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How Do Xunzi and Kautilya Ponder Interstate Politics?

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Xunzi/Xun Kuang (313–238 BCE), a Chinese philosopher, and Kautilya/Chanakya (between first century BCE and first century CE), an Indian philosopher, lived in an era of frequent interstate warfare. It is always helpful to explore the ideas of ancient thinkers of different civilizations and draw useful insights on understanding contemporary international politics. Indian scholars view both Sun Tzu and Kautilya as strategists and have done many comparative studies about their thoughts on strategies.[1] Although Han Feizi and Kautilya are often categorized as Machiavellian thinkers, the former's work does not touch extensively on interstate relations. However, Xunzi and Kautilya both have plenty to say about interstate politics. Thus, this article explores and compares their thoughts on the aspect of interstate politics, based on two corpora, *Xunzi* and the *Arthaśāstra*. Since Xunzi and Kautilya were not aware of each other's work, their shared thoughts reflect a cross-cultural understanding of interstate politics, and their differences of views may result from, but are not limited to, different personal experiences and interstate systems.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDYING INTERSTATE POLITICS

Although both books are about political governance, *Xunzi* focuses on political ideas while the *Arthaśāstra* addresses mainly governmental strategies. The former is more concerned with basic concepts of political studies, the latter primarily with policy making. The methodology used in *Xunzi* is historical induction, while that used in the *Arthaśāstra* is logical deduction. The methodological differences between the books may be due to the personal experiences and cultural differences of the authors or editors. Despite these differences, both *Xunzi* and the *Arthaśāstra* adopt an individual level of analysis, treating political leadership as the independent variable and ministers as the intermediate variable.

Historical Induction vs. Logical Deduction

As mentioned above, *Xunzi* and the *Arthaśāstra* make arguments using historical inductive and logical deductive methods, respectively. Xunzi illustrates his arguments by bringing forward a viewpoint before or after presenting historical cases. For instance, when he argues that morality enables a king to conquer the world quickly, he says, "They uniformly applied moral principles throughout the land, and in a single day it was plainly evident. Such were Tang and Wu."[2] Differing from Xunzi's inductive methodology, Kautilya applies a deductive method. Every book of the *Arthaśāstra* illustrates arguments with detailed literal explanations but rarely with historical cases. For instance, when he discusses strategies for dealing with allies, Kautilya comments on more than forty scenarios but provides neither successful nor failed historical examples.[3]

Xunzi's methodology makes his arguments empirically convincing, and Kautilya's makes his arguments rigorously logical. Unfortunately, Xunzi's arguments cannot be applied to every case because he does not set up rigorous conditions for them. The defect in Kautilya's methodology is that many of his arguments cannot be proven by empirical experiences. Inductive methodology makes Xunzi's thought concrete and deductive methodology makes Kautilya's abstract.

Xunzi's thoughts blend the ideas of Confucianism and Legalism but not religious thinking.[4] Since both Confucianism and Legalism are secular political thoughts rather than religious ideologies, he attributes different political phenomena to rulers' or ministers' mentality and capability rather than a nonhuman power. His writings are loaded with historical records of human activities but say nothing about the power of a god. Differing from Xunzi, Kautilya is a religious believer and his analysis treats human capability and supernatural power as equally important factors in the fate of a state: "[Acts] of human agency are good policy and bad policy; of divine agency, good fortune and misfortune. For it is acts of human and divine agency that make the world go. . . . That [human acts] can be thought about; the divine is incalculable."[5] The abstract style of the *Arthaśāstra* might have been influenced by the religious practice of Kautilya or this book's unknown editors. It is full of conversations between Kautilya and other people, all of which are presented in the name of Kautilya or the third person.

Individual Analysis: Treating Kings as the Independent Variable

For modern IR theoretical studies, the level of analysis comprises system, state, and individual.[6] Xunzi's and Kautilya's analyses can be interpreted at the individual level, for they treat rulers as the fundamental independent variable. They define the nature of states as an instrument used by rulers. Xunzi says:

> The state is the most powerful instrument for benefit in the world. The ruler of men is the most influential position of authority for benefit in the world. If a ruler

> employs the Way to maintain these two—the state and his position—then there will be the greatest peace and security, the greater honor and prosperity, and the wellspring for accumulating what is beautiful and fine. If a ruler does not employ the Way to maintain them, then there will be the greatest danger and peril and the greatest humiliation and adversity. It would be better not to have these two than to have them.[7]

Kautilya also views rulers, namely kings, as the most important factor for the survival of a state. "The king, the minister, the country, the fortified city, the treasury, the army and the ally are the constituent elements (of the state),"[8] Kautilya says. "The king and (his) rule, this is the sum-total of the constituents."[9] Treating kings as the most important element of a state, every book of the *Arthaśāstra* engages with the theme of what policy a king should adopt for the survival and improvement of his state.

Although they hold the same view about the role of kings and the nature of states, Xunzi differs from Kautilya in his understanding of the components of states. Xunzi views people and land as two independent components, but Kautilya views people and land as one. In Kautilya's writings, the term "country" refers to the land with people ruled by a king outside his fort: "For there is no country without people and no kingdom without a country."[10] Nevertheless, he regards people as just one of many components of a country:

> Possessed of strong positions in the center and at the frontiers, capable of sustaining itself and others in times of distress, easy to protect, providing neighboring princes, devoid of mud, stones, salty ground, uneven land, with agriculture land, mines, material forests and elephant forests, beneficial to cattle, beneficial to men, with protected pastures, rich in animals not depending on rain for water, provided with water-routes, with valuable, manifold and plenty of commodities, capable of bearing fines, and taxes, with farmers devoted to work, with a wise master, inhabited mostly by the lower *varnas*, with men loyal and honest—these are the excellences of a country.[11]

Xunzi and Kautilya hold different views about the relations between land and people, possibly because the Chinese feudal system makes every individual's identity tied to the state where he/she is born; for instance, Xunzi is still identified as a native of the State of Zhao. In ancient China, people with different state identities often lived on the land of a same state; Xunzi regards land and people as separate elements of a state. In ancient India, there were groups of wandering people without state identity. For instance, Buddha and his followers were stateless and landless people. This situation may have caused Kautilya to make no distinction between people and land and to consider the combination of people and land as country.

Triadic Categorization

Niraj Kumar noticed that both Kautilya and Xunzi prefer triadic categorization when they analyze political subjects: "We find various triads all through

[the *Arthaśāstra*]. The war itself is to be launched in three ways: open war (*prakashayuddha*), secret war (*kutayuddha*) and silent war (*gudayuddha*). There are three kinds of neighbours—hostile (*aribhavi*), friendly (*mitrahavi*) and vassal (*bhribhavi*). The aggressor is one of three kinds—righteous (*dharmik*), greedy (*lobhi*) and tyrannical (*atyachari*)—and appear[s] to be resonating [with] Xunzi's thought during the same period."[12] It is true that there are also many triads in *Xunzi*, such as the three desires of rulers— desire for security (*an*), desire for glory (*rong*), and desire for establishing his fame and meritorious accomplishments (*gongming*)—and the three types of leadership—humane authority (*wang*), hegemony (*ba*), and tyrant (*qiang*).[13]

Kumar suggests that the geopolitical shape of India had an impact on Kautilya's triadic framework of thinking: "Since India has a perfect triangular peninsula, this landscape had profound influence over Indian thought-structure. Indian mind is encapsulated in triadic thinking that possibly stems from the geophilosophical domain."[14] Regardless of whether Kumar's argument is popular among Indian scholars, the geographical analysis of Kautilya's concept does not sound convincing. However, it is quite certain that Chinese scholars have never thought Xunzi's triadic thinking to have been influenced by the geographic shape of ancient China. The geographic shape of ancient China changed frequently both before and after Xunzi.

Viewing Ministers as the Intermediate Variable

Both Xunzi's and Kautilya's individual analyses are not limited to the rulers. They treat ministers as the intermediate variable in their arguments, with ministers fulfilling the roles of policy consultation and implementation. Xunzi says:

> Those who are to maintain the state certainly cannot be so alone. Since this is the case, the strength, defensive security, and glory of country lie in the selection of its prime minister. Where a ruler is himself able and his prime minister is able, he will become a True King. Where the ruler is personally incapable, but knows it, becomes apprehensive, and seeks those who are able, then he will become powerful. When the ruler is personally incapable, but neither realizes it, nor becomes apprehensive, nor seeks those who are able, but merely makes use of those who fawn over him and flatter him, those who form his entourage of assistants, or those who are related to him, then he will be endangered and encroached upon, and, in the extreme case, annihilated.[15]

Xunzi illustrates his arguments with historical cases, such as the following:

> Thus, the relation between King Cheng and the Duke of Zhou was that he heeded the duke's advice on everything that transpired, for he realized what was valuable. The relations of Duke Huan to Guan Zhong were that in the business of state he used Guan for everything that developed, for he knew what was beneficial. The kingdom of Wu had Wu Zixu but was incapable of using him, so ultimately the country was destroyed, for it turned against the Way and lost this worthy man. Thus, those who honored sages became king; those who valued the worthy became

> lords-protector; those who respected the worthy survived; and those who scorned them were destroyed.[16]

Kautilya also suggests that the correct principle for appointing ministers should be based on capability rather than personal relations to the king: "For from the capacity for doing work is the ability of a person judged. And in accordance with their ability, by (suitably) distributing rank among ministers and assigning place, time and work (to them), he should appoint all these as ministers, not, however, as councilors."[17] He provides details about the appointments of ministers, councilors, and chaplains; the administration of secret tests to determine the integrity of ministers; the appointments of persons to the secret service; and so on. But he does not provide any imperial references to support his views.[18]

Kautilya does not view the capability of ministers as equally important to that of the capability of rulers, whereas Xunzi does. For instance, Xunzi believes that capable ministers can make a state strong even when the ruler is incapable: "Where the ruler is personally incapable, but knows it, becomes apprehensive, and seeks those who are able, then he will become powerful."[19] Kautilya suggests that the capability of ministers is secondary to the capabilities of the ruler because the ruler can replace impotent ministers at any time: "It is the king alone who appoints the group of servants like the councilor, the chaplain and others, directs the activity of departmental heads, takes counter-measures, secures their advancement. If the ministers are suffering from calamities, he appoints others who are not in calamities. . . . For the king is in the place of their head."[20]

VIEWS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM

Xunzi and Kautilya have different concepts about interstate systems, mainly because the ancient Chinese and Indian interstate systems were not the same. Xunzi lived in the Warring States period, which was experiencing the power decentralization of the unipolar Zhou Dynasty, but the norms of that interstate system were still hierarchical. Kautilya lived in a nonhierarchical and competitive interstate system, although his normative aim was that the king he was advising and who was bent on conquest (*vijigīṣu*) could eventually emerge victorious and even become a universal emperor (*cakravartin*) within the Indian subcontinent. Their distinct conceptualizations of the interstate system can be observed in their views about the nature of interstate systems and understandings of peace and war.

Anarchy or Hierarchy

In ancient China and India, people had no knowledge of modern geography; thus, neither Xunzi nor Kautilya knew that the earth is spherical, believing it to be a flat square. Xunzi describes the earth with the concept of "the Four Seas"[21] and Kautilya with the concept of "the four ends of the earth."[22] Therefore, they imagine the geographic shape of an interstate system as a flat square.

Based on the belief that human beings do not like to be controlled, both Xunzi and Kautilya view the nature of the interstate system as anarchic. For instance, Xunzi says: "It is of the inborn nature of human beings that it is impossible for them not to form societies. If they form a society in which there are no class divisions, strife will develop. If there is strife, then there will be social disorder; if there is social disorder, there will be hardship for all. Hence, a situation in which there are no class divisions is the greatest affliction mankind can have."[23] Kautilya also views the world as an anarchic system, with all states playing the same roles. He describes the interstate system as a chessboard, with states as the chess pieces:

> There are the constituents (of the circle of kings). Or the conqueror, the ally and the ally's ally are the three constituents of the (circle of kings). They, each individually united with its five constituent elements, the minister, the country, the fort, the treasury and the army, constitute the eighteen-fold circle. By that is explained a separate circle (for each of) the enemy, the middle and the neutral kings. Thus there is a collection of four circles. There are twelve constituents who are kings, sixty material constituents, a total of seventy-two in all.[24] (See figure 3.1.)

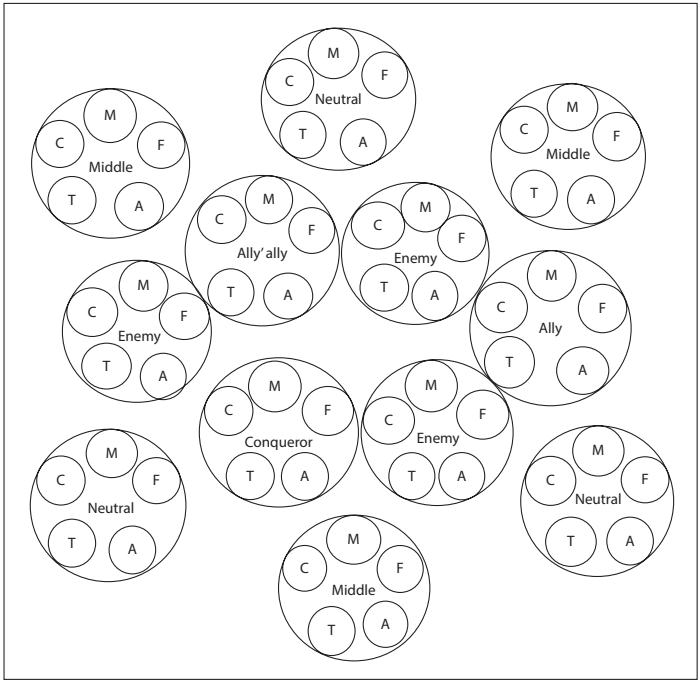

FIGURE 3.1. Kautilya's concept of the ancient Indian interstate system. Acronyms: Minister (M), Country (C), Fort (F), Treasury (T), Army (A).

Differing from Kautilya, who never discusses the possibility of a hierarchic interstate system, Xunzi believes the interstate system can be either anarchic or hierarchic, depending on whether there is a class arrangement of states. He suggests that a hierarchic interstate system can be established by a strong interstate leading power via regulating a social estate of states: "A situation in which there are class divisions is the most basic benefit under Heaven. And it is the lord of men who is the indispensable element wherewith to 'arrange the scale' of the classes of men."[25] He also notes, "The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder. Thus, they instituted regulations, ritual practices, and moral principles in order to create proper social and class divisions. They ordered that there be sufficient gradations of wealth and eminence of station to bring everyone under supervision. This is the fundamental principle by which to nurture the empire."[26]

Xunzi's concept of a hierarchic interstate system is based on the Five Ordinances System said to be established in the Xia Dynasty and improved in the West Zhou Dynasty.[27] He says:

> Accordingly, all states of Xia Chinese have identical obligations for service to the king and have identical standards of conduct. The countries of the Man, Yi, Rong, and Di barbarians perform the same obligatory services to the king, but the regulations governing them are not the same. Those who are enforced within [the royal domain] do royal service. Those who are enforced without [the royal domain] do feudal service. Those who are in the feudal marches zone do guest service. The Man and Yi nations do service according to treaty obligations. The Rong and Di do irregular service. Those who do royal service provide offerings for the sacrifices of thanks; those who do feudal service provide offerings for the cult sacrifices; those who do guest service provide for the drinking ceremonies; those who do service according to treaty present tribute offerings; and those who do irregular service come to pay their respects at the succession of the new king. Each day, offerings of thanks are made; each season, there is the drinking ceremony; each year, tribute is offered; {and once a generation there is the succession of the new kin}. This is just what is meant by they observed the qualities inherent in the land forms and regulated with ordinances the vessels and implements; they judged the various distances and so differentiated grades of tributes and offerings—for such is the perfection of true kingship.[28]

Figure 3.2 shows the diagram of the Five Ordinances System.

Divergent Views on Interstate Relations

According to Xunzi, a state's foreign relations are crucial to its security, and the formation of foreign relations mainly depends on a state's policies toward others:

> A humane man would keep in good order the obligations between small and large countries, between the strong and weak, and would sedulously maintain them. The

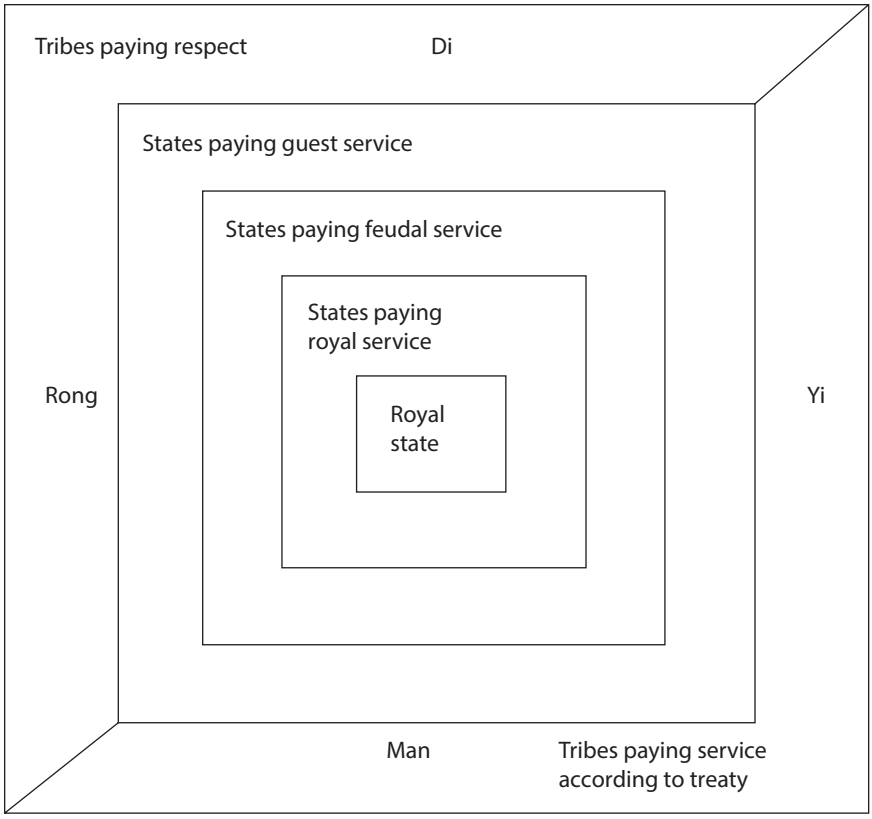

FIGURE 3.2. Xunzi's concept of the ancient Chinese interstate system.

> important point of ritual would be observed with the extreme of good form. The *gui* jade baton and the *bi* jade insignia would be very sumptuous. The presents and contributions would be very munificent. The means he uses to persuade others must be those of a gentleman who is elegantly correct in form and of discriminating intelligence. Should others have designs against him, who among them could become angry with him? This being so, those who act out of anger will not commit aggression against him. If for the sake of a reputation, or for the sake of profit, or because of anger, others do not commit aggression against him, then his country will be as secure as a boulder and as long-lived as the Winnowing Basket and Wings constellations.[29]

Kautilya also regards foreign relations as an important factor in a state's security. He identifies friends and enemies in terms of geopolitics, blood lineage, and interests:

> One with the immediately proximate territory is the natural enemy; one of equal birth is the enemy by birth; one opposed or in opposition is the enemy made (for the time being). One with territory separated by one other is the natural ally; one related through the mother or father is the ally by birth; one who has sought shelter for wealth or life is the ally made (for the time being).[30]

Kautilya regards ally as an element of state, but Xunzi does not. The divergent views of ally might be a result of their respective experience in the ancient Indian and Chinese interstate system. The ancient Indian interstate system was normally multipolar and rarely unipolar. The configuration consisted of two components: the power structure and strategic relations between major powers. In a multipolar configuration, the balance of power among major states is critical to the survival of a state and the stability of that interstate system. Based on his observation of the characteristics of a multipolar system, Kautilya theoretically types states according to relations between kings, such as conqueror, ally, ally's ally, enemy, middle states, and neutral states.[31] Since ally is so important to the fate of a king, it is very reasonable for Kautilya to view ally as a component of state.

Unlike the ancient Indian interstate system, the ancient Chinese interstate system irregularly shifted among unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar configurations. In general, unipolar configuration rests on an asymmetric power structure between a solo superpower and other major powers. Their strategic relations are less important in shaping a unipolar configuration than in a bipolar or multipolar configuration. A unipolar configuration lays the foundation for a hierarchic interstate system, in which the survival of states greatly relies on the protection from the solo superpower. The royal state serves as the interstate leadership who arranges the class of states. Based on his observation of the ancient Chinese hierarchic interstate system, Xunzi categorizes interstate actors into three groups, including six classes according to their relations with the royal state, namely the kingdom of the son of heaven. They are the royal state, states of three classes, and tribes of two classes.[32]

Although Kautilya views the interstate system as an anarchic system, he also realizes the unequal relationship between the strong and the weak. He suggests making allies according to relative material strength between states rather than the principle of equality: "He should seek shelter with one whose strength is superior to the strength of the neighboring (enemy). . . . Or if situated between two stronger kings, he should seek shelter with one capable of protecting him or with one whose intervening weak neighbor he may be, or with both."[33] Kautilya's idea of seeking shelter with both friendly and threatening states at the same time may appear, to foreign eyes, as an Indian diplomatic tradition similar to the principle of nonalignment during the Cold War.

Different from Kautilya's way of studying the types of states according to relations or material strength only, Xunzi stresses the political nature of states. Xunzi views the political nature of a state as a more important criterion than material strength and foreign relations for its identity. According to the foreign policies adopted by each country, Xunzi divides leading powers into three types: "*wang*" (the true king or the humane authority), "*ba*" (the lord-protector/hegemony), and "*qiang*" (the powerful/tyranny).[34] He says, "The True King tries to win men; the lord-protector to acquire allies; the powerful to capture land."[35] In his view, the state with a moral leadership will be supported by talented people of other states, including its enemies; the state with strategic credibility will be supported by its allies only; and the state with material strength only will get no support from others, although it is able to conquer others by military force.

Views about Peace and War

Xunzi views peace as an opposite state of security to war. The word "*heping*" (peace) was coined in modern Chinese and its corresponding ancient Chinese character is *an* (peace, order, and stability) or *zhi* (order by governance). Studying the peace between states in a hierarchic interstate system, Xunzi views peace as a result of good interstate governance by the leading state rather than an approach adopted by the leading power to achieve security. For instance, Xunzi says, "Order is born of the gentleman; chaos is produced by the small man."[36] Although Xunzi treats war as both a state of security and a strategy for security, he does not study peace from an instrumental perspective.

Differing from Xunzi's view of peace, Kautilya believes that both peace and war have dual characteristics; namely, they are both states of and strategies for security. Viewing peace as a state of security, Kautilya says, "Peace is that which brings about security of enjoyment of the fruits of works."[37] Regarding peace as a strategy for security, he says that "entering into a treaty is peace."[38] When addressing the six major measures of foreign policy, he parallels peace and war: "Peace, war, staying quiet, marching, seeking shelter and dual policy constitute the six measures."[39] It is reasonable for Kautilya to examine both peace and war in an anarchic interstate system from an instrumental perspective. His instrumental perception of peace leads him to believe that peace is a less expensive strategy than war to achieve the same profit: "If there is equal advancement in peace and war, he [king] should resort to peace. For in war there are losses, expenses, marches away from home and hindrance."[40] He rigorously calculates the costs and benefits of peace and war in an instrumental way: "For, when the gain is equal there should be peace, when unequal war is considered (desirable) for equal, weaker and stronger kings. Thus have peace and war been described."[41]

As for war, Xunzi regards it as both a state of and a strategy for security, but he worries about the negative political results of military victory:

> When others defend the ramparts of their cities and send out knights to do battle with me and I overcome them through superior power, then the number of casualties among their population is necessarily very great. Where casualties have been extreme, the population is bound to hate me with vehemence. If the population detests me, then each day their desire to fight against me will grow. Where others defend the ramparts of their cities and sends out knights to do battle with me and I overcome them through superior power, then the number of casualties among my own people is certain to be very great. If the number of casualties among my own people has been great, they are certain to have a fierce dislike for me. If my own people hate me, then each day they will have less desire to fight for me; so as others grow more willing to fight, my own people will grow less willing to defend me. In this way, the cause of my former strength is reversed and produces weakness. Lands may be acquired, but their inhabitants will flee. As involvements become more numerous, accomplishments decrease. Although there is more to defend, the wherewithal to defend it diminishes. In this way the basis of my former greatness is reversed and is taken piece by piece from me.[42]

It would be wrong to suppose that Xunzi is a pacifist. In fact, he does not oppose the idea of achieving political goals through war, nor does he oppose the annexation of other states. In his view, different types of annexation bring different political results. Annexation based on moral principles will make a state a humane interstate authority, while immoral military attacks will undermine a state's interstate status: "One who uses moral power to annex people will become a True King; one who employs raw power to annex them will become weak; and one who employs wealth to annex them will become poor. In this regard, antiquity and today are one and the same."[43]

Differing from Xunzi's emphasis on the moral legitimacy of war, Kautilya focuses on the military capability of winning a war: "When in decline as compared to the enemy, he should make peace. When prospering, he should make war."[44] Kautilya also adds: "The conqueror should employ the six measures of policy with due regard to this power. He should make peace with the equal and the stronger; he should make war with the weaker. For going to war with the stronger, he engages as it were in a fight on foot with an elephant. And (at war) with the equal, he brings about loss on both sides, like an unbaked jar struck by an unbaked jar. (At war) with the weaker, he attains absolute success, like a stone with an earthen vessel."[45] Kautilya touches on the legitimacy of war on some occasions, but his emphasis on the military capability of war leaves readers with a much deeper impression than his concern for legitimacy. This could be the reason for many comparative studies about his strategic thoughts in the *Arthaśāstra* and Sun Tzu's in *Art of War*.

ANALYSIS OF THE POWER OF A STATE

Both Xunzi and Kautilya study the power of a state from the aspects of material and nonmaterial strength, but they have different views about the components of

both kinds of strength. They hold similar views about the importance of political leadership to a state's comprehensive strength. Both of them believe that the morality of leadership is crucial to a state's interstate status, but Xunzi values strategic credibility to a state's security more than Kautilya does. Xunzi views strategic credibility as the basic element of interstate leadership morality. The cost of obtaining strategic credibility is lower than that of practicing other higher moral norms. For example, it is easier for a leading power to keep its promises effectively than to aid other states generously. Other states will view a leading power as an immoral leader when it has no strategic credibility.

Components of a State's Power

Both Xunzi and Kautilya regard power as strength, but Xunzi categorizes power into two types—material strength and nonmaterial strength—while Kautilya divides power into three types—counsel, might, and energy. Kautilya says, "Power is (possession of) strength. . . . Power is threefold: the power of knowledge is the power of counsel, the power of the treasury and army is the power of might, the power valour is the power of energy."[46] Regarding material strength, Kautilya views geographical conditions of land as elements of material strength: "endowed with agricultural land, mines, material forests and elephant forests, beneficial to cattle, beneficial to men, with protected pastures, rich in animals, not depending on rain for water, provided with water-routes and land-routes, with valuable, manifold and plenty of commodities . . . these are the excellences of a country."[47]

Xunzi also discusses the military, the economy, and land, but he stresses the use of material resources: "One who knows the way of true strength does not rely on military strength. Rather, he considers how to use the king's mandate as the means to collect together his physical power and consolidate his inner power. . . . The way of the Lord-protector is quite different. He opens up wilderness lands to cultivation, fills the granaries and storehouses, and provides useful implements."[48] However, their different views on material strength are less important and evident when compared to their differing views on nonmaterial strength.

Xunzi treats political leadership as the only nonmaterial strength, while Kautilya views knowledge and valor as two types of nonmaterial strength. Xunzi believes that every individual is born with the same nature; thus, he does not think that anyone is born with leadership capability: "Now, since human nature is evil, it must await the instruction of a teacher and the model before it can be put alright, and it must obtain ritual principles and a sense of moral right before it can become orderly. Nowadays, since men lack both teacher and model, they are prejudiced, wicked, and not upright. Since they lack ritual principles and precepts of moral duty, they are perverse, rebellious, and disorderly."[49] In contrast to Xunzi, Kautilya assumes that every individual is born differently in nature; thus, he makes the distinction between valor, an inborn strength, and knowledge, an acquired strength. He asserts that "the excellences of the king are: Born in a high family, endowed

with good fortune, intelligence and spirit, given to seeing elder, pious, truthful in speech, not breaking his promise, grateful, liberal, of great energy, not dilatory, with weak neighboring princes, resolute, not having a mean council (of ministers), desirous of training—these are the qualities of one easily approachable."[50]

Political Leadership as the Basis of Comprehensive Power

Both Xunzi and Kautilya view political leadership as the foundation of a state's comprehensive strength. They believe that all of the other components of a state's strength, including the economy, the military, and natural resources, will be improved when its political leadership is strong; otherwise, no matter how immense a state is, it will lose strength when political leadership is weak. Xunzi argues that strong leadership will make a weak state rise and weak leadership will make a strong state decline:

> Hence, one who cultivates ritual principles becomes a king; one who effectively exercises government become strong; one who wins over the people will be secure; and one who merely collects tax levies will perish. Accordingly, the True King enriches the people; the lord-protector enriches his scholar-knights; a state that can barely manage to survive enriches its grand officers; and a state that is doomed enriches only the ruler's coffers and fills up his storehouses.[51]

Similarly, Kautilya emphasizes that the personal qualities of the leader are fundamental to the successful functioning of the other elements of a state, of which he suggests there are seven. That is, these seven elements cannot properly function, or can even be undermined, when the personal qualities of a king are poor.

> A king endowed with personal qualities endows with excellences the constituent elements not so endowed. One not endowed with personal qualities destroys the constituent elements that are prosperous and devoted (to him). Then that (king) not endowed with personal qualities, with defective constituent elements, is either killed by the subjects or subjugated by the enemies, even if he be ruler up to the four ends of the earth. But one possessed of personal qualities, though ruling over a small territory, being united with the excellences of the constituent elements, (and) conversant with (the science of) politics, does conquer the entire earth, never loses.[52]

Both Xunzi and Kautilya argue that morals and ethics of political leadership have direct impacts on a state's military strength. Xunzi stresses that military power is reliable when a state's leadership is viewed as ethical by the ruled, otherwise it could lead to the destruction of its military might: "If the ruler does not exalt ritual principles, then the army will be weak. If he does not love his people, then the army will be weak. If when he prohibits or approves something he is untrustworthy, then the army will be weak. If his commendations and rewards do not penetrate down to the lower ranks, then the army will be weak. If the generals and marshals are incapable, then the army will be weak."[53] It is obvious that Xunzi attributes the appointment of incapable officers to the poor morality of a state's leadership.

Kautilya also thinks that a ruler's morality has decisive impacts on the state's military strength. He views military capability as a combination of soldiers and military equipment. Among the two components, he suggests that the loyalty of soldiers, cultivated by the morality of their ruler, should be more important than military equipment. A ruler cannot rely on his state's military capability when his soldiers' loyalty is broken by his immoral behavior: "(When the choice is) between a strong king unjustly behaved and a weak king justly behaved, he should march against the strong king unjustly. The subjects do not help the strong unjust king when he is attacked, they drive him out or resort to his enemy. But the subjects support in every way the weak but just king when he is attacked or follow him if he has to flee."[54]

Moral Principles and a State's Interstate Status

Xunzi stresses that moral principles adopted by a king will make his state the leading power of the world:

> The Way of a True King is not like this. His humanity is the loftiest in the world, his justice the most admirable, and his majesty the most marvelous. His humanity being the loftiest is the cause of none in the world being estranged from him. His justice being the most admirable is the cause of none failing to esteem him. His majesty being the most marvelous is the cause of no one in the world presuming to oppose him. His majesty permitting no opposition coupled with a way that wins the allegiance of others is the cause of his triumphing without having to wage war, of his gaining his objectives without resort to force, and of the world submitting to him without his armies exerting themselves.[55]

Kautilya also regards the morality of a ruler as the key to a state's status. He lists four qualities of a king, including being easily approachable, intellect, energy, and personal excellence.[56] Each of the four qualities includes many aspects. The quality of being easily approachable includes "truthful in speech, not breaking his promise, grateful, [and] liberal."[57] He views immoralities as putting a country in danger of being destroyed by other countries: "Not royal descent, greedy, with a mean council (of ministers), with disaffected subjects, unjust in behavior, not applying himself (to duties), vicious, devoid of energy, trusting in fate, doing whatever pleases him, without shelter, without a following, impotent, ever doing harm (to others)—these are excellences in any enemy. For an enemy of this type becomes easy to exterminate."[58]

Xunzi regards strategic credibility as the basis for a state to win support from other states. Since every state may have enemies, it must seek the support of other states in order to survive or to rule. Xunzi knows that it is difficult for most kings to have a high level of morality, so he suggests they at least maintain strategic credibility . He believes that strategic credibility is the basis of winning support from others.

> Although the moral force of their inner power had not yet reached perfection and although moral principles had not yet been fully attained, yet, in a general way, they

> displayed rational principles for ordering the world. Their punishments and rewards, their prohibitions and assents, were believed by the world. Their ministers and subjects fully and clearly knew that they were capable of exercising constraints over them. When the rules and edicts of government had been set forth, then although they might see opportunity for profit or danger of loss, they would not deceive their people. When agreements had already been settled, then although they might see the opportunity for profit or danger of loss, they would not deceive their allies. Since they behaved in this fashion, their army was strong, their cities well defended, and hostile countries stood in awe of them. Then the unity of their own countries was a brilliantly evident beacon, and their allies had faith in them.[59]

Xunzi argues, relying on historical cases, that morality can help a weak state to become strong:

> Although from despised and backward countries, their majestic authority shook the whole world. Such were the five Lords-Protector . . . Thus, that Duke Huan of Qi, Duke Wen of Jin, King Zhuang of Chu, King Helu of Wu, and King Goujian of Yue, all of whom were of despised and backward countries, held majestic sway over the world and [that] their might held peril for all the Central States was due to no other cause than that they were in the main trustworthy. This is what is called "established trust and becoming a lord-protector."[60]

Kautilya also perceives strategic reputation as an important element in shaping foreign relations. He believes that strategic reputation is politically more important in ancient times than in his time because kings of his time were no longer as true to their word as were their ancestors.

> Peace, treaty, hostage, there are one and the same thing. The creation of confidence among kings is (the purpose of) peace treaty or hostage . . . . Plighting one's troth or taking an oath is a pact stable in the next world as well as here, a surety or a hostage is of use only in this world, depending on strength. "We have made a pact," thus kings of old, faithful to their word, made pacts by plighting their troth. In case of (fear of) its transgression, they touched fire, water, a furrow in the field, a clod of earth from the rampart, a gem, seeds, a fragrant substance, a liquid, gold or money, affirming with an oath, "May these kill or abandon him who would break the oath."[61]

Kautilya certainly considers allies' loyalty as an important criterion for judging the quality of an ally: "Allied from the days of the father and the grandfather, constant under control, not having a separate interest, great, able to mobilized quickly—these are the excellences of an ally."[62]

Nevertheless, his thinking about strategic credibility seems a one-way concept, different from Xunzi's. He suggests a king cautiously consider how loyal his allies are to him, but none of his comments on alliance suggests that a king be loyal to his allies. Whereas Xunzi stresses that "when agreements had already been settled, then although they might see the opportunity for profit or danger of loss, they would not deceive their allies."[63]

CONCLUSION

The shared thoughts of Xunzi and Kautilya on important concepts and issues of interstate relations as reflected in this article can help us to enrich existing IR theories. Ancient Chinese and Indian thinkers have paid attention to the paradigm of many theoretical concepts such as leadership determinism and leadership morality. These ideas have laid a good basis upon which Chinese and Indian scholars can construct a new IR theory. In regard to establish non-Western IR theories, Amitav Acharya suggests that "these theories need to incorporate and adapt to the realities of the non-Western world. … It is not enough to 'test' existing theories in non-Western contexts and revise them if there is a mismatch. We also need to go beyond the existing theories. Global IR calls for developing whole new theories and perspectives from other societies on their own terms."[64] I would like to propose that Chinese and Indian scholars develop universal IR theories covering both Western and non-Western historical realities. That means our thinking should travel beyond China and India and produce a general framework for both analyzing and forecasting international changes on major issues. For the sake of developing universal IR theories, Chinese and Indian scholars should refrain from the nationalist impulse to establish a Chinese or Indian school of IR theories.

Xunzi's and Kautilya's thoughts on interstate politics both reflect leadership determinism. While the paradigm of their thinking is very traditional, it is more efficient than economic determinism and political system determinism in explaining changes in economic growth of China and India. These two countries are distinctive in their political systems, but historical comparison shows that they have experienced quick as well as slow economic growth under the reigns of different national leadership since their independence. Horizontal comparison shows that their economies have grown at a similar speed in recent years, but faster than those countries that shared the same political system, such as Cuba and the UK respectively. Their bilateral relations experienced both amicable and antagonist periods in the last seven decades. Both friendly and hostile relations were shaped by the policies adopted by the leadership of the two nations. These facts imply that their future bilateral relations will continue to be shaped by their decision makers despite differences in their political systems or economic productivity.

Both Xunzi and Kautilya regard morality as an important component of leadership qualities. For quite a long time, people around the world have believed that democratic institutions determine American global leadership. During Donald Trump's presidency, which began in 2017, American leadership in global governance deteriorated dramatically while American democratic institutions have remained, for the most part, unchanged. Faced with the global pandemic that began in December 2019, Trump's administration failed to lead the world to contain the epidemic's expansion. People may have different judgments as to the morality of Trump's leadership, but most people, including many Americans, have a similar view of his leadership's strategic credibility. Nowadays, people are

worried about regressive changes in the world order, mainly because they have little hope of expecting a moral international leadership by any great power in the near future.

Xunzi's thought has had a strong influence on some Chinese IR scholars' theories, such as with regard to moral realism,[65] but it does not have a clear impact on contemporary Chinese foreign policy. Unlike Confucius and Mencius, Xunzi's arguments have never been quoted in any contemporary Chinese official documents or speeches. However, Kautilya's thought leaves tangible marks on both Indian scholars and decision makers. Kautilya's impact on modern Indian strategic thinking is generally recognized, although there are debates about the depth of his impact among scholars.[66] Nehru often referenced the *Arthaśāstra* in his speeches and writings, even commending the book to his daughter Indira in his *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*.[67] In regard to Kautilya's thoughts on interstate relations, L. N. Rangarajan states: "Kautilya gives us a detailed theoretical analysis of all possible political situations with recommendations on ways of meeting them."[68] I interpret his remark to suggest that the *Arthaśāstra* provides rich resources for scholars who seek to develop new IR theories.

NOTES

1. Akshay Joshi, "Strategic Wisdom from the Orient: Evaluating the Contemporary Relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra and Sun Tzu's Art of War," *Strategic Analysis* 43, no. 1 (January–February 2019): 54–74; K. N. Ramachandran, "Sun Zi and Kautilya: Towards a Comparative Analysis," *Strategic Analysis* 38, no. 3 (May–June 2014): 390–408; Anusmita Dutta and Manish S. Dabhade, "Diplomatic Theory of Kautilya and Sun Tzu: Assessing Interpretations," *International Studies* 51, nos. 1–4 (2014): 162–79; Giri Deshingkar, "Strategic Thinking of Kautilya and Sun Zi," *China Report* 32, no. 1 (1996): 1–13.

2. John Knoblock, trans., "Book 11, Of Kings and Lords-Protector," *Xunzi I* (Changsha: Human People's Publishing House, 1999), 319.

3. R. P. Kangle, "Book 7, The Six Measure of Foreign Policy," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2014), 339–53.

4. Xu Jin, "The Two Poles of Confucianism: A Comparison of the Inter-state Political Philosophies of Mencius and Xunzi," in *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, ed. Yan Xuetong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 161.

5. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 317 (6.2.6–7, 12).

6. James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 5th ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2001), 28–29.

7. Knoblock, "Book 11, Of Kings and Lords-Protector," *Xunzi I*, 315.

8. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 314 (6.1.1).

9. Kangle, "Book 8, Concerning the Topic of Calamities," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 390 (8.2.1).

10. Kangle, "Book 13, Means of Taking a Fort," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 486 (13.4.5).

11. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 315 (6.1.8).

12. Niraj Kumar, "Building Grand Strategy with Indian Characteristics for Rebounding India," *Journal of Indian Research* 2, no. 1 (January–March 2014): 12.

13. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulations of a King," *Xunzi I*, 217, 221.

14. Kumar, "Building Grand Strategy," 12.

15. Knoblock, "Book 11, Of Kings and Lords-Protector," *Xunzi I*, 329.

16. Knoblock, "Book 24, On the Gentleman," *Xunzi II*, 783.

17. Kangle, "Book 1, The Topic Training," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 16 (1.8.27–29).

18. Ibid., 17–27 (1.9–12).

19. Knoblock, "Book 11, Of Kings and Lords-Protector," *Xunzi I*, 329.

20. Kangle, "Book 8, Concerning the Topic of Calamities," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 386 (8.1.13–14, 18).

21. Knoblock, "Book 15, Debate on the Principles of Warfare," *Xunzi I*, 457.

22. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 317 (6.2.3).

23. Knoblock, "Book 10, On Enriching the State," *Xunzi I*, 273.

24. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 319 (6.2.23–28).

25. Knoblock, "Book 10, On Enriching the State," *Xunzi I*, 273.

26. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulation of a King," *Xunzi I*, 215.

27. The royal kingship city is located at the center of the system. The *dian* ordinance, which occupied the 500 *li* surrounding the kingship city, was for planting various grains and acted as the king's food supplier. The next surrounding 500 *li* was the *hou* ordinance, which mainly provided the king with labor and territorial protection. The next surrounding 2,500 *li* was the *bin* ordinance, which comprised the vassal states of China. This area was subdivided into five 500-*li qi*, in this order—*hou qi, dian qi, nan qi, ai qi, and wei qi*—that were mostly responsible for cultural education and military support. The next areas contained the *yao* ordinance and the *huang* ordinance, each 1,000 *li*, but their distance from the center is uncertain. The *yao* ordinance was further divided into the *man* and *yi* ordinances, each 500 *li*, of similar political order but reduced taxation. The *huang* ordinance was further divided into the *zhen* ordinance and *fan* ordinance, each also covering 500 *li*, which had simple political systems and norms, and where population mobility was high.

28. Knoblock, "Book 18, Rectifying Theses," *Xunzi II*, 571, 573.

29. Knoblock, "Book 10, On Enriching the State," *Xunzi I*, 309.

30. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 318 (6.2.19–20).

31. Ibid., 319 (6.2.23–28).

32. Knoblock, "Book 18, Rectifying Theses," *Xunzi II*, 571, 573.

33. Kangle, "Book 7, The Six Measures of Foreign Policy," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 325 (7.2.6, 13).

34. It should be noted that in Xunzi's works, *ba* is similar to the linguistically neutral "hegemony," which has no negative meaning such as aggression toward or bullying of weak states.

35. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulations of a King," *Xunzi I*, 221.

36. Ibid., 215.

37. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 317 (6.2.3).

38. Kangle, "Book 7, The Six Measures of Foreign Policy," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 321 (7.1.6).

39. Ibid., 321 (7.1.2).

40. Ibid., 325 (7.2.1).

41. Ibid., 348 (7.8.34).

42. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulations of a King," *Xunzi I*, 221, 223.

43. Knoblock, "Book 15, Debate on the Principles of Warfare," *Xunzi I*, 497.

44. Kangle, "Book 7, The Six Measures of Foreign Policy," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 321 (7.1.13–14).

45. Ibid., 327 (7.3.1–5).

46. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 319 (6.2.31, 33).

47. Ibid., 319 (6.1.8).

48. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulations of a King," *Xunzi I*, 223, 225.

49. Knoblock, "Book 23, Man's Nature Is Evil," *Xunzi II*, 743.

50. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 314 (6.1.2–3).

51. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulation of a King," *Xunzi I*, 219.

52. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 317 (6.1.16–18).

53. Knoblock, "Book 10, On Enriching the State," *Xunzi I*, 134–35.

54. Kangle, "Book 7, The Six Measures of Foreign Policy," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 335 (7.5.16–18).

55. Knoblock, "Book 9, On the Regulation of a King," *Xunzi II*, 227.

56. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 314–15 (6.1.3–6).

57. Ibid., 314 (6.1.3).

58. Ibid., 316 (6.1.13–14).

59. Knoblock, "Book 11, Of Kings and Lords-Protector," *Xunzi I*, 319, 321.

60. Ibid., 321.

61. Kangle, "Book 7, The Six Measures of Foreign Policy," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 375 (7.17.1–7).

62. Kangle, "Book 6, The Circle of Kings as the Basis," *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II*, 316 (6.1.12).

63. Knoblock, "Book 11, Of Kings and Lords-Protector," *Xunzi I*, 321.

64. Amitav Acharya, "From Heaven to Earth: 'Cultural Idealism' and 'Moral Realism' as Chinese Contributions to Global International Relations," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 4 (2019): 491.

65. Yan Xuetong, *Leadership and the Rise of Great Powers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 259.

66. Aparna Pande, *From Chanakya to Modi: Evolution of India's Foreign Policy* (New York: HarperCollins India, 2017), 24–25.

67. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), 462.

68. L. N. Rangarajan, *Kautilya: The Arthashastra* (Hayana: Penguin Books, 1987), 506.