

Relevance of Kautilya in Contemporary International System

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Kautilya's was the first realist thinker who evolved the theory of state security and power. He had written Arthashastra in 300 B.C. much before various western thinkers like Machiavelli, Hobbes and Thucydides had written about Realism. However, Kautilya's realism is different from the western Realism and also more suitable to the countries of global South who focused on the militaristic aspect of security since their independence. In the contemporary world as the meaning and dimension of security is transforming, there is need to revisit Kautilya's theory of statecraft, diplomacy and war in order to understand the nuances of security and power pertinent to the countries of global South. Kautilya unlike western Realists adopted the holistic concept of security. He gave primary importance to strong treasury for good governance and strong defense capability.

The Western theory of Realism considers war as an essential element of international politics. Morgenthau considered international politics as "struggle for Power". War is considered an endemic disease in international politics as war is the only mean of survival in the anarchical international system. In western realism there is no place for moral values. Kautilya provides an alternate perspective as his theory of power and security is not devoid of morality. Neither he consider war essential to achieve state objective. The chief objective of state is welfare of people and he suggested that these objectives should be achieved short of war if possible. He suggested that a state should try to achieve its objectives through diplomatic means and should carry out war only in extreme conditions- threat to survival. His theory is very significant for the countries of global South who are facing deficit of good governance and development and are therefore facing serious internal instability, insurgencies and conflicts which is posing threat to the very fabric of state system. The world has witnessed that USSR, one of the most powerful country in the world got disintegrated due to the internal instability. In this context, India's traditional/ historical writings like Arthashastra need

to be reinterpreted which can provides valuable insight to address the complex issues of security, war and peace in the contemporary world.

Arthashastra and Realpolitik:

Kautilya's Arthashastra written in 300 BCE almost 1800 prior to Machiavelli's 'The Prince', is an extraordinarily detailed manuscript on Statecraft .Henry Kissinger, in his book 'World Order' refers to the Arthashastra, a work that lays out the requirements of power, which is the dominant reality in politics. For Kissinger, the Arthashastra contained a realist vision of politics long before 'The Prince' which Kissinger deems 'a combination of Machiavelli and Clausewitz. Max Weber, the German sociologist called it truly radical Machiavellianism (Halpern, Georges, M.) The Arthashastra is perceived as a masterpiece of statecraft, diplomacy, and strategy and an example of non western literature that reflects realism and is relevant for foreign policy in the contemporary international politics. This is the philosophy of how to empower a state? What causes progress or decline of a state power? How to attain national stability? What is the role of power and diplomacy to achieve security?

Kautilya wrote Arthashastra for Indian king, Chandragupta Maurya, whose empire was confronting the environment resembling a Westphalian Europe of many states that encompassed the countries of Soth Asia in the contemporary time. Kautilya wrote Arthashastra as a solution to this anarchical situation and played a leading role in directing for assembling and administering the large empire of Ashoka.

Kautilya wanted ruler to aspire to be a vijigishu (the most powerful king or hegemon) for peace and security. Vijigishu is the one who desires of conquering other territories. It gives an impression that he believed in military expansionism. However, when he referred to territory, he meant not only physical territory but also psychological influence and even physical domination.(R.P. Kangle 2010, 247)

Kautilya divided wars in three categories: Open warfare, concealed warfare and silent warfare.

Open warfare: any state powerful and prosper can resort to open warfare. It is carried out by dharmavijaya, who makes conquest for glory and is satisfied by the submission of another king,

Concealed warfare: any country with declining power position can resort to concealed warfare.

Silent warfare: In order to prevent dominical king/ states authority, silent warfare can be carried out.

Kautilya viewed that such power should be used for the welfare and happiness, prosperity and peace of people. In case of expanding power, Kautilya advised that the ruler should adopt the customs, way of life, religion and gods of conquered territories. He also believed that the people of captured state be treated well. Moreover the international history shows that Europeans fought imperialist wars for the purpose of plunder, loot and exploitation of human and natural resources in these countries. The westerners or Islamic rulers committed atrocities on the people of the areas they captured. In this regard Kautilya's theory is distinct as he never aimed at plunder, loot or exploitation of the people of invaded territories. He believed in the anarchical nature of the world therefore aimed to secure national interest by eliminating enemies and cultivating friends.

Kautilya's Statecraft -Role of King

The history is full of instances when states focused only on military security , sidelining the welfare of people. Consequently these states had experienced decline in the power and sovereignty leading to disintegration of these states. The disintegration of the USSR is clear evidence of this fact;- despite being one of the super powers , USSR faced disintegration not due to the external invasion but due to the internal weakness, instability caused by the dissatisfaction of the people of USSR. The security of state does not mean military security only but security from within by establishing stable political and strong economic system. The ruler has to play significant role in this context. He emphasized on kings duties in terms of "RajDharam". The king's duty is the protection(Rakshana) welfare(Palana) and Rules of Law (yogakshema). (L.N.Rangarajan 2000, 15) If king performs Raj Dharam , then only his power or control on the state can be legitimised .Therefore strong king does not mean having mighty military power but his strength depends on the performance of rajdharmaprotection, welfare and rule of law. Kautilya's concept of Dharma, therefore does not have normative meaning but a realist description of statecraft.

The Arthashastra is not just about maximisation of power but explains the purpose of state and limits of power of the state. The vijigishu should aim at Dharma, Arth, Kama of people. In this context, Kautilya gave primacy to Artha (economic power) because it will facilitate Dharma (righteous and dutiful life) as well as kama (enjoyment and pleasure) in life. (Narasingha Prosad Sil 1985, 21-22)Kautilya considered the welfare of people essential for the survival of the state.Internal instability, conflicts and insurgencies are manifestations of societal discontent, therefore the ruler should work for the welfare of the public. In his words' an internal rebellion is more dangerous than

an external threat because it is like “nurturing a viper in one’s bosom” (Akhilesh Pillalamarri 2015, 21) Therefore he advised for good governance to attain the objective of state security.

He laid the foundation of democracy and was first to write about the welfare of people. . Earlier Monarch used to be treated as representative of god but Kautilya transformed the position of the ruler by making him representative of people. Boesche, Roger declared Kautilya a founder of “socialist monarchy”. (Boesche, Roger 2003, 11) In Kautilya’s opinion political and economic power are essential tools of state security. For this he proposed good governance. In Arthashastra, Kautilya outlines the rules of governance, fundamentals of political organizations, details of treasury and accounting, auditing, regulations governing the civil servants, law, foreign policy, prescription for national defense and war. It was written specifically for the ruler as he felt that a ruler can't defend his state and its population without strong army and treasury. Kautilya emphasized on maximization of state power by harnessing its physical and natural resources and power and by eliminating its enemy state. He emphasized the significance of allies or friends who can help in achieving the national objective by eliminating enemies and preventing war and maintaining peace. National interest should preferably be achieved by peace than war.

Kautilya’s Saptang theory:

The physical essence of state was manifested by Janapada (population) and Durg (fort). Kautilya considered all the elements of Saptang Theory- Ruler (Emperor), Amatya (group of ministers), Janapada (territory and population of the state), Durga (Fortified Towns and cities), Kosha (Treasury), Bala (military Force), Mitra (allies) essential constituent of state power. Each of the elements is considered essential for state existence and empowerment. He stated that “One wheel doesn't move a chariot”. (Akhilesh 2015, 15) The prioritization of each element of state power should be followed strictly. It is viewed that most of the newly independent countries had given top priority to defense, ignoring the economic development which caused the declining power of these states. In the globalising world Kautilya’s prakritis need to be adhered in order to stabilize and strengthen the state security particularly in the countries of global South.

Kautilya considered the first element, emperor as the most important factor of state security and power because it is king’s intellect and knowledge that can enable him to devise a smart strategy to achieve the state objective. He mentioned that power derived from three elements- power, knowledge, military strength and valour. He considered good command, analysis, and judgment as

important elements to empower a state. Kautilya believed that an enlightened and discipline ruler can ensure the prosperity and power of the state. It is the duty of the king to provide right kind of atmosphere to his subjects to achieve progress. The rulers duty should be to ensure individual's happiness and security and also protecting justice. State should follow the natural order of priority for progress. If the order of priority is disturbed it leads to the decline of state power. The strong leadership and correct prioritisation is essential for state stability and progress. Wrong prioritisation like just focusing on military security and inability to harness national physical and natural resources can lead to depletion of treasury and cohesive institutions that in turn would pose serious threat to the statehood. Therefore the king, prime minister and mantris should have clear vision and mission to secure the interest of the state. He argued that a strong king should have qualities of strong leadership, intellect, energy, and personal attributes. The mantri should have quality of concentration, good character, thinking capability, strong communication skill and observation/ vigilance. Moreover the strong treasury provides strong basis for internal cohesiveness and strong defence capabilities which are essential tools of state power. The king should devise strategies to cultivate friends and evolve diplomatic relations to cultivate friends in order to strengthen state security.

Kautilya considered power both an end as well as a mean as power was essential both to survive and to protect and advance the state interest. Therefore Kautilya was a unique thinker who was quite pragmatic and utilitarian in his approach.(G.Adityakiran 2015, 26)

Security in Matsya Nayaya system

Kautilya viewed that the vijigishu was truly living in the system of anarchy governed by the principle of matsya nyaya- the law of fish where big one swallows the little one. Because size enhanced security, the objective was to consolidate one's strength at the expense of another power.

For vijigishu, to survive in matsya nyaya system, Kautilya introduced the theory of Mandala system of states. The mandala literally means circle with a center or nucleus -vijigishu. The mandala is based on the political assumptions that vijigishu is center of mandala and his immediate neighbors are his ari or enemy and state next to the immediate neighbors is vijigishu friend or mitra. In mandala theory the immediate neighbours are enemies, next to the enemy is friend and after friendly states unfriendly states exist. Usually friendly states wait till the vijigishu attacks an unfriendly state and then attack from the rear. In mandala system two states play important role, madhyama (the middle kingdom) and udasina (the neutral kingdom.)The madhyama is situated on the border of vijigishu and

unfriendly state and is capable of helping either. Udasina is located beyond the border of vijigishu and is a friendly state and is capable of helping, vijigishu, unfriendly state, madhyama states, together or individually, or of resisting any of them individually. Rajamandala theory is Arthashastra's most timeless observations on foreign policy and international relations.

Element of this logic is found in India's foreign policy as both Pakistan and China have been our enemies and countries next to them like Afganistan and Russia have been our friends. The US also used this policy by creating enemies on the borders of its own enemies to check the power of its enemies. For instance China was developed as an ally after 1971 to check USSR's expansionism. The US also created US-China and Pakistan triangle alliance to counter India's growing power. In this regard US had compromised with its liberal democratic ideology by aligning with undemocratic regimes. Kautilya proposed SAMA (Conciliation), Dana (gifts), Danda (punishment), and Bheda (dissension)) as element of a states policy towards other states. (George Modelski 1964, 553). The US had been using all the elements of Sama, Dana, Danda and Bheda in order to pursue its interest in international politics. The system of alliance was considered significant to eliminate enemies and strengthen state security. The alliance is based on mutual interest. During the cold war period the US alliance with Pakistan and China were based on mutual interest as both Pakistan and China also had vested interest in aligning with the US.

Sadaguna Principles:

Kautilya's king can attain success in mandala system operating under system of matsya nyaya only by following 6 methods of foreign policy. (Soumak Set 2015, 712)

1. **Sandhi** (peace) any inferior nation can make peace with its stronger counterpart. Sandhi signifies treaty or agreement based on the perception that advantage can be derived from peace or war equally. In this situation one should prefer peace than war as war is a gamble and can cause unbearable losses. Peace is considered as temporary and a part of broader policy of lulling the enemy into complacency. The emerging alliances in the post cold war period is evident of this.
2. **Samshraya** (seeking alliance or shelter): whoever is devoid of necessary strength to defend himself shall seek the protection of another through alliance. Pakistan has been following the policy of alliance with the US and China in order to deal with India.
3. **Davidhibhava**(double policy):whoever thinks that help is necessary to work out an end shall

make peace with strong king and wage war with weak king. It can be interpreted as a policy to have peace with neighbor in order to peruse hostility towards the third party. In this scheme, peace with neighbor is temporary and conflict with it is inevitable. it is a policy of diplomatically inducing confidence in enemies and behaving aggressively in secret. The USSR adopted this policy during the period of detente. One the one hand USSR had entered in detente with US on the other hand it was trying to expand its influence in different parts of the world.

4. **Vigraha** (War): whoever is confident about it's superiority and feels that situation is conducive to launch war. Kautilya identified three types of wars: open warfare(normal war), treacherous warfare (using variety of ways to attack an enemy) and secret warfare(using secret agents and occult devices). The first war- open warfare is carried out by the strong king only.
5. **Yana** (March): acting from position of strength. Any state, possessed strong power shall march against his enemy. It can compel enemy into submission without actually fighting war.
6. **Asana** (neutrality):remaining quite in case of weak position. The policy of neutrality is pragmatic and changes with circumstances. There are three aspects of neutrality: stanza (keeping quiet), asana (withdrawal from hostility) and upeksha (taking no strategic steps).

The first four are guidelines for strong nations, fifth principle- Samsara for the weak and the last one- Duplicity policy is recommended for the middle status nation.

In the present context, international relations can be understood in terms of Kautilya's Mandal theory and six methods of foreign policy still hold relevance in the post cold war scenario. India's relations with countries like Afghanistan and Japan can be categorized as natural allies against Pakistan and China respectively. India's Look East Policy, BRICS and Shanghai security circle etc reflect India's interest to develop alliances as these alliances are mutually beneficial unlike alliances during the cold war in which each super power aimed to use its allies against the other super power. Therefore India's multi alliances with various countries aim to strengthen its power to counter balance its enemies like China. The common national interest of countries of Pacific Asia and India to counter balance China's hegemonic designs in Indian Ocean, china sea and Pacific ocean build the foundation for their alliance. The theory of Raj mandala could also be applied to other regions like Europe, where France and Germany had inimical relations till the end of second world war.

In the post-cold war scenario, India rising economic and military power is becoming obvious. India's relations with US are getting strengthened due to the mutual interests of both the countries.

India can negotiate for both strategic and international trade issues. These policies are product of India's perception of itself in a Matsya nyaya system. India's acquisition of declaratory nuclear posture also adopted in response to the emerging threats in its backyards.

Since independence, India has been trying to maintain balance between development and defence and legitimise its political system through democratic means. India adopted the policy of non alignment in order to stay away from cold war politics and to develop friendly relations with all the countries regardless to their ideological positions. India's main focus was national interest to move from the declined power position to the stable power position by staying away from wars and by developing economically.

India over the years has moved from its earlier policies due to the changed strategic environment in the region as well as the world around. India had been using its armed forces in order to maintain its territorial integrity. For instance it had to use force in case of Hyderabad(1949), Junagadh(1948), Goa(1961) and East Pakistan (1971). Even in the nuclear scenario, India had used its force in case of Kargil(1999) and also launched surgical strike on terrorist camps in Pakistan in response to Uri and Pulwama attacks (2016, 2019 respectively).It shows that India still follows Kautilya in its strategic culture as it considers use of force as relevant to maintain its territorial integrity but not to expand territorial borders by annexing another country. India preferred to keep its options open which was the hallmark of decision to acquire nuclear capability.(Lawrence Sondhaus 2006, 95-96)

One of the most serious threats to the contemporary security environment is transnational/global terrorism. It is argued that the reason for mushrooming of these terrorist outfits in the countries of global South is the political instability and conflict. The unstable political conditions provide opportunities for destabilising forces to develop (like incubation of terrorist forces) which challenge the political governance and political organisations. Due to the inability of the state to address ungoverned spaces within their territory, they become liable to intervention by strong states which in turn pose threat to their sovereignty and statehood. This problem can be handled by good governance that will legitimise the political power in these countries.

Conclusion:

In the post cold war world some of the countries in the global South are encountering the problems of socio- economic and political instability, internal insurgencies and civil war situations.

These countries perceive military power as the ultimate guarantee of security. These countries need to deal with their problems by following the holistic approach to security as propounded by Kautilya. Kautilya's theory can be instrumental in broadening our vision about statecraft, diplomacy and war. Kautilya's theory of Mandala, Matsya nayaya and sadguna have universal value in international relations. Kautilya's arthashastra is an Indian heritage which needs to have a significant place in Indian discourse on IR in order to understand all the concepts and theories related to foreign policy and security studies; it will strengthen the people's understanding of interstate relations. The knowledge of such theories, concepts and strategies/ tactics will enable scholars and officials to evolve theories and strategies to deal with security challenges in the contemporary world.

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