



Formulating National Security Strategy of India the Kautilyan Way



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Abstract

Arthashastra, written in the second century BC is an exhaustive, detailed, definitive and instructive treatise on statecraft, economics, foreign affairs, and defence. It amalgamates Kautilya's experiences, preaching, practice, and reflections with earlier similar treatises of the past. Several authors have translated Arthashastra and utilized its teachings in their research, which can be used for reference.

In the present-day environment, the formulation of the National Strategy is done by various experts and think tanks, which in turn is then ratified by the government. The possibility of exploring the master treatise, Kautilya's Arthashastra for guidance is worth its effort.

It classifies the relation within states based on their geographical location (Rajmandala), then focuses on appreciating the enemy (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [SWOT] analysis), followed

by the six-fold policy (decision for peace and war) and finally, the four *Upayas* (means to deal/resources to employ) which highlights the measures to be taken against various adversaries and formulates the conduct of a nation-state in international relations and military domain.

The arrow shot by the archer may or may not kill a single person. But stratagems devised by wise men can kill even babes in the womb.

—Kautilya

The Westphalia Treaty of AD 1648 marks the birth of the concept of nation-state. This Treaty made international relations focus on the tenets of national interest. It promoted sovereignty and legal equality of states.¹ This led to all the nations striving to secure their national interests. The measures taken to safeguard these interests by the nations can be termed as the National Strategy. With India's rise as an economic

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and regional player in the world arena, there is a need to formulate and promulgate a National Strategy document. National Strategy would encompass aspects of foreign, security and economic policy in the social, political, technological and economic contexts of contemporary domestic and international system.²

Traditionally, there has been a marked difference in the eastern and western ways of strategy formulation and dealings in international relations. The western way is analytical and aims to find ‘laws’ or rules easy to understand and apply. The eastern way, is at the conceptual level, using metaphors and in advisory form. To draw an analogy from the present-day lexicon, it focuses more on the decision-making process. The eastern (mainly Chinese and Japanese) writings about tactics and strategy became very popular in the West in the late twentieth century, probably due to the rapid economic progress and Vietnam War. India, on the other hand, over the past two decades has been shifting from the British advocated processes to the western concepts and procedures (primarily American). However, if we look back in the Indian history there were treatise and writings which addressed formulation of a comprehensive strategy at the apex level, which can be utilized for the formulation of National Security Strategy.

To embark on formulating a ‘National Security Strategy’ for India, the start point would be to identify the various precepts which would form part of National Strategy. Even though there are several nations who have promulgated their National Strategy and Military Strategy, there aren’t any standardised set of precept to formulate a National Strategy, unlike in the security/military domain, where there are many tools

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to formulate the concepts, doctrines, and strategy (Net Assessment, Operational Art [Op Art], Joint Operations Planning Process [JOPP]/Military Decision-Making Process [MDMP] etc).

One such treatise, ‘Arthashastra’ written and compiled by Chanakya (also known as Vishnugupt and Kautilya) lays down the constituents of a sovereign state,³ dynamics of national policy for foreign affairs,⁴ and the relations between states (international relations) by classifying them into the circle of states.⁵ It provides us with the tenets integral to a National Strategy and provides a linkage at the military level. It suggest the ways and means to protect territory, thereby implying ‘state administration’ and recommends methods to acquire territory and conquest territory from others, implying ‘War and Foreign Affairs’.⁶

This article aims to analyse the contemporary relevance of Arthashastra for formulating precepts of India’s National Security Strategy with emphasis on a strategy to deal with China and Pakistan.

The paper will analyse the following:

- (a) Examine precepts propounded by Arthashastra to formulate National Security Strategy.
- (b) The contemporary relevance of Arthashastra in formulating Military Strategy.
- (c) Security Mechanism to be adopted against Pakistan and China based on Kautilyan approach.

National Security Strategy

What constitutes National Strategy and National Security Strategy? How do you decide on the validity of a claim based on national interest in international relations? In the present-day environment, the formulation of the National Strategy is done by various experts and think tanks, which in turn is then ratified by the government. Thereafter, most of the nations promulgate their national aims/strategy by means of concept papers, strategic papers or white papers. India for one has never promulgated a comprehensive National Security Strategy. National Strategy may encompass various tenets of interests, geo-political factors, and guidelines

to deal with various scenarios. It comprises a broad spectrum of issues ranging from international events, regional issues, dynamics of the internal situation, and their influences on a nation's interest. Other issues, which fall under the national security concerns, include issues of energy security, food security, water security, etc.⁷ The legitimacy of the national interest as propounded by a country is laid down in the Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information principles adopted on 1 October 1995.⁸ This gives a legal framework to the extent to which a nation can extend its national interest.

The various processes which are utilised by some of the countries for formulating their National Strategy and may be examined are elaborated in succeeding

According to the US Army War College, 'National Interest' is derived from 'National Purpose'. Thereafter,

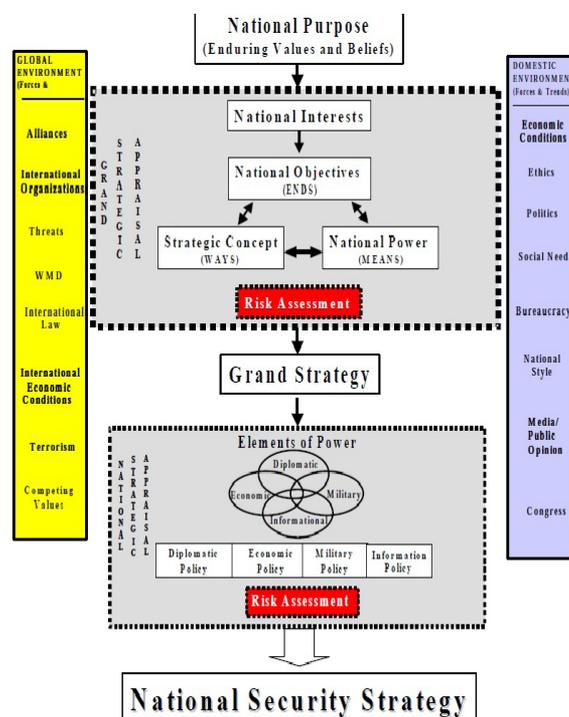


Figure 2. USAWC Strategy Formulation Model

the interests are analysed in the aspects of ends (national objectives), ways (strategic concepts) and means (national power) to derive the Grand Strategy and National Security Strategy (Figure 2).¹⁰

Japan has ratified a new National Security Strategy in 2013, which lays down the purpose, principles, national interests, and national security objectives. These are then examined considering the current geo-political situation to formulate a National Security Strategy.¹¹ What is noteworthy is that in most of the cases National Security Strategy is derived by analysing three main issues, namely, purpose/end state, methods/ways, and resources/means.

Relevance of Arthashastra

This treatise is written as a compilation of fifteen books and each of the books is divided into several chapters. This deals with a variety of facets of statesmanship. In general, the first five books deal with the internal

How to Think

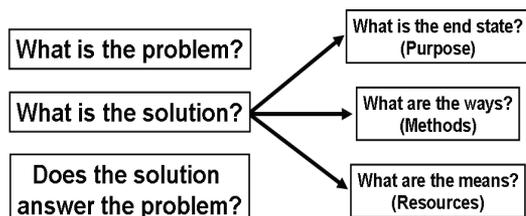


Figure 1: Problem Solving Model

paragraphs. At present, in the military domain, we deal primarily at the decision-making and campaign planning level for formulating Military Strategy. In the process of JOPP/MDMP the process of critical thinking starts after a mission has been given (Figure 1),⁹ which means it is a process which starts at strategic level after a national decision to go to war has been taken. Chanakya conversely recommends critical thinking to be done first in the realm of statecraft, incorporating various factors, to decide on whether to go to war or not, by the King (nation-state/government in present day) followed by the Military Strategy. Hence, the possibility of exploring Kautilya's Arthashastra for guidance is worth its effort.

administration of the state and the next eight books deal with relations with neighbouring states and the last two are miscellaneous in nature.¹² It defines and shows how a state must proceed to ‘acquire and protect the earth’ dealing exhaustively with all topics connected with internal administration and foreign relations.

It sets before a ruler the goal of conquest of the world and describes ways of attaining that goal,¹³ which can be related to ‘ends’, ‘means’ and ‘ways’. What is noteworthy is that the process for formulating National Security Strategy enunciated by the present day processes and Arthashastra is similar. In addition, Arthashastra also analyses the approach towards various adversaries based on the inter se superiority. It formulates and lays down the various tenets which must be deliberated upon before taking decisions at the national level. A combination of these would generate a ‘National Security Strategy’. Hence, it clearly emerges that the treatise has relevance with the contemporary strategic thinking.

Precepts of National Security Strategy

Analysis of critical aspects have been highlighted in various chapters of Book VII of Arthashastra by Shamashastry and have contemporary relevance for the formulation of National Security Strategy are enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.¹⁴

ARTHASHASTRA SETS BEFORE A RULER THE GOAL OF CONQUEST OF THE WORLD AND DESCRIBES WAYS OF ATTAINING THAT GOAL, WHICH CAN BE RELATED TO ‘ENDS’, ‘MEANS’ AND ‘WAYS’.

These tenets of National Security Strategy propounded by Kautilya will also be utilised to examine India’s relation/security strategy for Pakistan and China.

Chapter I deals with foreign policy and diplomacy and classifies the relation with the states based on their geographical location (Rajmandala). It then focuses on

appreciating the relative strength of the enemy (national power), followed by the six-fold policy (foreign policy) and the four *Upayas* (means). In these it highlights the measures to be taken against various adversaries and formulates the conduct in international relations and military domain. Kautilya emphasizes that six folds (peace [*sandhi*], war [*vigraha*], observance of neutrality [*asana*], marching [*yána*], alliance [*samsraya*], and making peace with one and waging war) are a subset of peace and war.¹⁵ Choice of policy to be adopted was to be based on the furtherance of national interest and growth of the nation. What is noteworthy is that the criteria for choosing the policy against a state were based on its geo-political location and relative national power.

Chapter II deals with measures to form alliances to negate a powerful adversary. It emphasises that these measures are transitory in nature based on either own power, status or shifting of power balance. These are derived after analysing the six-fold policy and relate to the means to deal with the adversary.

Application of Hard Power versus Soft Power

Chapter III highlights the inter se relation between equal, inferior and superior adversaries, the agreements to be undertaken between them, and factors to determine when to go to war. Power is described in terms of ‘soft power’ emanating from good counsel, ‘hard power’ emanating from economics and military strength; and individual power resulting from morality and personal energy (leadership). Kautilya’s expression of power had two sides—an overt and covert. Overt was friendly side and a covert used secret methods to achieve goals.¹⁶

Analysis

Chapter V considers factors of character, strength, and internal troubles to decide own action against a weak/strong enemy, akin to a SWOT analysis.

Domestic Factors

Chapter XIII lays down the various considerations

for dealing with the enemy in rear/internal disturbances.

Contemporary Relevance of Arthashastra to Formulate Military Strategy

Arthashastra gives a very detailed insight into the planning and execution of the military campaign, thereby connecting the strategy formulated at the national level with its execution at the military level. These teachings are contemporary and are comparable to the present-day teachings of Op Art, Maneuver Warfare, and Campaign Planning.

Campaign Planning

It includes a SWOT analysis to include the aspects of power, comparative strength, and weaknesses.

Six-fold policy advocates the following tenets which need to be factored in formulation of a National Strategy: Determination of deterioration, stagnation, and progress (strength/weaknesses); The nature of alliance (Threats); The character of equal, inferior and superior kings; Forms of agreement made by an inferior king; Neutrality after proclaiming war or after concluding a treaty of peace; Marching after proclaiming war or after making peace; The march of combined powers; Considerations about marching (opportunities) against an assailable enemy and a strong enemy; Causes leading to the dwindling, greed and disloyalty of the army (morale of the army); Considerations about the combination of powers; The march of combined powers; Agreement of peace with or without definite terms; and peace with renegades; peace and war by adopting the double policy; The attitude of an assailable enemy; friends that deserve help; Agreement for the acquisition of a friend or gold; Agreement of peace for the acquisition of land; Agreement for undertaking a work; Considerations about an enemy in the rear; Recruitment of lost power; Measures conducive to peace with a strong and provoked enemy; The attitude of a conquered enemy; The attitude of a conquered king; Making peace and

breaking it; The conduct of a Madhyama king, of a neutral king and of a circle of states.¹⁷

Leadership

It highlights the qualities that should be inherent in a leader.¹⁸

Maneuver

It lays emphasis on considerations of the ground which need to be analysed, based on which it states that army should select a convenient place for its maneuver and which proves unfavourable to the enemy.¹⁹

Factors of Space, Time, Strength

It lays down the various factors to be considered for force structuring and employment of various types of troops. In factor of time, it specifies that it must be considered as a period/timing of campaign in terms of season and state of economy/internal dynamics; as also the time of attack, i.e. night or day. Also, based on the objective the duration of ops/campaign should be determined. It also emphasises that these three are interrelated and should not be considered in isolation. It illustrates with examples the relationship between the three factors.²⁰

Importance of Rear Areas, Internal and External Troubles

These relate to securing of lines of communication and rear area security.

Types of Warfare

Arthashastra factors in aspects of intelligence gathering by use of spies, subversive actions, and asymmetric aspects of warfare. The various forms of warfare as propounded by Kautilya are as follows:

‘Mantrayuddha’ or War by Counsel. This is the exercise of diplomacy to win wars. This is to be utilised by a weaker state, as engaging in battle against such a state would not be wise or beneficial.

‘Prakasayuddha’ or Open Warfare. This is the form of normal/conventional warfare which follows all laid down rules of fighting a battle. This is to be undertaken by a superior state and on a land of own choosing.

Kutayuddha’ or Concealed Warfare. This form of warfare includes psychological warfare and treachery in the enemy’s camp. This includes subversive activities and Information Warfare.

‘Gudayuddha’ or Clandestine/Silent War. This type of war is waged by covert means to achieve the objective. It suggests means to win without fighting. It suggests measures such as assassinating important leaders, creating divisions among key ministers and classes, and spreading propaganda and disinformation.

Restoration of Peace in a Conquered Country

Kautilya laid emphasis on the final goal after a conflict, considering post-war/campaign planning for achieving an end state/notion of victory. He emphasised unless there was peace in conquered country, victory could not be achieved.²¹

Categorisation of China and Pakistan

Classification of the States

Applying the tenets propounded by Kautilya for deriving a National Security Strategy in the context of India’s present-day strategy to deal with China and Pakistan we need to cull out the measures to deal with China and Pakistan individually and as well as together. First, there is a need to understand



the classification of states done by Kautilya and identify the category in which both fit in the present-day context. In 2002, the former External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha quoted Kautilya to classify China and Pakistan as part of the first circle of states, stating as follows: Just as Kautilya talked of the Circle of States, a useful conceptual framework for the consideration of India’s foreign policy would be to view it as consisting of three concentric circles around a central axis—the first of our immediate region, the second of the larger world and the third of overarching global issues. First, there is the immediate Mandala (China and Pakistan), followed by intermediate Mandala comprising East Africa, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and South East Asia. The outer Mandala comprises Japan, Russia, and the USA.²² Hence, both these states according to the Rajmandala theory due to their geo-political location would fit into the category of ‘Ari’ or foe/enemy.

Identification of Power

In the present-day dynamics, ‘Comprehensive National Power (CNP)’ is a measure of the ‘National Strength’. To calculate CNP there are several indices, which combine various quantitative indices to create a single number, which purports to measure the power of a nation-state. These indices take into account both military factors (hard power) and economic and cultural factors (soft power).²³ Figure 3 depicts a list of twenty most powerful nations over the next four decades, according to the ‘Atlantic Council and the International Futures model’.²⁴

Rank	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
1	United States	United States	China	China	China	China
2	China	China	United States	United States	United States	India
3	India	India	India	India	India	United States
4	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan	Indonesia	Indonesia
5	Germany	Germany	Russia	Russia	Japan	Brazil
6	United Kingdom	Russia	Germany	Brazil	Brazil	Japan
7	France	United Kingdom	Brazil	Indonesia	Russia	Pakistan
8	Russia	Brazil	United Kingdom	Germany	United Kingdom	Russia
9	Brazil	France	France	United Kingdom	Pakistan	United Kingdom
10	Italy	South Korea	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia	Germany	Germany
11	South Korea	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia	France	Saudi Arabia	France
12	Indonesia	Italy	South Korea	Mexico	France	Nigeria
13	Mexico	Saudi Arabia	Mexico	Pakistan	Mexico	Saudi Arabia
14	Canada	Mexico	Turkey	Turkey	Nigeria	Mexico
15	Burma	Canada	Italy	South Korea	Turkey	Turkey
16	Spain	Pakistan	Pakistan	Nigeria	South Korea	Bangladesh
17	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	Canada	Canada	Bangladesh	Ethiopia
18	Turkey	Spain	Nigeria	Italy	Canada	South Korea
19	Pakistan	Nigeria	Burma	Bangladesh	Australia	Philippines
20	Nigeria	Australia	Australia	Australia	Philippines	Canada

Figure 3. National Power Ranking

Pakistan in the next few decades may be termed as a ‘weaker state’ as compared to India. China, on the other hand, would be termed as a ‘stronger state’. The various measures enunciated by Arthashastra to deal with a weaker and a stronger state independently as also

together, are enumerated next. With relation to Pakistan, though India may have an edge based on CNP, there are apprehensions that in an all-out war India may not be able to achieve an outright victory.²⁵ Hence, it may be prudent to say that in the current dynamics, except

for a few nations, it may not be feasible for a nation to carry out a large-scale occupation of the territory of another nation-state. Therefore, the aspect of physical occupation which was possible during the Kautilyan era may relate in present scenario to making a nation capitulate to your will.

Kautilya observes the following in his enunciation of six forms of policy: Whoever is inferior to another, shall make peace with him; whoever is superior in power shall wage war; whoever thinks “no enemy can hurt me, nor am I strong enough to destroy my enemy”, shall observe neutrality; whoever is possessed of necessary means, shall march against his enemy; whoever is devoid of necessary strength to defend himself, shall seek the protection of another; whoever thinks that help is necessary to work out an end shall make peace with one and wage war with another.²⁶ He amplifies that the ruler should choose the policy which enhances own national interest and growth. He also lays emphasis on selecting ‘peace over war’, saying ‘If advantages derivable from peace and war are of equal character, one should prefer peace.’²⁷

Security Strategy of India to Deal with Pakistan and China

As seen from the earlier-mentioned categorisation based on the observations of Kautilya, the policy to be adopted against Pakistan must be ‘Asana (observe neutrality)—no enemy can hurt me, nor am I strong enough to destroy my enemy.’ He further mentions that while maintaining neutrality, own resources/power should be enhanced and efforts should be made to degrade the enemy’s power. For this, he advocates fomenting trouble in the enemy state, which would mean maintaining overt peace while using asymmetric means. To affect this, it would be prudent to use economic and diplomatic means to reduce its standing in international fora as well as weaken its CNP. Even if Pakistan is considered as a weaker nation, there is a need to see the benefits of war, vis-à-vis, those accrued from peace towards the attainment of national interest,

keeping in mind the goal as propagated by Kautilya, of ensuring own national interest and growth.

Based on the earlier-mentioned categorisation of China, the policy to be adopted would relate to ‘Samsraya (form allies)—whoever is devoid of necessary strength to defend himself shall seek the protection of another.’ He further amplifies that ‘One shall make an alliance with a king who is stronger than one’s neighbouring enemy; in the absence of such a king, one should ingratiate oneself with one’s neighbouring enemy, either by supplying money or army or by ceding a part of one’s territory and by keeping oneself aloof; for there can be no greater evil to kings than alliance with a king of considerable power, unless one is actually attacked by one’s enemy.’²⁸ Hence, in the case of China, the policy to be adopted would be to form alliances, economic and military engagements, border resolution, and avoiding direct confrontation.

Dealing with Combined Threat of Pakistan and China

In case of two powerful neighbouring adversaries he suggests the following: Make peace with both on equal terms. Then begin to set one of them against the other by telling each that the other is a tyrant causing utter ruin to him, and thus cause dissension between them. When they are divided, he may put down each separately by secret or covert means.²⁹

Means to Deal with Pakistan and China

Kautilya proposed the use of four instruments of state power, *sama* or conciliation (diplomatic), *bhed* or dissension (informational), *dand* or force (military) and *daan* or gifts (economic), which are the instruments used by states even today (DIME).³⁰ However, Kautilya does not propound inaction in neutrality or in forming an alliance. He suggests the following: He (State) may make friendship with traitors, enemies, and wild chiefs who are conspiring against both the kings. Or, pretending to be a close friend of one of them, he may strike the other at the latter’s weak point by employing

enemies, and wild tribes. Or, having made friendship with both, he may form a Circle of States. Or, he may make an alliance with the “Madhyama” or the neutral king; and with this help, he may put down one of them or both.³¹ Hence, he emphasises on the role of concealed/asymmetric warfare, which should be utilized to target the weaknesses of both the weaker and the stronger enemy, while overtly maintaining peace. The choice of *Upayas* to be used must be on a case-to-case basis against both the adversaries.

Kautilya in his treatise put forth an elaborate and systematic process for critical thinking and formulating security strategy at the national level. This, in turn, can be utilised to formulate military thought, doctrines, concepts, war-games, and principles of war. Most of the military strategy advocated by Arthashastra is contemporary when compared with Op Art, Campaign Planning or Maneuver Warfare.

Arthashastra’s teachings are also closer home, and not just figuratively, as they were written to propose a national strategy for the Mauryan Empire which extended up to the western edge of the Indian subcontinent landmass (till present day Afghanistan). The similarities between the security requirements and challenges in that era and present-day exist, wherein the threat to the state/nation was envisaged from the west and the north. Moreover, Kautilya never proposed any forays outside the limit of the kingdom, akin to India’s reluctance in invading a foreign territory. Though there is a huge change in the technology and intensity of warfare; human nature, politics, and nation’s interest have not changed much. Hence, the study of Arthashastra is contemporary and relevant in the Indian context and should be encouraged at the highest level to formulate a National Security Strategy and prevent reinventing the wheel.

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There are three core U.S. national interests: physical security, defined as the protection against attack on the territory and people of the United States in order to ensure survival with fundamental values and institutions intact; promotion of values; and economic prosperity. The core interests are translated into the grand strategic objectives: preserve American security, bolster American economic prosperity, and promote American values. All administrations focus on these three objectives, but depending on a host of variables ranging from circumstances to personalities, presidents may choose to emphasize one objective over the others. For the incoming Carter administration, the initial emphasis was on human rights; for the Reagan administration, it was security; and for the Clinton administration, it was the economy. Security is once again the top priority, but in an increasingly globalized world populated by non-state actors with possible access to weapons of mass destruction, achieving physical security paradoxically may require an equal emphasis on promoting democratic values and generating global economic prosperity.
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