

Arthashastra - A Review Of Military Strategy

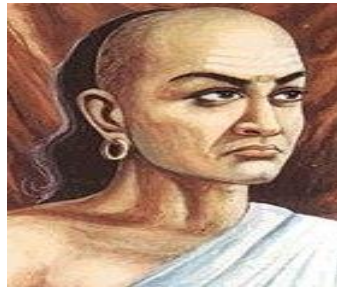
Dr. Kanchan Mishra

Associate Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, V.S.S.D. College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT: The Arthashastra (Sanskrit: अर्थशास्त्र, IAST: Arthaśāstra) is an ancient Indian Sanskrit treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy. Kautilya, also identified as Vishnugupta and Chanakya, is traditionally credited as the author of the text. The latter was a scholar at Takshashila, the teacher and guardian of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. Some scholars believe them to be the same person, while a few have questioned this identification. The text is likely to be the work of several authors over centuries. Composed, expanded and redacted between the 2nd century BCE and 3rd century CE, the Arthashastra was influential until the 12th century, when it disappeared. It was rediscovered in 1905 by R. Shamasastri, who published it in 1909. The first English translation, also by Shamasastri, was published in 1915. The title translates as "the science of wealth" (अर्थ), but the book has a broader scope. It includes books on the nature of government, law, civil and criminal court systems, ethics, economics, markets and trade, the methods for screening ministers, diplomacy, theories on war, nature of peace, and the duties and obligations of a king. The text incorporates Hindu philosophy, includes ancient economic and cultural details on agriculture, mineralogy, mining and metals, animal husbandry, medicine, forests and wildlife. The Arthashastra explores issues of social welfare, the collective ethics that hold a society together, advising the king that in times and in areas devastated by famine, epidemic and such acts of nature, or by war, he should initiate public projects such as creating irrigation waterways and building forts around major strategic holdings and towns and exempt taxes on those affected. The text was influential on other Hindu texts that followed, such as the sections on kings, governance and legal procedures included in Manusmriti.

KEYWORDS: arthashastra, military, economic, philosophy, war, manusmriti, governance

I. INTRODUCTION

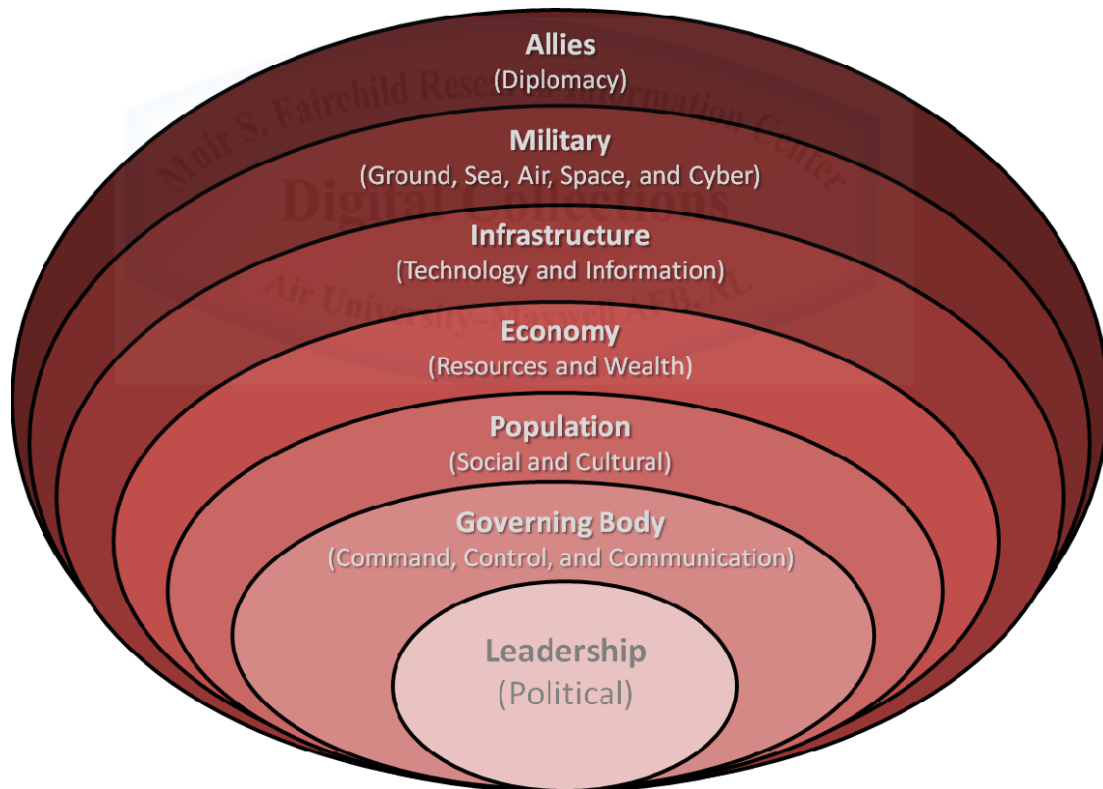


Chanakya

The ancient Sanskrit text opens, in chapter 2 of Book 1 (the first chapter is table of contents), by acknowledging that there are a number of extant schools with different theories on proper and necessary number of fields of knowledge, and asserts they all agree that the science of government is one of those fields. It lists the school of Brihaspati, the school of Usanas, the school of Manu and itself as the school of Kautilya as examples. [1,2]

सुखस्य मूलं धर्मः । धर्मस्य मूलं अर्थः । अर्थस्य मूलं राज्यं । राज्यस्य मूलं इन्द्रिय जयः । इन्द्रियाजयस्य मूलं विनयः । विनयस्य मूलं वृद्धोपसेवा ॥

The root of happiness is Dharma (ethics, righteousness), the root of Dharma is Artha (economy, polity), the root of Artha is right governance, the root of right governance is victorious inner-restraint, the root of victorious inner-restraint is humility, the root of humility is serving the aged.— Kautilya, Chanakya Sutra 1-6



The school of Usanas asserts, states the text, that there is only one necessary knowledge, the science of government because no other science can start or survive without it. The school of Brihaspati asserts, according to Arthashastra, that there are only two fields of knowledge, the science of government and the science of economics (Varta of agriculture, cattle and trade) because all other sciences are intellectual and mere flowering of the temporal life of man. The school of Manu asserts, states Arthashastra, that there are three fields of knowledge, the Vedas, the science of government and the science of economics (Varta of agriculture, cattle and trade) because these three support each other, and all other sciences are special branch of the Vedas.

The Arthashastra then posits its own theory that there are four necessary fields of knowledge, the Vedas, the Anvikshaki (science of reasoning), the science of government and the science of economics (Varta of agriculture, cattle and trade). [3,4] It is from these four that all other knowledge, wealth and human prosperity is derived. The Kautilya text thereafter asserts that it is the Vedas that discuss what is Dharma (right, moral, ethical) and what is Adharma (wrong, immoral, unethical), it is the Varta that explain what creates wealth and what destroys wealth, it is the science of government that illuminates what is Nyaya (justice, expedient, proper) and Anyaya (unjust, inexpedient, improper), and that it is Anvishaki (philosophy)[57] that is the light of these sciences, as well as the source of all knowledge, the guide to virtues, and the means to all kinds of acts. He says of government in general:

Without government, rises disorder as in the Matsya nyayamud bhavayati (proverb on law of fishes). In the absence of governance, the strong will swallow the weak. In the presence of governance, the weak resists the strong. [5,6]

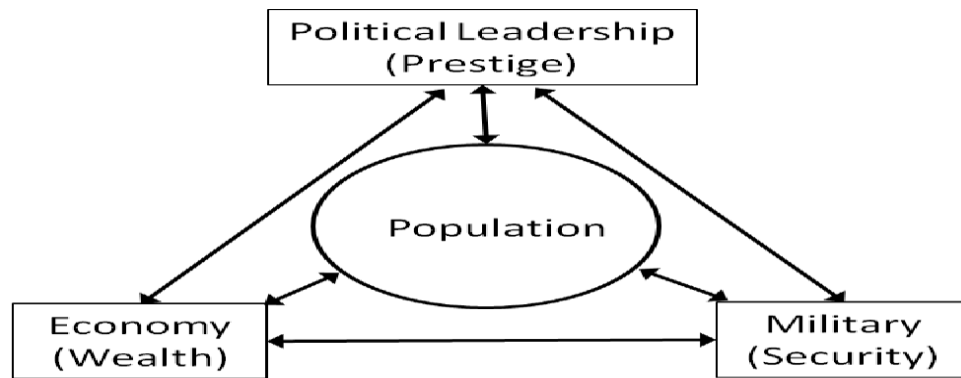


Figure 4: Kautilya's Trinity of National Policy

Source: Author's creation

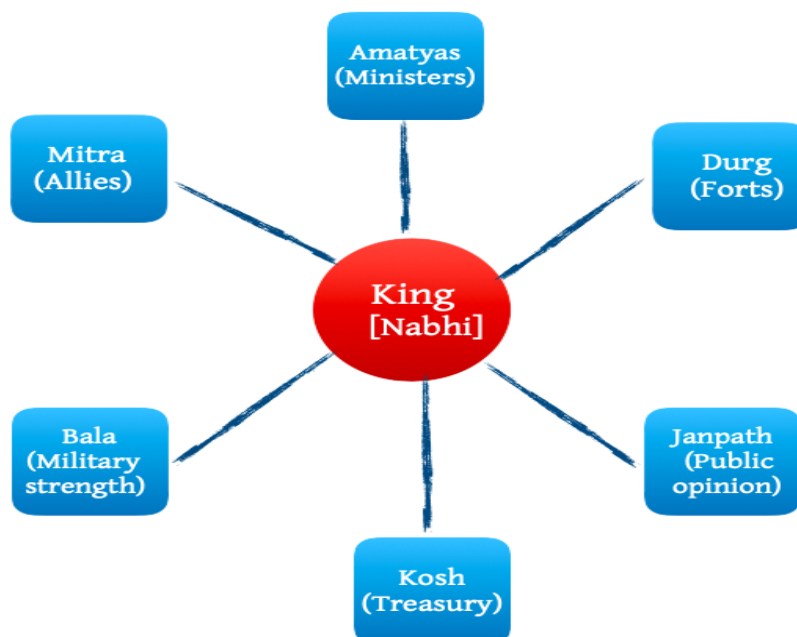
Anywhere, states Arthashastra, where people are fined or punished or harassed when they ought not to be harassed, where those that should be punished are not punished, where those people are apprehended when they ought not be, where those who are not apprehended when they ought to, the king and his officials cause distress and disaffection. When officials engage in thievery, instead of providing protection against robbers, the people are impoverished, they lose respect and become disaffected.[7,8]

A state, asserts Arthashastra where courageous activity is denigrated, quality of accomplishments are disparaged, pioneers are harmed, honorable men are dishonored, where deserving people are not rewarded but instead favoritism and falsehood is, that is where people lack motivation, are distressed, become upset and disloyal.

In verse the ancient text remarks that general impoverishment relating to food and survival money destroys everything, while other types of impoverishment can be addressed with grants of grain and money.[9]

II. DISCUSSION

The Arthashastra considers numerous scenarios and reasons for war. It classifies war into three broad types – open war, covert war and silent war. It then dedicates chapters to defining each type of war, how to engage in these wars and how to detect that one is a target of covert or silent types of war. The text cautions that the king should know the progress he expects to make, when considering the choice between waging war and pursuing peace.



When the degree of progress is the same in pursuing peace and waging war, peace is to be preferred. For, in war, there are disadvantages such as losses, expenses and absence from home.

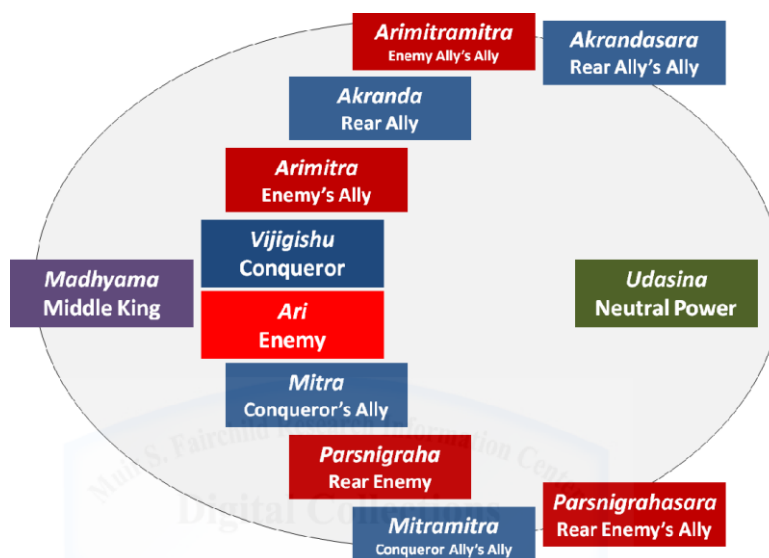
Kautilya, in the Arthashastra, suggests that the state must always be adequately fortified, its armed forces prepared and resourced to defend itself against acts of war. Kautilya favors peace over war, because he asserts that in most situations, peace is more conducive to creation of wealth, prosperity and security of the people. Arthashastra defines the value of peace and the term peace, states Brekke, as "effort to achieve the results of work undertaken is industry, and absence of disturbance to the enjoyment of the results achieved from work is peace".

All means to win a war are appropriate in the Arthashastra, including assassination of enemy leaders, sowing discord in its leadership, engagement of covert men and women in the pursuit of military objectives and as weapons of war, deployment of accepted superstitions and propaganda to bolster one's own troops or to demoralize enemy soldiers, as well as open hostilities by deploying kingdom's armed forces. After success in a war by the victorious just and noble state, the text argues for humane treatment of conquered soldiers and subjects.[10]

The Arthashastra theories are similar with some and in contrast to other alternate theories on war and peace in the ancient Indian tradition. For example, states Brekke, the legends in Hindu epics preach heroism qua heroism which is in contrast to Kautilya suggestion of prudence and never forgetting the four Hindu goals of human life, while Kamandaki's Nitisara, which is similar to Kautilya's Arthashastra, is among other Hindu classics on statecraft and foreign policy that suggest prudence, engagement and diplomacy, peace is preferable and must be sought, and yet prepared to excel and win war if one is forced to.

Results

The Arthashastra dedicates many chapters on the need, methods and goals of secret service, and how to build then use a network of spies that work for the state. [11]

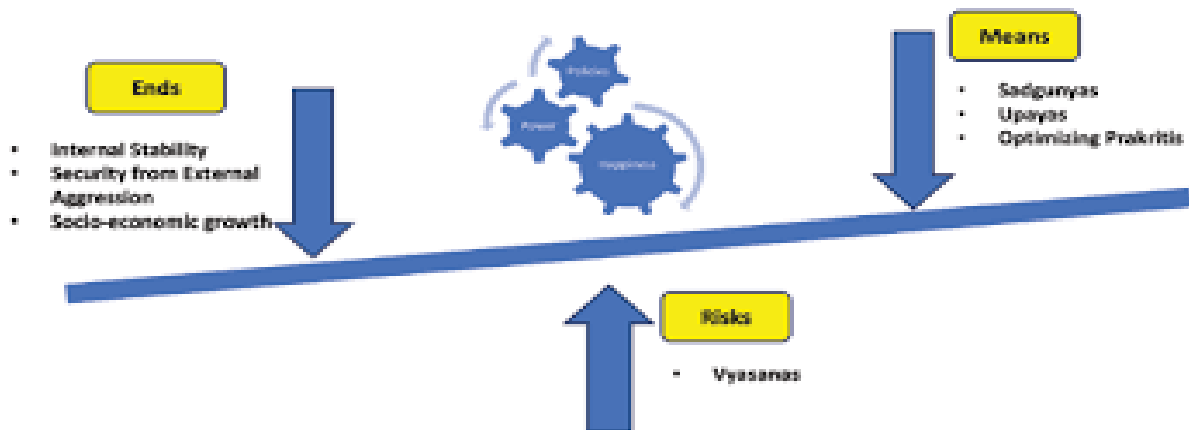


The spies should be trained to adopt roles and guises, to use coded language to transmit information, and be rewarded by their performance and the results they achieve, states the text. The roles and guises recommended for Vyanjana (appearance) agents by the Arthashastra include ascetics, forest hermits, mendicants, cooks, merchants, doctors, astrologers, consumer householders, entertainers, dancers, female agents and others. It suggests that members from these professions should be sought to serve for the secret service. A prudent state, states the text, must expect that its enemies seek information and are spying inside its territory and spreading propaganda, and therefore it must train and reward double agents to gain identity about such hostile intelligence operations.

The goals of the secret service, in Arthashastra, was to test the integrity of government officials, spy on cartels and population for conspiracy, to monitor hostile kingdoms suspected of preparing for war or in war against the state, to check spying and propaganda wars by hostile states, to destabilize enemy states, to get rid of troublesome powerful people who could not be challenged openly. The spy operations and its targets, states from Arthashastra, should be pursued "with respect to traitors and unrighteous people, not with respect to others". [10]

III. CONCLUSION

Kautilya's Arthashastra provides an insight into the ancient Indian anthology of political wisdom, theory, and the art of statecraft.



It is one of the major political and strategic treatises that constitute a collection of timeless concepts. The importance and relevance of such strategies and concepts could be enriching to the contemporary world. Some of the strategies could be gainfully employed to achieve long-term benefits and resolve some of the key issues affecting numerous countries today. Kautilya's Arthashastra provides guidance to a wise king to further the national interests of the state that center on issues of security, wealth, and prestige. Throughout the Arthashastra, three fundamental objectives flow from one to the other: good governance, promotion of the welfare of the subjects, leads to good economy, acquisition of wealth that, in turn, allows for the expansion of territory. The concept of diplomacy is primarily to achieve world conquest and world consolidation. Therefore, six measures of foreign policy are recommended that assist the leader in managing the state through transition from a state of decline to one of stabilization, and from there to achieve progress or advancement. The policy to be employed depends on the relative power, strategic environment, and dynamics of the political situation. The aim of the policy is increase in power of the state at the expense of the enemy. As such, the Arthashastra has been identified as the first comprehensive statement of political realism. Kautilya defines war as an expression of the foreign policy of a state. He provides guidance to a king to employ the elements of national power to achieve a state of continuing advantage. Kautilya provides a grand strategy.[11]

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.ancient.eu/Kautilya/>
- [2] Ashwani Sharma (2011), Chanakya his teachings and advice, Jaico publication
- [3] B.K.Chaturvedi (2010), Chanakya Neeti, Diamond publication
- [4] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chanakya> [5] <https://suntzusaid.com/>
- [6] www.history.com/topics/sun-tzu
- [7] www.suntzustrategies.com/about/who-was-sun-tzu/classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html
- [8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War [9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Tzu
- [10] Sun Tzu and John Minford. 1990. The Art of War. New England Review (1990-), Vol. 23, No. 3 (Summer, 2002), pp. 5-28
- [11] Shantanu K. Bansal. 2001. Comparative Study of Sun Tzu and Kautilya on Military Affairs. C3S Paper No. 0071/2001, pp. 1-12