



Inter-philosophical Critique of Realpolitik from School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism: Comparative and Dialectical Analysis of Role of Realpolitik Orientation on International Issues

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ABSTRACT

Machiavellianism and Legalism exerted influences over bureaucratic administration, balance of power competition, among state empires and Realpolitik-oriented competition that may remain observable in today's world of geopolitical security dilemma and structural power asymmetry, notwithstanding little advancement as they design in absolute terms due to domestic mechanism and confinement of a more modernising, inclusive, non-Realpolitik international norm upon political behaviours of state actors or supreme political decision makers. Both of these philosophical schools attach significance not to benevolence, righteousness, and morality in the realm of governance of both domestic affairs and foreign affairs, but rather to power supremacy of the rulers, and bestows and punishments combined according to the degree of consistency between the behaviours of officials and results of their performance, and even tricky usage of tactical deception if needed in response to the complicated Realpolitik affairs and arena partly because they presuppose human nature is not benign but evil, selfish and transactional mostly for the sake of narrow self-interests, especially in a Realpolitik-based environment that they observe and identify and that only the ends justify the means. This analytical essay methodologically seeks to utilise certain representative case studies of Ukraine-Russia geopolitical security dilemma and US-China structural dilemma in a more unpredictable world where Realpolitik remains observable but its methodology is insufficient, for the purpose of dialectically evaluating potential theoretical merits and demerits of Machiavellianism and Legalism. Briefly, these two philosophical schools facilitate state actors, supreme decision makers and research analysts to undertake maximum non-emotive, rational observation of an authentic geopolitical world in a physical sense as it literally is, but they probably omit the normative progressive philosophical notion of reshaping an international arena on a normative basis of minimum zero-sum-game mentality and minimum vicious structural competition and confrontation and of possibility of interstate cooperation beyond the Realpolitik framework.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the holistic human history, School of Platonism and School of Confucianism have unveiled indelible influences over Occidental civilisation and Chinese civilisation, which are the indirect ramification and variation and evolution of ancient Greek civilisation and chronologically-sustainable Chinese civilisation (Bao, 2022). Both of these two above-mentioned philosophical schools pay heeds to virtue and morality in the realm of personal self-fulfillment and even in some cases meritocracy, partly because they presuppose that since human nature can be labeled as benign and at least non-vicious, the humanity can be cultivated through constant moral education, therefore achieving peace, harmony and self-realisation of moral supremacy, especially the notion from Mencius Doctrine as an extended part of School of Confucianism (Bao, 2022). To the contrary, as the main themes of this analytical research manuscript, School of Legalism, mainly synthesised by Han Fei (Yang, 2015), and School of Machiavellianism, initiated by Italian Renaissance political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli (Chen, 2018), have magnificently impacted the way of bureaucratic administration of the classical Chinese society and realistic power maximising among a diversification of European empires in history respectively and certain Realpolitik-relevant confrontation that may remain observable instead of being perished in today's world of geopolitical, geostrategic dilemma: much profound indirect ramification and variation of political philosophical legacies of School of Legalism¹ and School of Machievallianism remain scripted in the contemporary world in one way or another (Yang, 2020; Watson, 2003), notwithstanding not being all of them in absolute terms by the grace of domestic governance mechanism, and much confinement of a set of more modernising, inclusive and even homogenising international norms upon political behaviours of state actors or supreme political decision makers. Both of these two classical philosophical schools of political

science and even international studies of the embryonic stage attach considerable significance, exclusively, not to individual benevolence, righteousness, and morality in the realm of bureaucratic governance, administrations of domestic state affairs, and judgements and managements of interstate affairs, but rather proportionally to power supremacy and maximising of the supreme sate decision makers, stringent laws and regulations, rewards and punishments combined in accordance with the degree, depth and nature of consistency between the behaviours of bureaucratic officials and results of their bureaucratic performance (Yang, 2020; Watson, 2003), and even the tricky implementation and performance of flexible tactical deception, if possible, in the realm of complicated, uncertain, unpredictable *Realpolitik* affairs, foreign and domestic alike, partly because they presuppose that human nature can be labeled not as benign, non-vicious² instead of evil, selfish and transactional mostly for the sake of narrow self-interests, especially in a Realpolitik-based political arena (Watson, 2003)³.

To a large degree, rarely had the historical trajectory of sociocultural, political and human development been automatically advancing in a harmonious fashion that School of Confucianism and School of Platonism once designed and conceptualised. Instead, Niccolo Machiavelli and Han Fei explicitly observed and even facilitated the otherwise. Some relevant examples can be adduced: throughout the ancient Greek history, the official diplomatic ties were established at a city-state level, and the formation of alliances, declarations of war and peace settlements and so forth being conducted by city-state envoys and the basic objective of all these states in their foreign relations was to maintain the inter-city-state equilibrium (Wang, 1995). Two chief reasons for such Realpolitik equilibrium can be interpreted from the domestic level and interstate level: from the domestic perspective, rulers

¹ It is worthy of mentioning that Professor Burton Watson from the Chapter of Introduction of *Han Feizi: Basic Writings* (2003, 4-5) argues that “Han Feizi, who is a representative of the school of philosophy known as the Legalist or Realist school, is its perfecter instead of the inventor of Legalism”. It may be reasonable to observe that most classical Chinese philosophical systems may pertain to issues of political science in one way or another, but School of Legalism predominates as it exclusively evaluates how to accentuate the strength of the state. “Like Machiavelli’s famous treatise, to which it has often been compared, Han Feizi’s work is a handbook for the prince in ancient Chinese rulers” (Waston, 2003: 5).

² Watson (2003) assumes that legal thought in general, and that of Han Fei in particular, is marked by a pessimistic opinion of human nature with profound displeasure.

³ It is worthy of mentioning that Burton Watson from the Chapter of

Introduction of *Han Feizi: Basic Writings* (2003, 6) argues that the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring State Period witnessed a series of administrative reforms; “these administrative reforms, along with technological advances in agriculture and warfare, allowed the feudal hegemonic states to annex their fairly weak neighbouring states or to push back the frontiers of China and open up new lands for cultivation”. Some of rulers drafted law codes for the governance of internal affairs, but “no one was in a position to enforce a code of international law, the relations between states were marked by intrigue, deceit, and ruthless pursuit of self-interest” Waston (2003, 6). It is fair to observe that this kind of historical background of unethical interstate warfare and the ideas for the sake of rulership are tantamount to that of the historical circumstances of Roman Republic and Roman Empire, alongside with neighbouring states of principalities, and the ideas, dismissing morality and kindness and upholding necessary force and deception if possible, initiated by Niccolo Machiavelli during the Renaissance Period.

of these states were cognisant of the fact that their authority is endowed by their own strength and none tend to engage in any unprofitable or non-beneficial struggle that might drain their human or material resources. From the interstate level, any political change in one of the states may generate the ensuing balance of power, threatening the survival of the other states (Wang 1995).

To some extent, part of interest-and-power-seeking politico-economic development has been on a track of a non-harmonious, competitive, adversarial and confrontational fashion that both School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism theoretically recapitulate and encapsulate. Likewise, it is fair not to meta-cognitively ignore the notion that the variability, unpredictability and uncertainty of complicated, nebulous human nature and combination of a diversification of irregular, narrow self-interests make the proponents of human nature as inherently benign, which School of Confucianism interprets (Bao, 2022), proportionally discredited and at least epistemologically problematic and falsifiable from the logic of consequence. Realistically speaking, excessive emphasis over morality and ethics alone could not necessarily engender desirable ramifications as intentionally anticipated, and instead, provided with uncharacteristically intrastate and interstate competition, confrontation, and conflict, the philosophy of *Realpolitik* and realism theory within the international relations theoretical framework seem more pronounced and may generate a sort of inward-looking nationalism in the research, administration and prediction of international studies, global human development and inter-civilisational, international affairs. On the other hand, it could be acknowledged that those kinds of their theoretical explanations as the theoretic instruments may remain observable and applicable to a peculiar set of *Realpolitik*-relevant phenomena concerning international-studies-relevant affairs in competitive, antithetical and even confrontational fashions. It is under this grand circumstance and realistic perspective that both School of Machiavellianism by Niccolo Machiavelli from classical Western philosophy and School of Legalism by Han Fei from classical Chinese philosophy are worthy of rational, dialectical and future-oriented rediscovery and reconsideration as the discourse of *Realpolitik* remains highly proportional nowadays and the task of further establishing an interdisciplinary, theoretical formula, mechanism and framework in response to a whole host of transnational studies-relevant conundrums, for

instance, the underlying representative case of Ukraine-Russia geopolitical security dilemma, and that of the US-China structural competition and dilemma, has never been more institutionally and strategically urgent notwithstanding the intrinsic heterogeneity in definitions and interpretations on the nature, scope and function of *Realpolitik*, rule of public law among School of Machiavellianism, School of Legalism, and their unexploited implications in a contemporary era of multipolarisation, integration, fragmentation and anarchy combined due to the disparities in geographic circumstance and the advancement of politico-economic paradigms and so forth.

This analytical research manuscript seeks to pay heed to investigating the following consequential theoretical research questions. To begin with, when it comes to School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism, what kinds of their philosophical, theoretical notions can be dialectically discovered and abstractly inherited for the sake of well explaining and utilising power in the realm of international studies? Second, in accordance with Machiavellianism and Legalism, when it comes to their shared philosophical concepts of *Realpolitik* on state affairs and international affairs, of what theoretic spotlights of merits and theoretical demerits can be dialectically discovered and should we be conscious in line with modern international affairs in today's world of multipolarisation, integration, fragmentation and anarchy? Last but not least, what potential, future direction for analytical research and inspirational enlightenment over international studies can be unveiled associated with School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism?

Incidentally, it is of much necessity to emphasise that this analytical research essay does not pertain to any singular hypothesis-testing research, nor historical study and historical analysis (albeit in some ways some historical circumstances may be briefly taken advantage of as the special supporting evidence in support of necessary arguments and representative, empirical case studies), nor any singular policy analysis for any pragmatic purposes. Rather, this analytical academic manuscript does attach much importance to singularly theoretical integration of a diversification of scholarships and theoretical arguments, and seek to generate fresh, interdisciplinary academic scopes as regards potential merits and controversial demerits of those scholarships and academic archives concerning School of Machiavellianism by Niccolo

Machiavelli from classical Western political philosophy and School of Legalism by Han Fei from classical Chinese political thought and thus try to unveil a kind of, probably, promising direction for future interdisciplinary, inter-philosophical research over international studies analysis, notwithstanding no coverage of all important, underlying issues owing to limited research volume and limited volume of research data and comprehensive empirical formulas.

For the sake of significantly helping a whole host of research analysts and intellectuals within the realm of international studies, this analytical manuscript could be compartmentalised into several parts as follows. To begin with, this research manuscript seeks to quantify, structuralise and conceptualise the theoretical debates by scholarships over the scopes and natures of School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism as regards *Realpolitik* and political philosophy in particular, and evaluates the potential, intrinsic interrelation between theirs and realist theoretical framework of international relations theory. Furthermore, this analytical manuscript evaluates epistemological and methodological legacies and concerns regarding their intrinsic paradoxical merits and demerits of the side effects of Machiavellianism and Legalism, with the representative case studies of the underlying Russia-Ukraine geopolitical security dilemma and the remaining US-China complicated, competitive relations in the Biden Era, inheriting from the Trump Era, and, afterwards, tries to engender fairly thought-provoking insights on the critique of implementation of Machiavellianism and Legalism in international-studies-relevant issues. Ultimately, this manuscript seeks to facilitate probable promising theoretical orientation for future interdisciplinary theoretical research over School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism beyond *Realpolitik* philosophy and international studies in a more modernising, lawful society.

2. INTEGRATED SCHOLARSHIPS OF LITERATURE REVIEWS ON THEORETICAL DEBATES ABOUT SCHOOL OF MACHIAVELLIANISM AND SCHOOL OF LEGALISM

Philosophical Role of School of Machiavellianism in Realpolitik-Power Nexus and in Shape of International Affairs

In compliance with Henry Kissinger, former US national security advisor, *Realpolitik*-foreign policy involves in

calculations of power and national interest and the practice of *Realpolitik* avoids warfare and arms races merely under the circumstance that the major state actors of an international system are inclined to adjust their relations in accordance with evolving and varying circumstances or restrained by a sort of system of shared values, or both (Kissinger, 1994). It could be observed that from the perspective of Italy's diplomatic practices, Machiavelli's political philosophical concepts were the product of a particular era of the Renaissance Period of *Realpolitik* and religious force, and a considerable proportion of Machiavelli's philosophical concepts are the organic amalgamation of authentic political course and practice of *Realpolitik* amid the Renaissance Period.

What is the authentic theoretical substance behind School of Machiavellianism as part of modern political philosophy initiated by Niccolo Machiavelli as arguably one of the most significant realist political thinkers on a par with the status of Aristotle and Cicero as the idealist political thinkers, comparatively speaking? There may be a trajectory for alienation of Machiavelli from School of Machiavellianism, “his eponymous doctrine” and the realist appraisal of Machiavelli by Chinese scholars echoes this trend, who may juxtapose School of Machiavellianism with “statecraft” or “a political rationale for government” (Wang, 1995: 90). Nevertheless, Scholar Wang Tingzhi argues that School of Machiavellianism is literally the quintessential principle of modern political theory in realistic terms, rather than a doctrine of political rule in real practice (Wang, 1995).

To begin with, Machiavelli-proposing notion that “the end justifies the means” generates enormous controversy among academia (Wang, 1995: 93). School of Machiavellianism is thus viewed as something comparable to a kind of deliberate betrayal, but Wang Tingzhi (1995) contends that such a kind of partial, inaccurate juxtaposition stems from disregarding the historical contexts and circumstances, causing the failure to acquire a deepening understanding of an integrated concept of School of Machiavellianism by substance. “A wise mind will never censure anyone for employing extraordinary means to establish a kingdom or constitute a republic. It is well that, when the act accuses him, the result should excuse him; and when the result is good, as in the case of Ramulus, it will always absolve him from blame” (Machiavelli, 1996: 138-139). Moreover, provided that the distinctive characteristics and

substances behind the end-means-justification modern political theory discussed by Niccolo Machiavelli can be carefully extrapolated, then the justifiable preconditions could be mentioned as follows: it could be deduced that the means justifies the end that must be justifiable as the very important prerequisite. Scholar Wang Tingzhi (1995, 94) observes that when it comes to all aspects of Machiavelli's philosophy, and from Italy's national aspirations within that historical context, it could be observed that “the end sought by Machiavelli was equivalent to the unity and independence of a republic Italy”. It could be further observed that the notion that was given by Machiavelli in Chapter 26 of *The Prince* to deliver Italy from the barbarians may be regarded as an emphatic manifestation of Machiavelli's advocacy of national unity and independence, which is in the interests of such a supreme end (Wang Tingzhi, 1995; Machiavelli, 1998). Moreover, Wang Tingzhi (1995) emphasises that the end specified above thus is a kind of exemplification of the fundamental principle of end-means justification in terms of foreign relations, and it has to do with the pragmatism and effectiveness of strategies that are of that importance: “the public interests of a state constituted the ultimate end” (Wang, 1995: 95). Observably, it could be under the grand circumstance about the relationship between states in a Renaissance Italy that that generated Machiavelli's epistemology that the end justifies the means.

Furthermore, Niccolo Machiavelli's classical realist political theory as regards end-means nexus may meanwhile unveil the potential, intrinsic, relational paradigm between School of Machiavellianism and classical realism of international relations theory, and that can unveil coherence to the realist feature: “if human affairs are indeed characterised by groupism, egoism, and power-centrism, then politics is probably to be diametrically and non-hierarchically confrontational unless there is some central authority to enforce order” (Wohlforth, 2010: 135). Even if a state can be fairly sure that no alternative state tends to strengthen itself militarily on this day, there will be zero guarantee against the possibility that one might do so next day and there is no empirical reason not to establish a theoretical juxtaposition between School of Machiavellianism and *Realpolitik* philosophy, whose substance could be to some extent tantamount to power politics, which may be tantamount to the intersection of groupism and egoism in an anarchical environment and afterwards a politics of power and security permeates international relations (Wohlforth, 2010: 133;

Keohane, 1984; Frankel, 1996; Mearsheimer, 2001). Neorealist international relations scholar Kenneth Waltz (1979, 186) argued that “the web of social and political life is spun out of inclinations and incentives, deterrent threats and punishments”. To some extent, School of Machiavellianism helps to amplify much room for discovering the nature and scope of modern political phenomenon rather than religious supremacy that permeated the Medieval Age or the Renaissance Period, especially the substance of Realpolitik extrapolating and encapsulating power politics, and Machiavelli's analysis realistically examines and evaluates the principle of modern political theory of power politics in general notwithstanding limited case examples from the Western Hemisphere amid the Renaissance Period as well as the Era of Ancient Roman Empire, which may be inapplicable to the contemporary political world.

Methodologically speaking, with regards to case studies in support of *Realpolitik* theoretical arguments, Niccolo Machiavelli's comparisons between oriental states and occidental states facilitate to initiate Machiavelli's modern political theory, quantifying and conceptualising and theorising their different state structures (Chen, 2018). A high proportion of scholars within academia allege that Niccolo Machiavelli was believed to have inaugurated a modern interpretation of “a distinctive European tradition of politics”, since “Machiavelli's focus on France and the Ottoman empire as modern archetypes inaugurated a highly influential tradition” (Rubiés, 2005: 117). Thierry Hentsch (1992, 64-65) demonstrates that Machiavelli's modern political philosophy features the model which inundated “in the classification of political regimes”, and would afterwards “nourish the concept of Oriental despotism”. Differently, Professor Chen Haoyu (2018), from School of Governance of Peking University, tends to take the validity of this historiography under much question and to reconsider Machiavelli's juxtapositions between Western regimes and Eastern regimes. That is partly because when Niccolo Machiavelli seems to denounce the oriental despotic regimes, his discussions are accompanied by part of considerations corresponding to Roman Empire, and his criticisms have invariably been translated into a thorough criticism of Roman Empire (Chen, 2018). In *Orientalism and Islam*, Michael Curtis (2009, 54-55) and Chen Haoyu (2018, 234) write that it was Machiavelli who made “perhaps the sharpest, earliest and most influential” remarks on the discussion between Western and

Eastern systems, embodied by France and Ottoman empire respectively, for the latter “represented the Orient where royal power was not restrained by law”. Tracing the genesis of the notion of the oriental mode of social and political production, Perry Anderson (1974, 462) highlighted, in *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, that theoretic juxtaposition and contrast of European state structures and Asian state structures “formed a long tradition from Machiavelli and Bodin onward”; it indeed comports with the new renaissance or revival of political theory (Chen, 2018). In compliance with with John M. Najemy (2009, 145), Niccolo Machiavelli’s originality and novelty result from his capability to deconstruct all “myths, assumptions, preconceptions, and old stereotypes”, including those “with which contemporaries continued to view East and West, Europe and Asia”. John M. Najemy (2009) emphasises that this quality of Machiavelli’s political philosophy is of much great value as certain classical preconceptions and dichotomies would soon re-surge. Like Najemy, Lucette Valensi (1993, 58-60) in parallel seeks to sever Machiavelli from the long historiography of oriental despotism, because Machiavelli’s words “had to be skewed for him to be made the founder of a tradition”. For instance, the dichotomy Niccolo Machiavelli establishes between Turkey and France is by no means benign and vicious in absolute terms and “it is more complex than it has generally been made out to be” (Valensi, 1993: 58-60). However, albeit in some ways Najemy and Valensi have critically evaluated the habit of treating Machiavelli’s depiction on Asia as the herald of orientalism, they may still fall short of pointing out clearly the authentic substance and nature as well as dialectical implications for Niccolo Machiavelli’s argumentation and core inclination (Chen, 2018). It is necessary to emphasise that Niccolo Machiavelli associated himself with the European continent in the first place, and occasionally chose Asia as a counterpart to convey the lessons that Machiavelli realistically discovered to the contemporaneous Renaissance Europeans (Chen, 2018). Nevertheless, this counterpart is not simply employed to highlight the superiority of Europe; rather, “Asia is invoked as a more sensible object to measure the corruption of Europe” for which Roman Empire was proportionally responsible (Chen, 2018: 243). Without epitomising Machiavelli as the modern critic of the conception of oriental despotism, it is more appropriate to assert that some aspects of Machiavelli’s Realpolitik political philosophy pays heeds to the deleterious effects and repercussions caused by the Roman Empire (Chen,

2018).

Moreover, Niccolo Machiavelli sought to prove his modern political theory over end-means nexus and Realpolitik formula with the contrastive cases of different state structures of Turkey and France in early history, and they seem to act as strong evidence of Machiavelli’s orientalist implications, Machiavelli (1998, 17) states that,

Principalities have been governed in two diverse modes: either by one prince, and all the others servants who as ministers help govern the kingdom by his favour and appointment; or by a prince and by barons who hold that rank not by favour of the lord but rather by antiquity of bloodlines. In our times, the examples of these two diverse kinds of government are the Turk and the king of France. The entire monarchy of the Turk is governed by one lord; the others are his servants. Dividing his kingdom into sanjaks, he sends different administrators to them, and he changes and varies them as he likes. But the king of France is placed in the midst of an ancient multitude of lords, acknowledged in that state by their subjects and loved by them: they have their privileges, and the king cannot take them away without danger to himself.

From the above-mentioned statements, Michael Curtis (2009) argues that the existence of an aristocracy that retains some independence and acts as an intermediary power between the prince and people is believed to play a key role in thwarting the excessive expansion of the prince’s power and thus preventing the entire state from sinking into despotism. It could be argued that this kind of philosophical conception could meanwhile be a consequential epistemological prerequisite to the establishment of preliminary democratic institutions and mechanism towards republicanism that Machiavelli aspired to achieve as a justifiable purpose, even with classical *Realpolitik* methodology in real practice in the political arena. Nevertheless, Chen Haoyu (2018, 236) mentions that it is important to notice that rarely does Machiavelli unveil his preference nor “make any value judgement in his statement”. Distinct from Montesquieu or Tocqueville who frames the aristocracy as an indispensable intermediary power, Machiavelli holds a rather critical standpoint as regards the relationship between independent aristocracy and maintaining of republicanism, and

ridicules the existence of an independent aristocracy or a feudal system as zero guarantee for political liberty and republicanism (Lucchese, 2015). When it comes to the relationship between empire and liberty, on the one hand, Machiavelli admires Roman Empire and its virtue in one way or another; on the other hand, his being a sober political thinker learning much from history, despite the European history mostly, it could be observed for Machiavelli’s profound displeasure or begrudging acquiescence towards what may come from an empire: oppression, corruption, and liberty deficiency (Chen, 2018). That may be because Machiavelli’s ultimate purpose seeks to establish a state of republicanism, which absolutely contradicts with oppression, corruption and liberty deficiency. From Chapter 55 of *Discourses on First Decade of Titus Livy* (1996), here is Machiavelli’s notion (1996, 111) that for any republic to maintain a political and uncorrupt way of life, it cannot “endure that any citizen of theirs either be or live in the usage of a gentleman”. It could be observed that Machiavelli holds the view that “Republic is the most ideal regime type and only in a republic can liberty be maintained and flourished” (Viroli, 1990: 152).

Furthermore, regarding Realpolitik philosophy for the sake of state survival and security in the implementation of foreign affairs in the Machiavellian sense, from Chapter Three of *The Prince*, Machiavelli (2019, 7) argues that when states are acquired in a country with different languages, customs, or laws, huge fortune and energy “are needed to hold them, and one of the greatest and most real helps would be that he who has acquired them should go and reside there”, because this would make his supreme position more secure and durable, “as it has made that of the Turk in Greece”, who, notwithstanding all the other measures taken by him for holding that state, had he not settled there, “would not have been able to keep it”. Moreover, regarding Realpolitik philosophy for the sake of state survival and security surrounded by an anarchical environment in the Machiavellian sense, Machiavelli (2019, 8-9) argues that again, the Prince who holds a country differing in the above respects ought to accentuate himself “as the head and defender of his less powerful neighbours”, and to attenuate “the more powerful amongst them”, to ensure that no foreign aggressor as powerful as himself shall, by any accident, acquire any chance and foundation for there is a high probability that instability will be “introduced by those who are discontented, either through excess of ambition or through fear”. Concerning these

statements by Machiavelli, it could be argued that Machiavelli’s political philosophy is highly and inextricably intertwined with his realistic observation on how the European political empires and states in early years realistically balanced their state powers and sought to make national primacy for the sake of absolute security and dominance in a Realpolitik arena, and the notion of political philosophy that the end justifies the means is deeply rooted in this specific political background and circumstance.

Philosophical Role of School of Legalism in Realpolitik-Power Nexus in Shaping of Relationship between Domestic Governance and Foreign Affairs

As the comparable Chinese-version School of Machiavellianism, School of Legalism, summatively and collectively proposed by Han Fei, administratively, bureaucratically and even conceptually, exerted enormous influences over realist political discourse and trajectory throughout the ancient Chinese history, especially during the dynastic epoch, and even beyond (Waston, 2003). From the theoretical perspectives of School of Legalism that Han Fei represents, the singular position to which it proportionately attaches much considerable significance lies in the reform of bureaucratic workings and rule of public law in services of maximising national power (Watson, 2003), national interest, centralised power of the ruler and indomitable military forces with little or at least minimum regard to human development index and civic satisfaction index that the contemporary world necessitates. It could be emphasised that whilst this may be arguably one of the most falsifiable theoretic, philosophical notions that Han Fei presents from the contemporary perspectives in a more democratic, modernising society, it may abstractly set an architectonic preliminary *grundriss* for legalist advancement and centralisation of *Realpolitik*-oriented power in services of the supreme decision-makers over the course of the Chinese dynastic period. It could be observed that part of core conceptual substances from Han-Fei-relevant School of Legalism can be extracted: 1) the significance of selection of omnipotent and competent personnel in critique of Confucian morality-oriented criteria in response to the Realpolitik workings; and 2) the significance of establishment of public law in services of supreme rulers and public national interests in avoidance of private scheme and private interests in response to a number of underlying and potential Realpolitik conundrums.

When it comes to the abstract theoretical and philosophical implications of importance of selection of omnipotent and competent personnel and individuals in critique of Confucian morality-oriented criteria, considerable academic research has been conducted for those who attach much considerable significance to School of Legalism, which is an inevitable part of classical Chinese intellectual history. From *A Han Feizian Worry with Confucian Meritocracy - and a Non-Moral Alternative*, Eirik Harris (2020) highlights much contemporary debate as regards meritocracy and modernises Han Fei's concerns to critically evaluate an application of Confucian meritocracy. Eirik Harris observes that Han Fei's philosophical thoughts proportionately contrast with Confucian philosophical concepts that “1) politically relevant merit is necessarily tied to moral merit, that 2) virtuous individuals who possess the relevant moral merits can reliably be identified even by those who are not themselves virtuous, that 3) moral cultivation is actually possible, and that 4) those qualities that make someone virtuous can reliably be ascertained” (Morgan, 2021: 9-10; Harris, 2020). The virtues in the Confucian sense are theoretically challenging to be inculcated and empirically identified (Morgan, 2021). For virtue may be unable to serve as backbone for meritocracy in the arena of *Realpolitik*, Eirik Harris (2020) emphasises Han Fei's political merit in substitute for moral merit on a basis of the notion that the singular point, which literally matters, is how competent an individual candidate may be in the fulfilments of specific tasks and is to examine singularly targeted criteria without being distracted by some irrelevant alternatives, such as morality. That may be reasonable to point out that certain validity of this philosophical notion stems from the realistic criteria on whether and how to recruit substantively politically and bureaucratically virtuous people in the field of *Realpolitik* structure and arena. In other words, as a result of recruiting those who are competent by substance rather than those who are morally virtuous by surface within the realm of bureaucratic administration and domestic governance, that tends to yield a solid foundation for a powerful, fundamental government itself (Morgan, 2021). Moreover, it may be understandable to consider Confucian meritocracy as an important orientation of determining meritocratic administration and leadership at an individual level and yet legalism offers a far more politically pragmatic, accessible way of establishing a secure, strong state than probably wishful thinking of moral cultivation of supreme rulers and ministers alone in the field of the very complicated, unpredictable and

variable *Realpolitik* structure, arena and discourse. As Eirik Harris (2020) mentions, the realistic historical significance and value of Han Fei's political meritocracy and his Legalism prior to Emperor Qin's realistic unification of a chaotic, divisive Chinese society China can be an exemplification of Han Fei's philosophical conception on why the useful ministers and frameworks can play a realist role in the face of realist political tasks (Morgan, 2021; Harris, 2020).

Furthermore, it could be argued that the realistic importance of selection of omnipotent people in critique of Confucian morality-oriented criteria may be indistinguishable from the significant nature, necessity, sustainability and dynamics of establishment of public law in services of supreme national decision makers and public national interests in avoidance of undesirable private schemes and private interests. In compliance with Han Fei, those who can eliminate private scheme and galvanise the ministers and bureaucratic officials to uphold the public law tend to witness the security and stability and order of the state (Han, 2003). For the realist sake in the *Realpolitik* arena, Han Fei himself asserts that at the domestic level, the selection, recruitment and appointment of those who profoundly appreciate what may be beneficial to the nation and grasp the system of public laws and regulations, in bureaucratic administrations and managements, will make the supreme national ruler distant from deception by lies and falsehoods; for the realist sake in the *Realpolitik* arena, at the interstate level, the selection, recruitment and appointment of those who profoundly appreciate what may be beneficial to the nation and can weigh issues properly in the administrations and managements of foreign affairs will help the supreme ruler to be distant from deception associated with the relations with the foreign powers (Han, 2003). In addition, provided that there may be zero obvious faulty statement for Han Fei in claiming almost all individuals are selfishness-oriented, then it could be reasoned that the state being an apparatus that functions, which is distinguishable from the only subjective desire of the individual, may be a beneficial or at least necessary mechanism and structure within certain contexts (Morgan, 2021); that may be because the state is institutionally capable of monitoring for the well-being of the individual and, ultimately, the chronic stability of the state (Han, 2003). There lies in a fundamental, intrinsic state-individual nexus and dynamics that the diverse interests of the individuals must be organically architectonic part of the collective interests of the state, epistemologically

and dialectically speaking. Furthermore, it may meanwhile be more preferable for the interest of the state, to some extent, to embrace the interest of the public demographics and the supreme political decision maker then manipulates the interest of the individual to fulfill the interest of the state which culminates in benefiting the public demographics (Morgan, 2021).

Nevertheless, there seem to be tremendous misconceptions and misrepresentations on School of Legalism as posited by Han Fei from the contemporary scholars, notably from the Western academia without taking Chinese historical context into full consideration probably because their working intuitions may be misguided by decades of singularly libertarian values influencing academia (Morgan, 2021), and part of their highlight on freedom and autonomy may be to some extent of much validity and yet of that irrelevance to the historical and philosophical substance of Han Fei’s legalist doctrine. Supposedly, given that Han Fei’s political philosophy is deeply considered within the perspectives of historical materialism and dialectics, Han Fei’s philosophical theory may be in no ways an oppressive, punitive rule in absolute terms; instead, it could be defined as what may be considered well-ordered and considerate of the public sphere in general. Furthermore, Kaleb Morgan (2021) contends that certain scholars misinterpret the function of state consequentialism in Han Fei’s doctrine: state consequentialism is by no means completely tantamount to the inaccurate comparison of Han Fei’s legalist doctrine to tyrannical despotism. Kaleb Morgan (2021, 1) briefly argues for the relevancy of Legalism in the dynastic Chinese period as a synthesis of not merely Legalist dogma but a relevant tendency to adopt for possible structures in the bureaucratic workings. Additionally, it could be observed that there may be an alternative misinterpretation that the benefit of the state is antithetical to the civic well-being of the public. Whilst the observation that Han Fei may be epitomised as a state consequentialist and advocating for the public interest of the state actor over the individual ones may to a certain degree rationalise such an understandable analysis, this kind of inadequate analysis remains one-dimensional out of his specific historical circumstance rather than multidimensional within that. To the contrary, in compliance with Kaleb Morgan (2021), by the grace of research made by Eirik Harris, not singularly does Han-Fei-proposed School of Legalism remain applicable to managements of public interest of the state but relevant to

the benefit for any form of government, meritocratic and non-meritocratic alike (Morgan, 2021). On the other hand, the implication behind the above-mentioned statements may be in support of Han Fei’s enduring realistic functionality in the realm of Realpolitik phenomena, Realpolitik discourse and Realpolitik-relevant challenges that confront the state.

Figuratively speaking, it is not dialectical and materialistic to evaluate Han Fei’s political philosophy in isolation. Instead, School of Legalism, which highly proportionally pays heeds to the theoretical nature and application and implementation of *Realpolitik* philosophy amid domestic bureaucratic administration and governance and interstate affairs, may be the summative synthesis of most classical Chinese philosophical schools. In accordance with *The Right and The Expedient: A Warring States Dialectic*, Peter Moody (2016) defines School of Legalism that Han Fei represents as a kind of organic convergence of classical Chinese philosophy by mentioning that Han Fei utilises the important intellectual thinkers at his disposal by selectively adapting some of their philosophical concepts, especially Confucius, Lao Tzu, and Mencius, to School of Legalism. In response to Confucius, Han Fei jettisons Confucian moral cultivation for the sake of internal conditioning of individuals but emphasises the probability and feasibility of non-moral cultivation in the wake of manipulating the human nature with rewards and punishments combined (Morgan, 2021; Moody, 2016). From Lao Tzu, part of Han Fei’s interpretations may be influenced by the Taoist proposition that humans are by no means guided by a metaphysical presence albeit in some ways Lao Tzu offers an ontological point toward the metaphysical interpretation of humans in the nature. Differently, Han Fei sticks to the ontological presence of the state in a broadening sense rather than nature in the Taoist sense (Morgan, 2021; Moody, 2016). Furthermore, in response to Mencius, Han Fei acknowledges that the individual behaviour varies in accordance with the occurrence of times: normally good times may generate fairly benign behaviours, or the opposite may be the case, too (Morgan, 2021; Moody, 2016). Moreover, Peter Moody (2016) points out that Han Fei contends against the philosophical notion of Mencius that rarely could utility be the foundation of a collection of philosophy. Peter Moody (2016, 134) argues, “the quest for utility must be guided by or embedded in some set of considerations transcending the advantages to be gained, an end worth pursuing even at the cost of advantages”.

Comparatively speaking, this sort of utility-oriented philosophy may be comparable to Machiavelli's notion that the end justifies the means at all costs so long as the end is justifiable.

Briefly speaking, on a basis of academic observation thus far, corresponding to Realpolitik arena and Realpolitik challenges, it could be recognised that School of Legalism offers more than Confucianism as being a politically and bureaucratically realistic, attainable, and pragmatic framework to implement (Morgan, 2021). Judging from those statements, it could be further extrapolated in terms of Han Fei's Realpolitik-and-utilitarianism-based notion of international relations that two figurative consequential points are inextricably intertwined in services of national interest and national strength alone: a) diplomacy by powerful state and force and b) diplomacy by the authoritarian ruler without any private scheme and private interest (Cai, 2006). To begin with, a powerful state is the very realist prerequisite to the realist objective of taking advantage of diplomacy by strong force, which entails military force, economic force and even public force combined. Additionally, realistically speaking, powerful force is unlikely to be established without a solid basis of rule of public law, and reform of public law, and performance and implementations of competent state rulers, as well as senior ministers, in avoidance of private schemes that are at affront with public, state interest (Cai, 2006). That can be viewed as a product of social chaos and interstate warfare amid the complicated Warring-State Period when singularly the maximum Realpolitik-oriented strategies functioned. Furthermore, it could be observed that power of domestic governance by the authoritarian ruler can help to dismiss much over-dependence upon the external force that may thwart national interest (Cai, 2006). Realistically speaking, as the public interests of an authoritarian supreme decision maker in the bureaucratic, administrative and structural sense rather than in the political, ideological, and temperamental sense are the summative interests of the state, and states remain the dominant variable for development of diplomatic affairs, the philosophical implications of diplomacy by an authoritarian supreme decision makers may be matched with desirable expectation for avoidance of anarchical structure among the states.

3. DIALECTICAL AND COMPARATIVE CRITIQUE OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL MERITS AND DEMERITS AS REGARDS SCHOOL OF MACHIAVELLIANISM AND SCHOOL OF LEGALISM FOR THE SAKE OF NEW INSIGHTS

Intrinsic Epistemological and Methodological Merits

As a result of discovering considerable research by a wide range of scholars and research analysts, irrespective of the validity and limitation of them for some reasons, the author of this analytical manuscript seeks to restructuralise certain philosophical legacies of Niccolo-Machiavelli-proposing School of Machiavellianism and Han-Fei-proposing School of Legalism at the methodological and epistemological levels.

To begin with, from the methodological perspective, both of them are to a large degree categorised as *Realpolitik*-oriented political philosophy on the grounds of what literally is in the realm of authentic political affairs as they really are rather than on the grounds of what ought to be in an at least normative political affairs as they are imagined to be. That kind of ground-based methodology generates the philosophical significance of the notion that just as objective backgrounds and circumstances should be the prerequisite to making conclusions and arguments, so is the case with empirical observation on a set of authentic Realpolitik phenomena and cases prior to launching political-relevant advice and judgements in services of national strength and national interest rather than making utopian, quixotic judgements and analyses out of mindset.

Furthermore, both of them epistemologically emphasise the significance of absolute political power and governance by rule of public law, which are part of classical philosophy of political science in services of supreme political ends (e.g. a. political unity and supremacy of rulers from School of Legalism of classical Chinese philosophy in the middle of Warring States Period; b. republicanism and maximum state stability and the Prince's power in front of fixed and distinctive principalities from School of Machiavellianism of classical Western philosophy in the middle of Renaissance Period) rather than irrelevant moral virtue, righteousness and benevolence that these two realist philosophical schools reject significantly from the perspectives of their defined non-functionality in response to Realpolitik arena in real practice. The political theories of both Niccolo Machiavelli and Han Fei as classical political theorists capture some elements of the political experience in

unique ways, and their works have been studied for what they discussed about the nature and foundation of law (Blahuta, 2015). For instance, the example of two prominent modes of thought presented in Machiavelli’s archives can be adduced, and the preliminary mode of Machiavelli’s thought is a straightforward recipe for preserving a powerful, secure and durable state: an insightful political science grounded both in Machiavelli’s account of human nature as self-interested and in the cyclical perspective of history (Blahuta, 2015). The alternative mode of Machiavelli’s philosophical notion is an articulation of Realpolitik, or power politics, the practice and performance of obtaining narrow political self-interest (Blahuta, 2015). To the contrary, there are a set of limitations in many of the academic and research commentaries that associate Niccolo Machiavelli’s political philosophy with classical Chinese philosophy from the Warring State Period that they singularly pay attention to the power politics mode of thought, which omits the mode of political science categorically and hierarchically, causing inaccurate misrepresentations and misinterpretation of their realist philosophy (Blahuta, 2015). In a nutshell, most of their realist philosophical concepts initiated by both Niccolo Machiavelli and Han Fei may be characteristically applicable and attainable to a series of realistic explanations of *Realpolitik* competitions and confrontations in a non-hallucinatory fashion.

Intrinsic Epistemological and Methodological Demerits

Unfortunately, neither Han Fei nor Niccolo Machiavelli offers a political philosophy that successfully recapitulates and encapsulates all political and institutional themes, antique, present and future alike, and this may be why their disciples, no matter how competent they have been, have nearly not succeeded, or they have just secured only a temporal victory based on certain limited conditions (Blahuta, 2015). The failure of these would-be supreme rulers is, at least, attributable to demerits of the texts and documents that they have consulted (Blahuta, 2015). In the first place, neither of these supreme rulers are thoroughly interested in a fully-developed bureaucratic establishment and mechanism to be ameliorated, but rather pay heed to identifying the source of the social and political discord and seeking a pragmatic remedy accessible, attainable to them at a tactical level (Blahuta, 2015). Both Niccolo Machiavelli and Han Fei, to the contrary, merely offer the *preliminary sketches* of such bureaucratic systems (Blahuta, 2015). Nevertheless, Machiavelli’s vision of rule remains of

that progressive deficiency because of his over-emphasis over the personal trait of the supreme *Prince*, whose systematic problem may be deterministic of how he formulates his advice to the supreme ruler (Blahuta, 2015). In other words, his notions proportionally fall short of attaching much importance to the thorough, comprehensive institutional reforms that a meritocratic, omnipotent supreme decision maker can monitor and operate in response to all sorts of political arenas and challenges, domestic and international alike. Furthermore, it could be argued that overemphasis on the role of philosophy of *Realpolitik* and power politics by School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism tend to amplify the probability of continuing intrastate conflicts and trust deficiency and interstate security dilemma on the basis of Realpolitik-oriented political consideration alone, highly probably causing the ossification of power competition and confrontation within the realm of geopolitical and geo-economic activities at a state level, or of misconceptions and misrepresentations on a basis of Thucydides Trap owing to the political, economic and civilisational disparities, and low probability of interstate cooperation on some targeted, shared areas that can be, and should be, quantitatively distinguishable from Realpolitik or power politics.

Representative Case I: Duality of Realpolitik and Ukraine-Russia Geopolitical Security Dilemma

The representative example of the underlying Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security dilemma can be a kind of exemplification of how excessive power politics and Realpolitik, to which School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism pay attention, pessimistically cause regional instability and regional security dilemma. In accordance with *The Impact of the Crisis in Ukraine on Global Supply Chains and China’s Economy* by the Chinese think tank, Centre of China and Globalisation (2022), the geopolitical, geostrategic security dilemma between Russia and Ukraine broke out on 24th February, 2022 when Russian supreme diplomatic decision maker Vladimir Putin issued an order for a special military operation in the eastern part of Ukraine; afterwards, the US and European Union as the adversarial state entities against Russia rapidly announced devastating sanctions against Russia. On 28 February, 2022, the Biden Administration announced that Russia’s Central Bank and “other Russian financial institutions were banned from using the US dollar for settlement, and some Russian banks were excluded from the Society for Worldwide

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Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)” (CCG, 2022: 2). This move led to a considerable portion of “Russia’s foreign reserves becoming unusable, prompting a sharp drop in the Ruble” (CCG, 2022: 2), making “nearly half of Russia’s foreign reserves (about US\$300 billion) unavailable and a plunge in the value of the Ruble”, which prompted Russia’s Central Bank to “raise its benchmark interest rate from 9.5% to 20%” (CCG, 2022: 4). On 8March, 2022, the 46th US President Joe Biden signed an executive order to ban the import of petroleum and natural gas from Russia and the European Commission meanwhile “outlined a plan to cut gas imports from Russia by two-thirds prior to the end of 2022” (CCG, 2022: 2). Three days later, US President Joe Biden announced the consecutive US plans to nullify Russia’s status of “most-favoured nation”, thereby raising the US tariffs on the Russian products by nearly nine times (CCG, 2022). Correspondingly, three days later (on 14March, 2022), the European Union, following the political step taken by the Biden Administration, meanwhile launched an announcement of the withdrawal of “most-favoured nation” trade status with Russian Federation (CCG, 2022). On the other hand, without much trivial probability of showing any diffidence singularly from the Realpolitik consideration, Russia announced “a list of over 200 banned export products in areas including technology, telecommunications, medical equipment, transportation and agricultural machinery” (CCG, 2022: 3). Russia categorised “48 states and regions as the unfriendly ones”, demanding the repayment of “Ruble-denominated loans” and “blacklisted 59 multinational corporations”, including the technological corporations like Apple, Microsoft, IBM, the automobile corporations like Volkswagen, Porsche, Toyota, and miscellaneous corporations and industries like IKEA, Shell, McDonald’s, and H&M (CCG, 2022: 3). Meanwhile, Ukraine, with the backing of the US, EU, and NATO, put up strong resistance, and “a total of 28 NATO members, led by the US”, have continued the task of continuously furnishing Ukraine with military weapons (CCG, 2022: 11)⁴. Judging from those political behaviours, it could be observed that much Realpolitik consideration and power politics have an strongly-galvanising role to play in multidimensionally influencing the adversarial,

confrontational dynamics and paradigms among Ukraine, Russia, the European Union and the United States, and much maximum improbability of regional, interstate *detente* and diplomatic reapproachment within a short period.

Albeit in some ways the end justifies the means, this sort of Realpolitik-oriented-only calculation put forward by the relevant supreme leaders that both Realist School of Machiavellianism and Realist School of Legalism emphasise at the theoretical level can give rises to the likelihood of security and economic dilemma and zero winner for relevant state actors. Since the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security crisis at the economic level, the US capital markets and European stock markets have plummeted rapidly. On 25February, 2022 and 11March, 2022, the three consequential “New York stock indexes - Dow Jones, NASDAQ and Standard & Poor’s - suffered cumulative decline of 3.27%, 6.21% and 4.11% respectively” (CCG, 2022: 1). On the European side, Europe’s comparable stock indexes - “the FTSE 100, Germany’s DAX and France’s CAC40 suffered cumulative declines of 4.46%, 6.45% and 7.29%, respectively”, far larger blows than those experienced in the US (CCG, 2022: 1). On the Russian side, Goldman Sachs “raised its forecast for Russia’s inflation of 2022” (from 5% to 17%) and “lowered its GDP growth” (from 2% to -7%) (CCG, 2022). A survey released by Central Bank of Russian Federation on 10March, 2022 reports that Russian GDP is predicted to decline by 8% in 2022 (CCG, 2022). The deteriorating continuation of the underlying Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security dilemma has negatively exacerbated the global capital markets and currency markets (CCG, 2022). Likewise, the author of this analytical manuscript would predict that global economic and financial deterioration will be even far-reaching and disruptive in civics to all targeted state actors and international players if this kind of geopolitical, geostrategic confrontation, which should have been prevented through comprehensive diplomatic measures beyond Realpolitik consideration and methodology, continues within 2022. This geopolitical, Realpolitik case supports the argument that the potential side effects of Machiavellianism and Legalism over the course of

⁴ Additionally, throughout this Ukraine crisis, NATO itself confronts security dilemma and NATO has announced no official plan to deploy troops to Ukraine or to “establish a no-fly zone” (CCG, 2022: 13). On the Ukraine side, Ukraine as a state actor find it difficult to join in NATO membership and “probably

national security can be guaranteed if Ukraine does not join NATO” (CCG, 2022: 13).

implementation and performance should not be ignored.

If the relevant individual supreme decision makers conceptualise the underlying, complicated Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security crisis beyond the singular notion of political philosophy that the ends justifies the means, the idea of discovering certain forward-looking methodologies to solving international-affairs-relevant issues necessitates the task of seeking the core genesis and the root cause, other than symptom, of the occurrence between relevant state actors just like Ukraine and Russia. To some extent, the intrinsic substance of the underlying, complicated Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security crisis may be the product of both the geopolitical, geostrategic, Realpolitik consideration for US hegemonic status to stimulate NATO to unveil the infringement upon “Russia’s security buffer, and Russia’s traditional geopolitical outlook triggering the search for a buffer zone in its regional neighbourhood” (CCG, 2022: 11). Associate Professor Roy Anthony Rogers (2022) at University of Malaya demonstrates that the origins can be traced back to the historical period when the USSR-US bipolar system concluded at the end of 1991, and that disintegration inadvertently contributed to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance against the military threat from NATO, established in May 1951 by the USSR alongside East-Central European state actors “such as Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia” (Rogers, 2022: 20). As the Cold War discontinued, no longer could the Soviet Union have much dominant military and political influence to sustain the Warsaw Pact, and then USSR supreme leader Mikhail Gorbachev had the inclination to dissolve the organisation, with NATO’s non-written promise of no eastward expansion of NATO forces (Rogers, 2022). To the contrary, since the conclusion of the bipolar system between the USSR and the US, NATO’s acceptance of 14 new members has contradicted to its non-written promise of no further expansion (Rogers, 2022). It could be observed that that kind of inconsistency is part of the product of Machiavellian tactical deception based on Realpolitik consideration only on defining Russia as a potential geopolitical, geo-strategic aggressor. Sequentially, Russia considers NATO’s membership expansion process a threat to “national sovereignty and territorial integrity” (Rogers, 2022: 21). Likewise, that is a paralleled part of the product of Machiavellian Realpolitik calculation articulated in *The Prince*--that the Russia’s sovereignty and territorial survival free from neighbouring threats may be the supreme

ends--on defining NATO as an enduring threat of inconsistency between promises and deeds. Excessive realist orientation from the both sides in a Realpolitik, anarchical arena generate almost zero probability of substantive, normative diplomatic negotiations beyond the framework of School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism.

Comparatively speaking, it could be observed that for Russia, Ukraine is of that high strategic importance to its national survival and sovereignty (Rogers, 2022). Wherefore, were Ukraine to join NATO, then Russia would be ambivalent towards the vulnerability of territorial security and integrity out of Realpolitik account (Rogers, 2022). Probably based on calculations of balance of power, Russia has repeatedly opposed NATO expansion since 1999, when state actors like “Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined the alliance” (Rogers, 2022: 21). Russia’s last-but-not-least request prior to the outbreak of the ongoing geopolitical, geo-strategic security crisis in Ukraine emerged in December 2021, when the US and NATO were expected to deliver a written guarantee that “Russia’s sovereignty would not be compromised and yet this was not given due consideration” (Rogers, 2022: 21). In accordance with *The Impact of the Crisis in Ukraine on Global Supply Chains and China’s Economy* written by Centre of China and Globalisation (2022, 14), Russia’s perception of Ukraine is not based exclusively “on the single concept of the sovereign state or nation-state as described in the Westphalian system”; rather, Russia’s constant highlight on the chronic, interwoven Russia-Ukraine ties at the economic, sociocultural, religious and historical level may be a kind of manifestation that Russia’s epistemologies towards Ukraine’s statehood are highly likely to be distant from the neoliberal framework of international law. Briefly speaking, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russian supreme diplomatic decision maker, is more likely to pay heeds more to Ukraine’s strategic position in Russia’s geopolitical security in an observable Realpolitik arena.

On the other hand, from the perspectives of neorealist international relations framework, China as the second largest economic entity and a strategically-important neighbouring state actor, is indirectly influenced by the geopolitical, geostrategic dilemma between Ukraine and Russia mainly in terms of energy, mass transit and heightening energy prices (CCG, 2022). Additionally, the European Union’s

counteractions and the Biden Administration’s sanctions against Russia may result in intervening, indirect sanctions on Chinese economic and commercial entities, engendering potential short-term pressure on Russia-China trade (CCG, 2022). Realistically speaking, from the holistic perspective, over the long run, the ongoing Ukraine-Russia geopolitical security dilemma has generated fundamental alteration in the “geopolitical landscape of European continent” (CCG, 2022: 19). How long and in what kind of direction this Realpolitik-oriented conflict will be advancing remains of that unpredictability.

In summary, it may be understandable that all the relevant state actors and international actors, like Russia, Ukraine, the United States, European Union and NATO, seem to stick more to certain Realpolitik philosophy initiated by School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism that the end justifies the means, that diplomacy by strong force and diplomacy by a powerful supreme decision maker alone in services of state interests can be functional in the Realpolitik arena, and that the dominant position and status of a state should be inviolable in an anarchical structure and environment surrounding them. Nevertheless, the additionally heightened trust deficit partly caused by Machiavellianism-and-Legalism-generating classical realism and neoclassical realism within the international relations theoretical framework costs the potential deterioration of interstate and regional geopolitical dilemma as well as much minimum probability of normative diplomatic negotiations, which can serve neither their long-term national and institutional interests nor the public interests that both Niccolo Machiavelli and Han Fei highlight from their realist archives of not merely that historical significance but also that modern significance in one way or another.

Representative Case II: US-China Complicated, Geopolitical, Geostrategic and Geo-economic Dilemma

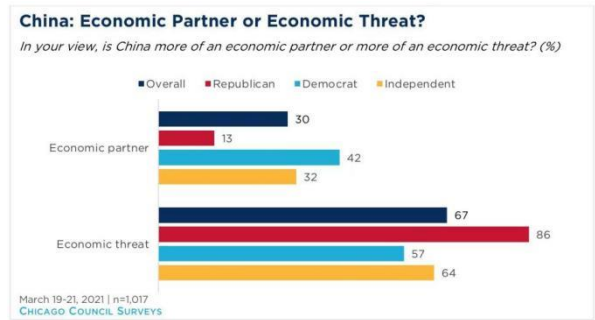
In addition to the adduced representative example of the underlying Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security dilemma, the continuing US-China complicated, complex, multilayered geopolitical, geo-strategic and geo-economic dilemma can serve as an alternative representative case of manifestation of how excessive Cold War mentality and classical Realpolitik orientation, which School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism may inadvertently cause, despite not their faults, pessimistically cause the track on

the verge of regional Thucydides’ Trap and even the risks of global geopolitical and geo-economic fluctuation. Since the conclusion of the Cold War, China has attached much considerable significance to the establishment and maintaining of constructive, benign relations with the United States as a remaining economic superpower so as to create a necessarily normative, positive international environment for its own socioeconomic development as China’s national, public interest. “The vision to cooperate together to build a constructive strategic partnership” was jointly formulated by the United States and China (Wang, 2016: 29). However, pessimistically, ranging from the Trump Era to the Biden Era, both the United States and China have witnessed a precipitous drop in the bilateral interstate relations in which their confrontational enmities harden the complexity. What should be prioritised, such as the US-China COVID-19-resistant partnership, seems perfunctory. Something like conspiracy theories, which should have been jettisoned, seems pervasive (Kuhn, 2022). Figuratively speaking, it could be deduced that within the theoretical framework of both Machiavellianism and Legalism, the undesirable bilateral confrontational enmities tend to overshadow potential tactical deceptions and inconsistency and centralisation of power and state interests by supreme state decision makers singularly in services of their national, public interest probably because the ends that either side defines in accordance with respective national interests justify the manageable, indispensable means that they may have discovered and considered at all costs, even in some cases begrudgingly, e.g. their retaliatory tariffs in services of the irreversible technological competitions.

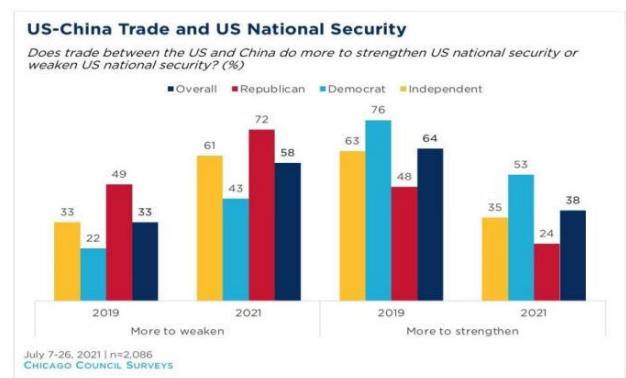
Here is an important question of how the theoretical demerits of overemphasis over Realpolitik from School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism in association with the public sentiments between the United States and China literally hardens the minimum probability index of interstate cooperation that matters more. US Scholar Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn (2022), Chairman of The Kuhn Foundation and recipient of the China Reform Friendship Medal, asserts that certain issues of sovereignty and territoriality, for all state actors, may be the very drivers of international diplomacy irrespective of political ideology because public nationalism may transcend ideology based on certain conditions. For instance, the Chinese majorities hold the belief on the US containment policy on China’s rise through alliance in services of the US hegemonic

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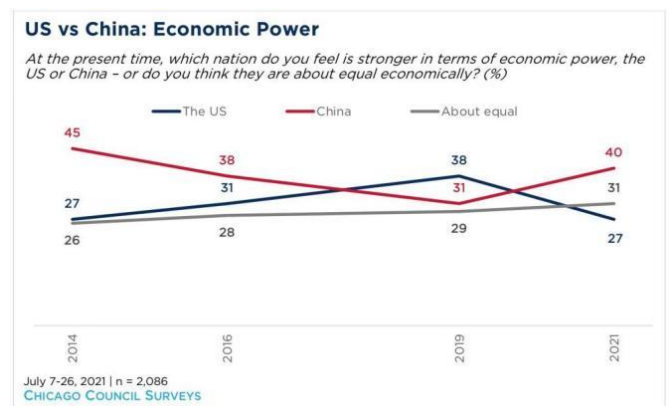
status from the perspective of offensive realism theory and defensive realism theory: for instance, QUAD (i.e. US, Japan, India, Australia) and AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) (Kuhn, 2022), the US naval force into South China Sea in the name of freedom of navigation, US interference in China's internal affairs by stirring up internal rebellion and violence in Hong Kong of China, Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China and Tibet Autonomous Region of China as the core interests of national sovereignty and territorial integrity from the realist perspective. In accordance with an additional observation by the Chinese majorities, the US maliciously accuses China of the global COVID-19 pandemic, followed by much expansion of US domestic law and extraterritoriality against China's interests in foreign affairs, and injection of Western values to erode Chinese culture in services of US cultural hegemony (Kuhn, 2022). To the contrary, for the US sides, China plays by its own rules through the way of using a mercantilist economic system of government subsidies in services of so-called unfair advantage, and modernising a burgeoning military to enforce geopolitical influences; for the US sides, China has become more restrictive at the domestic level and more aggressive at the international level through seeking territorial expansion and unleashing aggressive diplomacy. Some members from the US side claim that there is actually little reciprocity in the China market because China is thought to steal technologies to boost its economy (Kuhn, 2022). China is accused of considerable cyber theft in industrial and commercial sectors as well as in defence sectors (Kuhn, 2022). It could be argued that even as the ends of national interest may be justifiable, to which both Niccolo Machiavelli and Han Fei pay heed from their written books, the kind of bilateral deteriorating suspicions and enmities under the Realpolitik framework and Realpolitik model alone literally and methodologically help to accomplish little to achieve their respective strategic, supreme ends over the long run (moreover, the statistics and data from Table 1 to Table 4 about the unprecedented confrontational, competitive sentiments between the United States and China as the two underlying economic juggernauts reported by Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2021) could be in support of the above-mentioned concerns regarding how complicated, complex and deep-rooted the bilateral interstate ties turn out to become if they are observed from the conceptual framework of School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism alone.)



Note. From Table 1: “Statistics of Viewpoints on China as Economic Partner vs Economic Threat”, by C. Kafura, 2021, *Americans and US-China Trade Relations*. Copyright 2021 by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Permission not sought.

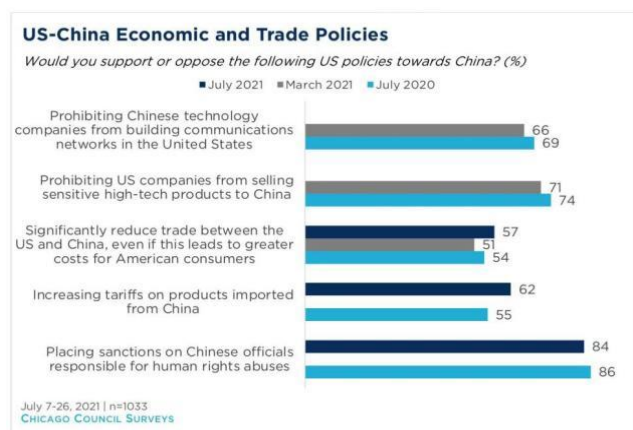


Note. From Table 2: “Statistics of Viewpoints on the Relationship between US-China Trade and US National Security”, by C. Kafura, 2021, *Americans and US-China Trade Relations*. Copyright 2021 by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Permission not sought.



Note. From Table 3: “Statistics of Viewpoints on the Comparison between US and China in the Realm of Economic Power”, by C. Kafura, 2021, *Americans and US-China Trade Relations*. Copyright 2021 by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Permission not sought.

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Note. From Table 4: “Statistics of Viewpoints on the US-China Economic and Trade Policies”, by C. Kafura, 2021, *Americans and US-China Trade Relations*. Copyright 2021 by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Permission not sought.

In response to that kind of international security dilemma, here is an alternative question about a kind of an effective philosophical formula to reduce the undesirable risks of implementation and proxy of excessive Realpolitik orientation associated with the US-China complicated, complex, multidimensional, geopolitical, geo-strategic and geo-economic dilemma, and the risks of overemphasising justification of the means in accordance with the ends and of burgeoning dominant confrontation in an anarchical international arena and structure. It could be argued that a normative transformation of crisis into potential opportunities with Realpolitik philosophy and beyond could be an empirical formula for diplomatic experimentation at a theoretical, empirical level.

To start with, it may be understandable and reasonable to align with the observation made by Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn (2022) that just as the possibility of transformation from enmity into reconciliation remains, even in the wake of protracted and devastating conflict, so may be the case with US-China bilateral structural dilemma because it could be observed that the degree to which the United States and China are antagonistic seems fairly lower in 2022 than that was prior to 1972 during the Cold War Period, notwithstanding more contemporary issues of more complexity in the contemporary political world. Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn’s observation to have been made is beyond classical Realpolitik philosophical framework and architecture on a solid basis of comparative analysis and developmental methodology rather than fixed mindset.

Second, albeit in some ways School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism advocate for supremacy of the supreme national leaders and diplomacy by the bureaucratically-authoritarian supreme decision makers, that could meanwhile be a potential opportunity for readjusting the interstate relations because the author of this analytical manuscript is in agreement with Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn’s alternative notion that the likelihood of more flexibility to compromise by the hardliner-oriented supreme decision makers results from much less vulnerability and susceptibility to domestic governance and structure around them (Kuhn, 2022). On 16 November, 2021 and on 18 March, 2022, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping as the respective supreme national leaders reached sort of initial diplomatic agreement on much importance of candid, constructive exchanges and negotiations on myriad issues of strategic significance in the shaping of the China-US dynamics that may even define and influence the international arena in the 21st century (Xinhua, 2021; Xinhua, 2022). Whilst just one or two rounds of discussions between the supreme national leaders cannot solve all relevant international issues overnight that matter to both the United States and China and to the global arena, they could set an adjustable framework and formula concerning how to create much improbable room and conditionality for diplomatically defining, managing and restructure a competitive, confrontational and even seemingly unbridgeable bilateral ties between the two dominant state actors out of the box of classical Realpolitik philosophy that Machiavellian philosophy and Legalist philosophy represent.

Last but not least, albeit in some ways philosophy of Machiavellianism highly advocates the notion that the end justifies the means and philosophy of Legalism highly advocates the functionality of utilitarianism, they may be the very optional arithmetical algorithm about how to define the type of enemies and, if possible, transform enemies into non-enemies in response to an alternative shared enemy. Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn (2022) and Dr. Hans. J. Morgenthau (2005) observe that the enemies who confront shared enemies can create much room and condition for normalising the seeming-unbridgeable interstate relations even as they are not epistemologically defined as close friends and allies with each other in so far as the possibility of turning out to be a kind of cooperator by the enemies of enemies remains observable. For

instance, just as both the United States of America and People’s Republic of China borne shared confrontation with the other economic and military superpower, i.e. USSR, in 1972 when Richard Nixon paid a strategic, ice-breaking visit to Beijing, so could be the case with the bilateral ties between the United States and China confronting more shared enemies, including global COVID-19 pandemic, anthropogenically-causing climate change, global sluggish macro-economic recovery, transnational terrorism and unconventional national and international security challenges, and so forth (Kuhn, 2022). Briefly speaking, the out-of-cave mentality beyond classical, traditional Realpolitik, to which School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism pay heeds for historical significance and reasons mostly within historical context, though, can methodologically facilitate potential, normative bilateral international cooperation that international neoliberalism promotes.

In summary, from the fairly-representative case analysis of both the Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geo-strategic security dilemma and the underlying US-China structural dynamics of geopolitical and geo-economic competition and even confrontation, it could be argued that Legalism-and-Machiavellianism-generating realistic-oriented mindset, especially Realpolitik mindset and power politics in particular, in services of supreme political ends, on the one hand, helps to pose much considerable deterrence and raise much consciousness against defined, targeted threats from anarchy, trade disputes, technological competitions, tactical deceptions and inconsistency from neighbouring state actors and international institutions that may negatively influence national security and national interest, and yet, paradoxically, on the other hand, excessive highlight on, and excessive implementation of, narrow national self-interests and Machiavellian tactical deception in services of those interests alone tend to grant a license to amplify Realpolitik-oriented geopolitical and geoeconomic solipsism and utilitarianism and inadvertently pose a more undesirable restriction on normative interstate, international cooperation on shared international, inter-civilisational issues in the contemporary eras of modernisation and multipolarisation. Afterwards, that may cause the unanticipated structural fragmentation among a diversification of state actors and important Realpolitik players under the condition of excessive implementation and institutionalisation of School of Machiavellianism and School

of Legalism that some state actors and international institutions xerox without any necessary institutional framework to be formulated. These epistemological and methodological demerits should be the alternative room for future theoretical discovery among international research analysts and scholars in the field of international studies review and of School of Machiavellianism as part of classical Western political philosophy from the Renaissance Period and School of Legalism as part of classical Chinese philosophy from the Warring State Period.

4. BRIEF THEORETICAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF ORIENTATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH OVER SCHOOL OF MACHIAVELLIANISM AND SCHOOL OF LEGALISM ASSOCIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

As a result of the author’s dialectically exploring and evaluating myriad philosophical legacies and potential, intrinsic limitations, epistemologically, methodologically and pragmatically, it may be elemental for political and bureaucratic supreme decision makers in general not to unilaterally and blindly xerox those Machiavellian and Legalist methodologies and tactics as regards governance, power relationship, and international diplomatic activities without the very specific, targeted circumstances or normative frameworks. Instead, it may be more preferable to abstractly conceptualise and ameliorate certain Machiavelli-finding-and-Han-Fei-seeking principles and disciplines concerning *Realpolitik* philosophy to be dialectically and cautiously applied to some theoretically analogous political and bureaucratic arenas within certain consequential contexts and framework.

For the sake of future research, to begin with, interdisciplinary framework should be established and combination of School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism and alternative classical Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy dealing with international human development issues for the sake of public interest of public Humanity. Power and Realpolitik consciousness and discourse should no longer be the singular bottleneck but rather one insufficient mirror of political, bureaucratic and diplomatic decision making. Furthermore, it is crucial to undertake theoretical abstract inheritance from what is epistemologically constructive and also jettison what is methodologically inapplicable to a construction of a modernising, inclusive, democratic contemporary world of

multipolarisation and people power. Last but not least, in addition to much critical rediscovery of School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism, today's world necessitates the normative, constructivistic advancements of more international human institutions and mechanism on sharing of legitimate power and restrictions on implementation and performance of excessive Realpolitik power dynamics as well as shared cooperation on shared imminent threats and challenges, e.g. a necessary rule of public law and non-Realpolitik-based architectonic mechanism against the COVID-19 pandemic as a shared transnational challenge of global public health crisis that absolutely transcend Realpolitik framework, to which neither Niccolo Machiavelli nor Han Fei provided any ready-made political prescription or methodology.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

On a basis of above-mentioned multiple analysis of previous scholarships and literature review and representative samples and case studies, it may be logical and reasonable to recapitulate that the definitions of Realpolitik philosophically, circumstantially and historically vary and remains inevitable in so far as a range of independent variables and parameters like national security interest, public interest, anarchical environment, sociocultural circumstances and certainly historical circumstances have been far distinct from their respective, separate historical moments when Niccolo Machiavelli highlighted end-means justification and the critical role of the Prince over the course of the Renaissance Period and Han Fei highlighted Realpolitik and diplomacy by a supreme ruler and a strong state and force amidst the Warring State Period. On the one side, many of their intellectual, philosophical concepts and analysis bearing that historical significance have been proven of being, in some cases, epistemologically and methodologically problematic and controversial in today's world of vulnerability, unpredictability, competitiveness and ambiguity. The adduced representative cases of the Ukraine-Russia geopolitical, geostrategic security dilemma and of the emerging US-China structural dynamics of competition and even confrontation help to accentuate those controversial limitations, e.g. credibility and trust deficit, pessimistic and suspicious perception of either of the state actors, minimum possibility of interstate cooperation on shared issues, which to a large extent transcend Realpolitik framework over the long run.

To the contrary, by grace of the thought-provoking notion by Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn, it is necessary to beware that the rest of their intellectual, epistemological and methodological legacies, merits and primitive philosophical intentions, once associated with pragmatic framework of bureaucratic governance and a set of political phenomena and international geopolitical dilemmas, for instance, ranging from the criteria on meritocratic selection of bureaucratic personnel, to much probable transformation of enemies to, at least, non-enemies, something unbridgeable as a crisis to something bridgeable as an opportunity under certain conditionality, if possible, are the very constructivistic, identifiable, recommendable theoretical instruments of strategically reminding the supreme national decision makers, experts in international affairs, social scientists of international studies, of seeking and ameliorating a more normative, cooperative international system on a basis of grand strategy and grand political philosophy over public interest in avoidance of private scheme and deeply-rooted narrow self-interests.

In a nutshell, it could be argued that much maximum organic amalgamation of inter-philosophical, intellectual legacies and merits of Machiavelli-proposing School of Machiavellianism and Han-Fei-synthesising School of Legalism as the alternative and supplementary theoretical, epistemological and methodological formula, algorithm and guideline, to a large degree, necessitates maximum interdisciplinary, out-of-cave, encyclopaedic perspectives for the sake of ameliorating and reconfiguring an international arena -- the Realpolitik arena and non-Realpolitik arena combined -- of shared unprecedented shared global opportunities and global challenges at an empirical, normative and functional level. At least, the benign and critical inter-philosophical learning of School of Machiavellianism and School of Legalism, which are not encouraged to be irregularly xeroxed without any framework or mechanism, can be of more theoretical significance to philosophical breakthroughs in an international arena of the Realpolitik structure and element as they were and as they remains and non-Realpolitik ones as they are figuratively and as they should be in the contemporary era that is far different from the Machiavelli Era and Han-Fei Era.

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