase their own state's capability to ensure survival. But Han Feizi was extremely distrustful of interstate relations and opposed alliances, while Chanakya developed the Mandala theory of the state circles: distinguishing friends and enemies according to the location on the circles. Han Feizi focused on domestic construction for the rule of law to increase state power. He dismissed diplomacy. Chanakya proposed the principle of sixfold diplomacy and applied it in a comprehensive and flexible manner. Both Han Feizi and Chanakya valued the role of war and also proposed different war strategies.

The international political thoughts of Han Feizi and Chanakya have similarities and relate to each other because of the similarities of their times and backgrounds. And their thinking was based on reality. Yet they are different because they were influenced by different cultures and social environments.

## NOTES

1. Yan Xuetong, *Leadership and The Rise of Great Powers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019); Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

2. Han Feizi: Jian jie shi chen.

3. Han Feizi: wu du.

4. Han Feizi: Yu lao.

5. Wang Yan, "Zheng shi lun guo ji zheng zhi si xiang jie du" [An interpretation of the international political thoughts in *the Arthashastra*], (Graduate thesis, Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, July 2017).

6. Ibid.

7. Han Feizi: liu fan.

8. Han Feizi: bei nei.

9. Ibid.

10. Sun Xuefeng and Yang Zixiao, "Han Feizi de guo jia jian zheng zhi si xiang" [Han Feizi's thoughts on international politics], *Quarterly Journal of International Politics* 2 (2015): 85–101.

11. Jin Haipeng, "Kao di li ye he ma ji ya wei li de zheng zhi si xiang bi jiao" [A comparative study on the political thoughts of Chanakya and Machiavelli], *Theory Research* 32 (2014): 33–34.
12. Han Feizi: wu du.
13. Han Feizi: Liu Fan.
14. The author thanks Prof. Deepshikha Shahi.
15. Han Feizi: Shi Xie.
16. Han Feizi: Shi Xie.
17. Han Feizi: Wu du (Five Vermin).
18. Han Feizi: Xian Xue.
19. Han Feizi: Nan Yi.
20. Han Feizi ji jie xu (A review on Han Feizi).
21. Deepshikha Shahi, chapter 6, this volume.
22. Ibid.
23. Haipeng, "Kao di li ye he ma ji ya wei li de zheng zhi si xiang bi jiao," 33–34.
24. Han Feizi: you du.
25. Han Feizi: shi xie.
26. Han Feizi: wai xu shuo.
27. Ibid.
28. Han Feizi: nan san.
29. Han Feizi: wu du.
30. Han Feizi: chu jian qin.
31. Han Feizi: nan yi.
32. Han Feizi: ba jing.

## REFERENCES

1. Gao Huaping and Wang Qizhou, trans. and ed. Zhang. 2015. *Han Feizi*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
2. Zeng Xiangyu and Wei Chuxiong. 2019. *Zheng shi lun guo ji zheng zhi si xiang yan jiu* [A study on the international political thought of the *Arthashastra*]. Beijing: Current Affair Press.
3. Guan Lixin. 2012. "Han Feizi si xiang yan jiu" [A study on Han Feizi]. PhD Dissertation, Heilongjiang University.
4. Sun Xuefeng and Yang Zixiao. 2008. "Han Feizi de guo jia jian zheng zhi si xiang" [Han Feizi's thoughts on international politics]. *Quarterly Journal of International Politics* 2: 81–97.
5. Cai Xinde. 2006. "Han Feizi wai jiao si xiang yan jiu" [A study on Han Feizi's diplomatic thoughts]. Graduate Thesis, Jilin University, April.
6. Yang Zhicai. 2008. "Fei dao de de dao de: Ping Han Feizi de zheng zhi dao de guan" [The morals behind the immorality: A review of Han Feizi's political moral views]. *Jiaozuo Normal College Review* 24(3): 42–45.
7. Wang Yan. 2017. "Zheng shi lun guo ji zheng zhi si xiang jie du" [An interpretation of the international political thoughts in the *Arthashastra*]. Graduate Thesis, Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, July.
8. Zhang Jincui. 2013. "Zheng shi lun yu yin du wai jiao zhan lue de gu dian gen yuan" [The *Arthashastra* and the classical roots of India's foreign strategies]. *Foreign Affairs Review* 2: 123–34.
9. Jin Jie. 1986. "Zheng shi lun si xiang yu ce lue" [The thoughts and strategies in the *Arthashastra*]. *South Asian Studies* 4: 3–14.

10. Wang Yan. 2016. "Cong zheng shi lun kan yin du guo ji zhan lue si xiang gen yuan" [The *Arthashastra* and the roots of India's international strategies]. *Shanxi Youth*3: 24–29.
11. Liao Xuesheng. 1993. "Zheng shi lun miao su de jiu jin shi zen yang de guo jia" [What country does the *Arthashastra* describe?]. *Historiography Quarterly* 4: 161.
12. Jin Haipeng. 2014. "Kao di li ye he ma ji ya wei li de zheng zhi si xiang bi jiao" [A comparative study on the political thoughts of Chanakya and Machiavelli]. *Theory Research* 32: 33–34.
13. Ye Zicheng and Pang Xun. 2011, "Zhong guo chun qiu zhan guo shi qi de wai jiao si xian liu pai ji qi yu xi fang de bi jiao" [The schools of Chinese diplomatic thought during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods and the comparison with the West]. *Journal of World Economics and Politics* 12: 24–29.
14. Ye Zicheng. 2003. *Chun Qiu Zhan Guo Shi Qi De Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Si Xiang* [Chinese diplomatic thought during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods]. Hongkong: Hongkong Social Sciences Press.