



# ISSUE BRIEF

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## Kautilya's Arthashastra and its Relevance in 21st Century

*"Without political will and good governance, no economic goals can be achieved. Without economic and administrative governance, populist ambitions cannot be realized in their true spirit."*

### Introduction

*Arthashastra* is the seminal treatise on statecraft by Kautilya of the fourth century BCE era which ushered in and assisted the establishment of Mauryan Empire, the first politically united Bharat. The treatise since has been ingrained in the Indian Culture and was followed till the 12th Century without much dilution. During the later Medieval Period and Modern Period, it seems to have lost its sheen and after British Rule as a Nation our thinking was prejudiced by the Western Culture and the priceless document languished as unknown to the world. Professor R. Shamashastry rediscovered the book in 1904, published in 1909, and wrote its first English translation in 1915. Ever since then, only two more translations that are in English have been written. One by Professor R. P. Kangle and the other by Shri L. N. Rangarajan. Now the question arises is, whether the treatise written in the 4th Century BCE is still relevant in the 21st Century?



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### Key Points

1. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is the seminal treatise on statecraft of the fourth century BCE which ushered in the establishment of Mauryan Empire, the first politically united Bharat. *Arthashastra* is unique since it contains universal truths that transcend the boundaries of time and space. The breadth and depth of analysis of statecraft is far superior to that of contemporary thinkers and significantly applicable in today's complex world dynamics.
2. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* treated the populace as the centre of gravity and the priority was symbiotic relation between the ruler and the populace focusing on their welfare. Any nation, irrespective of the system of government it has, which deviates from this theme is bound to perish.
3. The treatise comprehensively covers governance of state by dwelling in detail about economics, foreign policy, internal administration to include Law and Order, Human Resource Management, Conflict Management both internal and external and Utilisation of Military with an ultimate theme of *Yogakshema* which is the social welfare of the society.
4. Kautilya's macro strategy not only pushes for optimising and prioritising elements of state's constituents (*Prakriti's*) but also addresses the inherent risks (*Vyasanas*). He has clear ends, ways, and means in his doctrine with respect for risks which is evident in his elaborate examination into the aspect of each *Vyasana*.
5. The *Arthashastra* and contemporary strategic thought are analogous in several aspects having elements of power almost similar propounded 2,400 years ago. The treatise exhibits concepts of both realist and idealist schools of thought while remaining grounded in morality and ethics (*dharma*).
6. Kautilya's *Mandala* theory gives out various options to nation states for working out multiple templates to arrive at Comprehensive National Strategy. India as emerging power thus needs to derive its Comprehensive National Strategy with clear-cut enunciated National Priorities from our own ancient all-inclusive treatise of *Arthashastra*.

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## Kautilya's Arthashastra and ...

There had been a significant shift in the political, economic and social conditions in the past 2,400 years. From the autocratic and monarchical system of governments many nation states have shifted to the democratic form of government. The dominance of superstitious attitudes of the society has been replaced by the scientific outlook. Agriculture dominated economies have shifted to manufacturing and service activities. Internet revolution has virtually made the world borderless even in a politically demarcated world. Kautilya developed his theories based on the ultimate superiority of the King and the Kingdom as a way of governance in synchronisation with the social, economic political and security conditions prevalent in his time. But Kautilya's *Arthashastra* contains some universal truths that surpass the boundaries of time and space. In fact, its relevance is increasing day by day when the nations are grappling with myriad complex issues for suitable permanent solutions, but in vain. The thoughts of the modern strategists, economists and diplomats are based on paradigms that may not be time-tested. On the other hand the human progress portrayed in the *Arthashastra* visualises the symbiotic progress of spirituality, moral values and materialism which has stood the test of time. Kautilya's approach to various problems was very scientific, rational and practical; it was not dogmatic and utopian. The real test of usefulness of any treatise is not just its comprehensiveness or just the beauty of its logic, but also the demonstration of its practical application in real life situations with enduring success, for which the Mauryan Empire bears the testimony.

Kautilya the perceptor and his masterwork the *Arthashastra* are much misunderstood. Chanakya is maligned and often ridiculed as a teacher of unethical, not to say immoral, practices and as an advocate of the theory that "the ends justifies the means." The only theory anyone recalls is the "*mandala theory*," "Every neighbouring state is an enemy and the enemy's enemy is a friend." This popular view is not so simplistic but also untrue. The paper endeavours to emphasise the relevance of Kautilya and the *Arthashastra* in the 21st Century.

### Theme of *Arthashastra*

प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम् ।  
नात्मप्रियं हितं राज्ञः प्रजानां तु प्रियं हितम् ।

*"In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness; in their welfare his welfare. He shall not consider as good only that which pleases him but treat as beneficial to him whatever pleases his subjects."*<sup>1</sup>

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* treated the populace as the centre of gravity and the priority was symbiotic relation between the ruler and the populace focusing on their welfare. Any nation, irrespective of the system of government it has, which deviates from this theme is bound to perish even in today's modern world and it thus opens up chapter for the relevance of *Arthashastra* in contemporary world dynamics.

### Who was Kautilya?

Kautilya is also known as Vishnugupta and Chanakya. The name Kautilya was derived from his gotra, Chanakya from his father Chanak and Vishnugupta was the name he earned while undergoing preachings at Takshila, presently in Pakistan. A number of stories revolve around this enigmatic character. Chanakya vowed to destroy the Nanda dynasty as he was insulted by the arrogant King of Pataliputra, Dhana-Nanda ordering him to leave a feast after he had started eating.<sup>2</sup> He destroyed Nanda and instated Chandragupta as King. Chandragupta, who ruled from 324 to 301 BCE, thus earned the title of a liberator and the first emperor of *Bharata* or India. Another story related to his birth, that he was born with a complete set of teeth, a sign of becoming King, which was inappropriate for Brahmins. Chanakya's teeth were therefore broken and later prophesied that he will rule through another. So, Chanakya was a born Kingmaker who set out with a definitive purpose to replace an unjust king with a just king. Chanakya was a fearless personality, not afraid of death, disgrace or defeat, was compassionate of the poor and evil to schemers. While embarking on this mission he found the earlier works on statecraft unsatisfactory in many respects, and he composed his own definitive work presenting ideas of statecraft, in his great treatise, the

**Arthashastra.** Kautilya was the organising genius behind the autocratic centralised state that Ashoka inherited and expanded. Mauryan political system reached a very high level of structural delineation and cultural secularisation, as its traditional orientations and attitudes gave way to more dynamic decision-making processes. India attained political unity for the first time under the Mauryas. In the pre-Mauryan age, there was no centralised administration. History tells us that Chandragupta Maurya was the first Indian king who established his rule over an extended India, an India greater than even British India, the boundaries of which lay beyond the frontiers of modern India along the borders of Persia. If we take into account the slowness of land and sea travel 2,400 years ago, administering such a vast area was the equivalent to ruling the entire globe today.

### Meaning of Arthashastra

*Artha* is one of the *purusharthas*, the others being *dharma*, *kama* and *moksha*. *Artha* has a much wider meaning than just wealth. The source of livelihood is wealth and the wealth of the nation encompasses the territory and its inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> *Shashtra* is science, therefore the science by which the wealth of a nation is acquired and maintained in achieving the purpose of Dharma in context of a nation is *Arthashastra*.

### Content and Form

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* contains 15 *adhikaranas* or books. The books have a total of 150 Chapters, 180 topics and a total of 6,000 *shlokas*.<sup>4</sup> It is also interesting to note that educational practices during Ancient India and Medieval Period were mostly by rote, thus the literature was passed down the generations verbally. The first five books deal with "*tantra*," i.e., internal administration of the state. The next eight books deal with "*avapa*" or its relations with neighbouring states and the last two are miscellaneous in character. Book Six enumerates the seven *prakritis* which are constituents of ideal state. Book Seven contains the six *gunas* or the foreign policy. The eighth *adhikarna* is concerned with *vyasanas*, i.e., the calamities, shortcomings or weaknesses affecting the various *prakritis*. The ninth *adhikarna* deals with preparation for war and

describes the kind of troops that should be mobilised for an expedition, proper seasons for starting an expedition, precautions to be taken and the dangers to be guarded against before starting, and so on. The tenth *adhikarna* deals with fighting, and describes the camping of the Army, its marching on a campaign, various modes of fighting, types of battle arrays and other related topics.<sup>5</sup>

### Uniqueness of Arthashastra

*Arthashastra* is unique since it contains universal truths which transcend the boundaries of time and space. The treatise comprehensively covers governance of state by dwelling in detail on economics, foreign policy, internal administration to include Law and Order, Human Resource Management, Conflict Management, both internal and external, and Utilisation of Military with an ultimate theme of *Yogakshema* which is the social welfare of the society. Kautilya was pragmatic in his approach and has focused on ends rather than means. He is probably the first to give more importance to the treasury and prophesied that the economy of a state should take priority since it was the source of power and welfare. Thus, all the aspects of a nation state whether it is a monarchy or democracy have been dealt with in *Arthashastra*. There can be two schools of thought regarding the relevance. One may argue this as popularly known in military parlance "situating the appreciation," so to say that it is happening and we are interpreting the treatise to fit the narrative. The other can be more pragmatic and accept it as a reality, learn, deliberate and apply. This treatise in Sanskrit can always be interpreted in different ways and the outcome is directly related to the ingenuity, vision and wisdom of the interpreter.

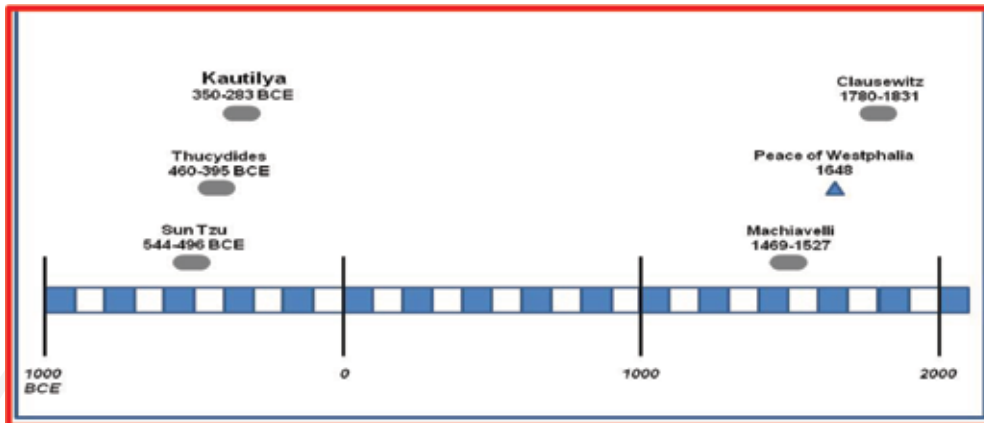
### Context of Kautilya in History

Various versions do exist on the date of *Arthashastra*, whether it was written during the period of Chandragupta or post-Mauryan period. But it is very clear that Kautilya lived between 350 BC to 283 BC post-Sun Tzu and Thucydides, as shown in Figure 1. Thucydides dealt with political realism wherein the state relations are constructed upon the emotion of fear and self-interest. Sun Tzu was a Military General and most of his writings revolve around tactical concepts

touching operational and strategic realms vis-à-vis Kautilya's *Arthashastra* which has been written as a statesman evolving Grand Strategy to tactics.

Therefore, Kautilya's breadth and depth of analysis is far superior to that of contemporary thinkers of that era.

**Figure 1: Context of Kautilya vis-à-vis other eminent Strategists in History<sup>6</sup>**



Two thousand years down the line a similarity is drawn with Machiavelli and his treatise "The Prince." Machiavelli is considered as the founder of modern political science, a discipline based on the actual state of the world and not the Utopian ideal state echoing very similar thoughts of Kautilya. Clausewitz, through his famous treatise "On War," initiated the concept "War is the continuation of policy by other means" and "War is an act of force to impose on enemy our will." Clausewitz also talked about asymmetrical war including violence by non-state actors. The peace of Westphalia brought in the idea of sovereignty of nations, territorial integrity and principle of non- interference in another country's affairs became the basis of International Law. But the

globalisation, terrorism and violence by non-state actors has questioned the validity of the Westphalian system. There are commonalities between the Sun Tzu's Art of War and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as far as Military domain is concerned; both highlighted the importance of Weather, Terrain, Military Leadership, Quality of Training, Logistics and Inter-relatedness of Power, Place and Time as shown in Figure 2. Kautilya's prowess lies in describing each aspect of Intelligence, Covert Operations, Leadership and Management of External Relations as separate operational manual. In brief, the teachings of Kautilya are much wider in scope and have maintained their relevance all through their historical timeline.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 2: Commonalities between Sun Tzu and Kautilya on Warfare**



*Acumen lies in striking en on a grd of own choosing, Striking inferior arm with a superior arm. –Sun Tzu*

*In daytime Crow kills the Owl, at night Owl kills Crow. –Kautilya*

*Fast and Swift Ops vis-à-vis Protracted Ops. –Sun Tzu*

*Crocodile drags the Dog in water, on land Dog drags the Crocodile. –Kautilya*

### Kautilya's views of a Nation State

The King of the Kautilyan state is not an absolute monarch. Kautilya bound the King in an implicit social contract to ensure social welfare, internal stability, and security from external aggression. Rangarajan defines the King's contract with society as a three-fold obligation, i.e., *Rakshana* (protection of the state and subjects), *Palana* (administration of the state), and *Yogakshema* (welfare of the population). His views on nation state do find relevance in present context. Firstly, State has an obligation to pursue self-interest even more than glory. Secondly, no alliance is conceived to be a permanent system and even within alliance one must pursue to increase own power and manoeuvre to strengthen its position, at the same time prevent neighbouring states to align against it. Thirdly, the purpose for ruthlessness should be to build harmonious empire. Fourthly, emphasis on separation of politics from religion and theology. In fact, he was the first one to propose strategic objectives should take priority over religion and morality. Fifthly, Kautilya was of the view equilibrium will never exist and *Vijigishu* should always endeavour to increase his power since *matsya-nyaya* (law of fishes) is universal. The geopolitics over the last two centuries is no different from the Kautilyan theory except for minor deviations forced upon by the environmental realities at various timelines of history.

### Elements of a State

Whatever the form of government, the presence of certain elements is essential to make a state. This is embodied as seven *Prakritis*. *Swamin* is the ruler in present context the leadership of prevailing government. *Amatya* is the ministers, intellectuals and diplomats. *Janapada* is the people, territory of the people including skills and infrastructure. *Durga* is the fortified capital in present context to defend the territory and people. *Kosa* is the treasury or economy of a nation in present context. *Danda* is the Army and *Mitra* is the ally. The *Mitra* or the ally is the ruler of different similarly organised state. Considering ally to be the foreign element, the state essentially has six elements. *Vyasanas* are calamities which can ruin any of the *prakritis* and the state must guard against these. The *Shastra* also refers to the three powers that operate in a state. They are *Utsahashakti*, the personal energy and

drive of the ruler, *Prabhavashakti*, the power of the Army and treasury and *Mantrashakti*, the power of counsel and diplomacy. Kautilya maintains that *Mantrashakti* takes precedence over both and *Prabhavashakti* takes precedence over *Utsahashakti*.<sup>8</sup>

### State Foreign Policy

*Sadgunya* or six *gunas* or policies which sums up foreign policy. *Samdhi* is making a treaty containing conditions, i.e., the policy of peace. *Samsraya* is seeking shelter with another king or forming an alliance. *Asana* is the policy of remaining quiet or neutral. *Yana* is marching on an expedition. *Dvaidhibhava* is dual policy of *Samdhi* with one king and *Vigraha*, i.e., the policy of hostility with other. The purpose of all policies is to grow stronger in the long run than the enemy.<sup>9</sup>

### Instruments of Foreign Policy

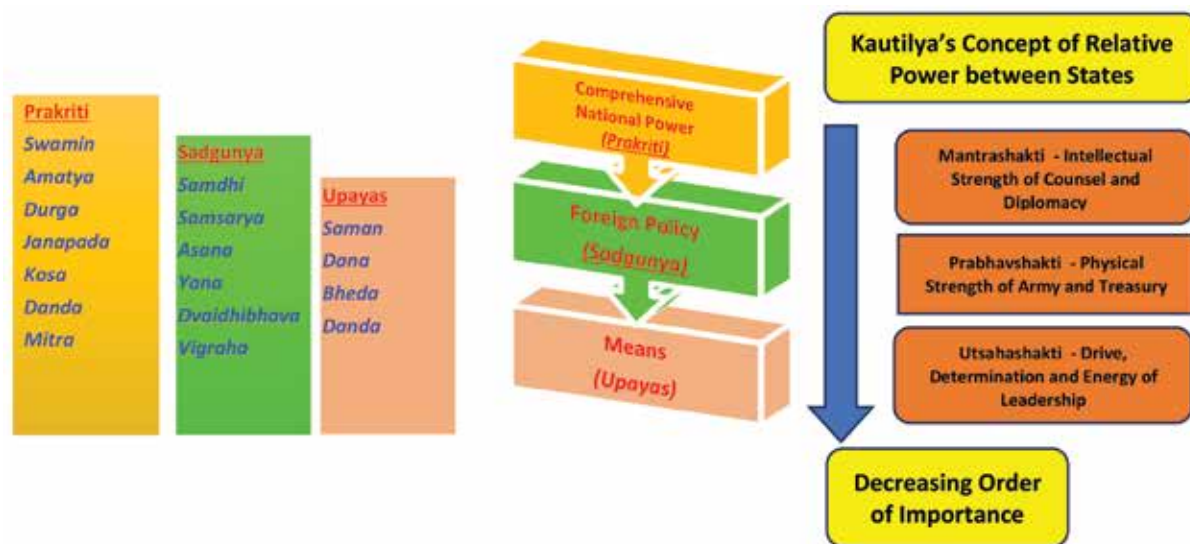
Alongside the *Sadgunyas*, there are four *Upayas*, i.e., *Saman*, *Dana*, *Bheda* and *Danda* meant for overcoming opposition.<sup>10</sup> The first two should be used to subjugate weak kings, the last two for strong kings. They sum up the means that are helpful in securing the submission of other to own will. *Arthashastra* emphasises that "State is fragile organization and the statesman does not have the moral right to risk its survival on ethical restraint."

In present context, the *prakritis* are the essential elements of Comprehensive National Power (CNP), *sadgunyas* are the policies to deal with foreign nations and *upayas* are the means to overcome resistance being presently applied by all progressive nations.

### Categories of Vigraha

Kautilya does not limit the policy of war (*Vigraha*) to physical conflicts alone. Kautilya classifies war into four categories: diplomatic offensive measures (*Mantrayuddha*), an open war at a designated time and place (*Prakasayuddha*), a secret war, i.e., using treachery and psychological warfare to surprise the enemy (*Kutayuddha*), and an undeclared war, i.e., using clandestine methods, assassinations, and secret agents (*Gudayuddha*). The treatise talks about breaking up confederacies and oligarchies by sowing dissension using "undeclared war." Kautilya's principles indicate his clarity of thought for consolidating the capture of territories and creating an enduring victory.

Figure 3: Kautilya's Concept of Nation State enunciated in *Arthashastra*



### Kautilya's Strategy

Kautilya's political purpose drives the design of strategy and strategic choices by the *Vijigishu*. Kautilya's political purpose was the happiness of the state and this objective drove the Kautilyan state's strategy. In line with contemporary emphasis on adopting a proactive strategy, Kautilya insists the *Vijigishu* to prevent the state's stagnation or decline. Instead, Kautilya pushes for the adoption of strategies, which would assure continued progress of the state and the decline of enemy states. Kautilya has clear ends, ways, and means in his doctrine. Kautilya's respect for risks in strategy is evident in his elaborate examination into the aspect of *Vyasana* (calamities) which can reduce the strength of a state's constituent elements. Kautilya's macro strategy of optimising and prioritising state's *Prakriti* addresses the inherent risks in strategy. Kautilya's treatise provides clear territorial, socio-economic and relative power end states for the *Vijigishu's* state. Kautilya's ways for reaching the end state are by optimising the *prakriti*, while the means are the *sadgunya* (sixfold policy) as well as the *upayas* (four stratagems).

Kautilya's treatise includes contemporary concepts of pre-emption and prevention. For a weaker king facing a belligerent stronger king, Kautilya prescribes

pre-emptive options using diplomacy, information operations, and covert military operations. Kautilya advises the weaker king to adopt strategies, which would prevent the stronger state from launching successful offensive operations, thus preventing the capture of the weaker state.

Kautilya holds contemporary concepts such as information operations and perception management as vital for the *Vijigishu's* policy formulation and execution. Kautilya's offensive usage of information operations is visible in his advice for breaking up rival states by sowing dissension through undeclared warfare. Kautilya indicates that a conqueror perceived as righteous will face relatively less opposition in securing the submission of the defeated king.

Akin to the contemporary theory for consolidating operational victories into strategic successes, Kautilya encourages the *Vijigishu* to win over both the defeated king and the vanquished population through pragmatic and ethical policies underpinned on successful perception management practices. Instead of forcing the vanquished population to change their culture, Kautilya advises the *Vijigishu* to adopt the captured state's culture. Kautilya's doctrine sagely prescribes ethical, just, progressive, and favourable policies for the captured territories.

Figure 4: Kautilya’s Strategic Acumen

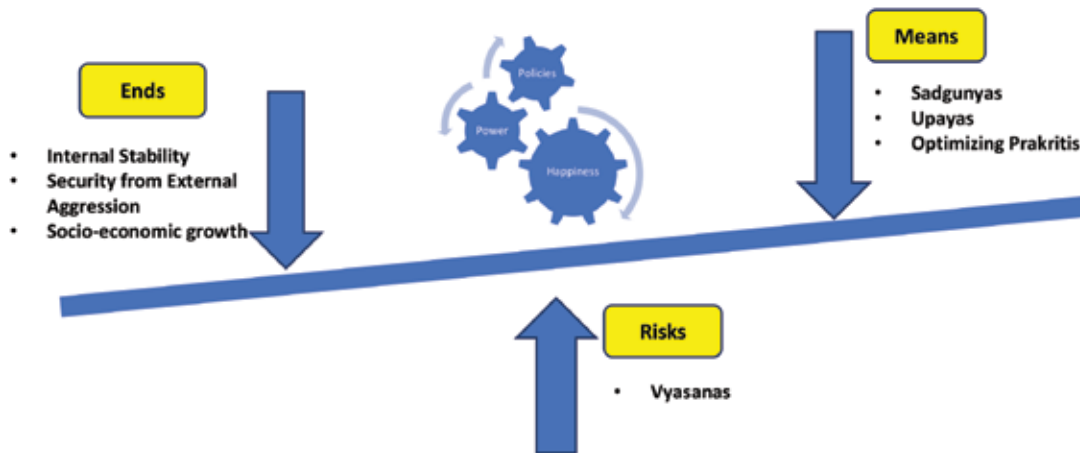


Figure 5: Comparison of Kautilya’s Concept and Tellis Model of CNP<sup>11</sup>

Tellis Model	Kautilya’s Equivalent <i>Prakritis</i>
<b>National Resources</b> Technology Enterprise Human Resources Financial/Capital Resources Physical Resources	<b>Janapada and Kosa</b>
<b>National Performance</b> External Constraints Infrastructural Capacity Ideational Resources	<b>Swamin and Amatya</b>
<b>Military Capability</b> Strategic Resources + Conversion Capability = Combat Proficiency	<b>Durga and Danda</b>

**Comparison with the Contemporary CNP**

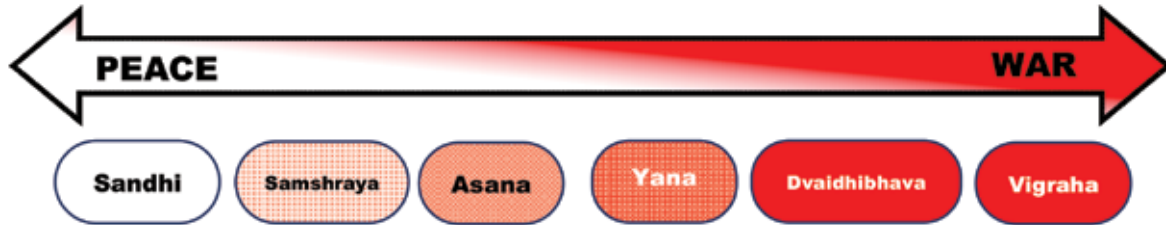
There is a need to have a comparative look at the concept of CNP as on today and that enunciated by Kautilya. The contemporary framework of national power propounded by Ashley J. Tellis, comprises three realms: national resources, national performance, and military capability. National resources are the “building blocks” which enable a nation to dominate “global economy and increase its hegemonic potential.” National performance analyses a country’s capacity to convert the latent

power of national resources into tangible usable power. The state’s military capability, which is the “first line of defence” against competitors in a fluid system of international politics, forms the third realm of national power. Scholars assert that political will and the populace’s domestic support for the government both play a key role in conversion of a state’s latent power into an operational reality. The *Arthashastra* and contemporary strategic thought are analogous in several aspects, i.e., elements of power are almost similar to those propounded 2,400 years ago. The treatise exhibits concepts of both realist and idealist schools of thought. While remaining grounded in dharma (morality and ethics) Kautilya propounds hegemony as a solution to survival in an anarchical environment. Therefore, the nay challengers to the relevance of Kautilyan concept need to rethink.

**Conflict Range**

*Sadgunya* policy can be associated to a war-peace continuum. Kautilya’s sixfold policy shows the similarity to the conflict continuum of the contemporary range of military operations. A nation state will always have to deal within the war-peace spectrum and have *prakritis* modulated, especially the *Danda* or the Military. Consequently, the strength of Military will have major impact on other *prakritis* and CNP.

Figure 6: Conflict Continuum



### Mandala Theory

Kautilya based his *mandala* on the contention that there are twelve primary kings with *Vijigishu* (the conqueror) at the center:

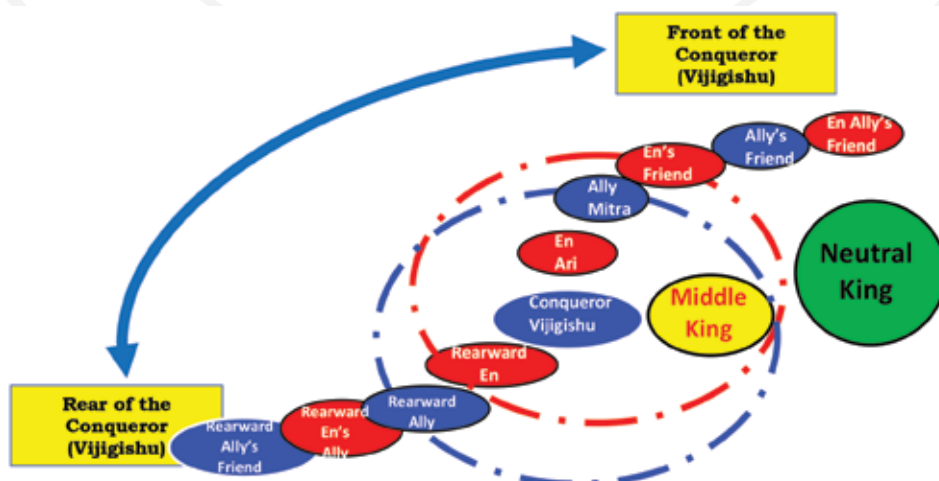
- A king ruling contiguous to the conqueror's territory is an enemy (*ari*).
- A king contiguous to the enemy but separated from the conqueror only by the enemy, is an ally (*mitra*) of the conqueror. A neighbouring foe of considerable power is styled an enemy; and when he is involved in calamities, he becomes assailable; and when he has little or no help, he becomes destructible; he deserves to be harassed or reduced.
- In front of the conqueror and close to his enemy, would be situated kings such as the conqueror's ally. Next to him, the enemy's ally (*arimitra*), and next to the last, the conqueror's ally's ally (*mitramitra*), and next, the enemy's ally's ally (*arimitramitra*).
- In the rear of the conqueror, there would be situated a rearward enemy (*pārshnigrāha*), a rearward ally (*ākrandā*), an ally of the rearward enemy

(*pārshnigrāhāsāra*), and an ally of the rearward ally (*ākrandāsāra*).

- That foe who occupies a territory close to that of the conqueror is a natural enemy; while he who is merely antagonistic and creates enemies for the conqueror is a factitious enemy.
- The one who is situated close to the territory of the immediate enemy of the conqueror is a natural ally; while he whose friendship is courted for self-maintenance is an acquired ally.
- A king who occupies a territory close to both the conqueror and his immediate enemy in front and who is capable of helping both the kings, whether united or not, or of resisting either of them individually is termed a *madhyama* (middle) king.

A king who is situated beyond the territory of any of the above kings and who is very powerful and capable of helping the enemy, the conqueror, and the *madhyama* king together or individually, or of resisting any of them individually, is a neutral king (*udāsīna*).

Figure 7: Schematic of Kautilya's Mandala

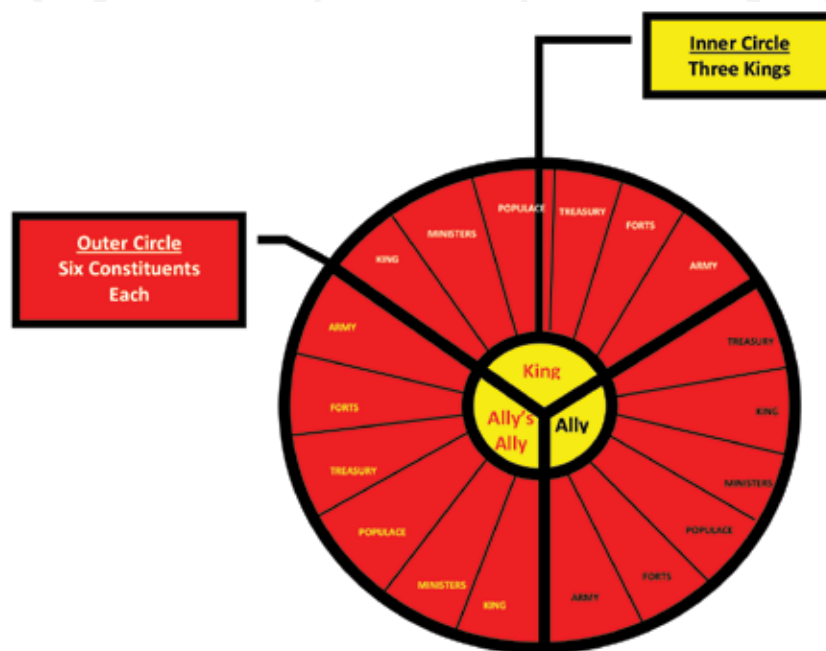


All the advice in the *Arthaśāstra* is directed to the would-be conqueror (*Vijigishu*). The underlying assumption is that neighbours always turn hostile. Another assumption is that a common enemy creates allies. But the categories of enemy and ally are not fixed. Under certain conditions, allies can become friends and vice versa. The twelve types of combinations are classified by the *Arthaśāstra*; they are not to be taken as the permanently existing situation in a *mandala*. Kautilya assumes that except for the neutral and “indifferent” kings/states, all others in the *mandala* are of equal strength. Therefore, in a concrete situation,

the *mandala* gets divided into two more or less equal blocs, with one bloc’s leader seeking to establish hegemony over all the others. The strengths of blocs being equal, diplomacy, strategy and tactics assume great importance in attaining hegemony.

Interplay of Kings or nation states will depend upon the capability of *Vijigishu* or the *Ari* to influence the six *prakritis* of own, Ally and Ally’s Ally which will form 18 constituents. Similarly, to emerge stronger within the *mandala*, the *prakritis* of Middle King as well as Neutral King forming 72 constituents are required to be influenced by *Vijigishu*.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 8: Schematic of Interplay of Three Kings and their 18 Constituents**



By way of broad strategy, the *Arthaśāstra* recommends that the would-be conqueror should first proceed against the hostile neighbour and, with the newly-acquired power, tackle the neutral king/state. If he succeeds, he should proceed against the most powerful or “indifferent” king. That would complete his hegemony over the *mandala* as a whole, for the rest would fall in line. If there are no neutral or “indifferent” kings, the conqueror should first tackle his enemies and then secure the allegiance of an enemy’s allies. In the event there are only two other states, one hostile and the other friendly, the would-be conqueror should

crush the neighbouring state regardless of whether it is hostile or friendly and then proceed against the other. Finally, if there are a number of neighbouring states, they should be tackled one by one, gaining strength in the process.

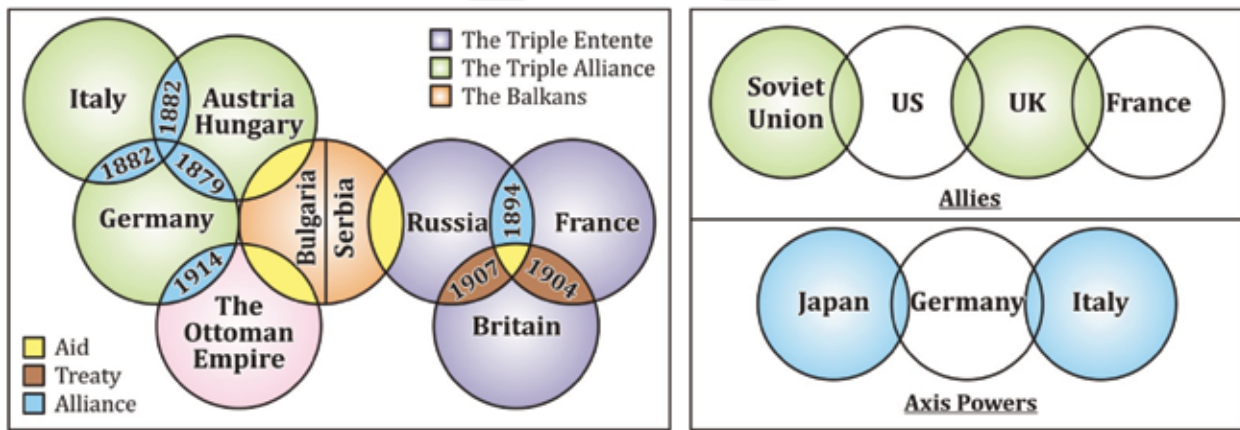
### Evolution of Global Order in 21st Century

Classical alliances could be seen during initial period of 20th Century when the race for colonialism was at a peak. Tri-entente and Tri-alliances both pre-WWI alliances were akin to Kautilya’s *mandala* concept. Also, the mismanagement of after-effects of WWI led to WWII, the major cause being the reparations

and exploitation of the German people much against the teachings of Kautilya. WWII commenced with invasion of Poland, the weaker state sandwiched between the Allies and Germans. If we consider Germans as *Vijigishu* with France as enemy (Ari) and Russians as Rearward Enemy, the *mandala* of Kautilya

seems to fall in place. During both WWI and WWII one could see Italy changing equations based on the self-interest much similar to *sadgunya* of *Arthashastra*. One assumption can be made when the nations with similar strength are in conflict zone the cultivation or management of allies by the policies suggested by Kautilya seems pragmatic.

**Figure 9: Schematic of Pre-WWI and Pre-WWII Alliances**



Post WWII, much stronger alliances were formed in the form of NATO, leading to formation of two super blocs based on the US and the USSR. The Cold War era saw development of WMDs, arms race, overt and covert manoeuvres apart from contest for energy and global commons. The nations chose to align themselves based on their self-interests. Nehru was known to be an admirer of Kautilya, probably the Diplomatic Enclave the extension of Lutyens was therefore named Chanakyapuri. The influence could be seen in the foreign policy during the formative stage of the nation when Nehru chose to be non-aligned with either of the super blocs till India grew in strength. The policy shaped the development of the nation. However, to increase their respective strength in Indian subcontinent both the US and the USSR made forays to cultivate allies in Pakistan by the US and in India by the USSR.

The beginning of the 21st Century saw the disintegration of the USSR and the World emerging into a unipolar one dominated by the US. The US went into Gulf War I to prove its hegemony and later into Gulf War II in spite of opposition from many other nations. Therefore, if the US is compared to Kautilya's *Vijigishu* which

had already emerged as strong power, the other states bow allegiance to its interests even though differences exist. The *Vijigishu* thus crushes weaker states at its will—examples being the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. If we analyse these wars further, both are militarily successful but strategically a stalemate since the populace (Janapada) in Kautilya's parlance was not given its due importance. The Modern World is learning that population is Centre of Gravity at the cost of human casualties and economic losses while tackling insurgencies. The same was prophesied by Kautilya almost 2,400 years back.

The evolution of the information age in this century and continuous revolution in technology has changed the dynamics of the World. The power of information has taken a form of force which all the nations across the globe need to reckon with. A major shift is seen from military alliances to economic cooperations, lately giant cooperations like Apple, Google, Facebook and Amazon have grown bigger than governments and can buy any of their competitors. Therefore, the economics is governing the geopolitics as taught by Kautilya.

### Global Order in 21st Century

The global order portends the multipolar world but the US still remains the most powerful nation both economically and militarily. There is shifting of locus of power from Euro-America to Asia with emerging China and India, resurgent Russia and Japan strengthening its military to tackle challenges posed by China and North Korea in East China Sea.

Though the militaries across the world are shrinking in strength the sophistication and military expenditure are increasing manifold.<sup>13</sup> WMD proliferation is a reality today and the World is yet to arrive at any consensus on NPT, CTBT or FMCT. This will remain a sore issue in the near future especially with the likelihood of these weapons falling in the hands of non-state actors. The nations are in the race of sophisticating the means of delivery by Land, Sea and Air for completing the Triad.

Geo-economics is driving the world over geopolitics and accordingly a number of cooperations are emerging globally as well as regionally, BRICS, SCO, ASEAN and SAARC, to name a few. BRICS have overtaken G7 countries as far as economic growth is concerned with latest IMF figures suggesting cumulative GDP of BRICS at \$37.4 trillion while that of G7 is \$34.5 trillion.<sup>14</sup>

The race for energy will continue to drive geopolitics and the century is likely to see the dawning of a post-petroleum age within a decade. The knowledge century is emerging as information century with a number of innovations and inventions within the first decade of the 21st Century exceeding that of the complete 20th Century.

Non-state actors will continue to challenge the external as well as internal security means. These non-state actors can easily receive financial aid from external nations. The military wings of these groups do not move from the area of conflict; instead they create conflicts right from their homes to controlled areas and then to areas where they desire to control. Contrary to the state funded troops, these non-state military wings continue to attain extensive funds, financial and technical assistance from offshore accounts and untraceable bogus organisations. Arrangements like these allow the military wings to continue their fights

without any external or third front opinions thus diminishing the boundaries.

National defence is no longer ensured only through maintaining the sanctity of one's borders, but is also highly dependent upon the ability to navigate safely through the global commons. These commons—sea, air, space, and cyberspace—enable militaries to protect national territory and interests, as well as facilitate the passage of goods, people, communication, and data upon which every member of the international community depends. Yet, a number of emerging trends are threatening this freedom of action needing absolute actions to protect global commons.

### Possible Scenarios

Asia is likely to remain a theatre of Great Power competition. China's economic and strategic footprint in Asia is enormous similarly resurgent Russia has established its prowess in the Putin era. At the same time, many Asian powers are looking to avoid their bets against excessive dependence on a particular major power. The US will retain a significant role in global politics as well as in Asia. China, Russia and the US, these three powers will retain primacy owing to their economic and military strength. Therefore, the global dynamics will portend around this Strategic Triangle as shown in Figure 10.

The triangle will *not* exist in a vacuum. There are other relationships, especially with countries like India, Iran, Japan and Pakistan that will influence the triangular dynamics. Furthermore, each country in the triangle has other interests in a host of sectors and has a range of imperatives at different levels—sub-national, national, regional and global. These powers therefore are likely to increase their clout through other growing nations like India, Japan, Pakistan or nations having considerable economic growth like Brazil and South Africa or neighbours within the region affecting each other. All these nations are similar to *mandala* of Kautilya with or without territorial boundaries and are likely to pursue their self-interests based on the Kautilya's *sadgunas* to meet their economic and military objectives. Therefore, the theory of increasing one's own strength and decreasing the strength of the rivals is much applicable in the present context.

Figure 10: Schematic of Possible Scenarios – No Permanent Allies



### Asian Context – China as *Vijigishu*

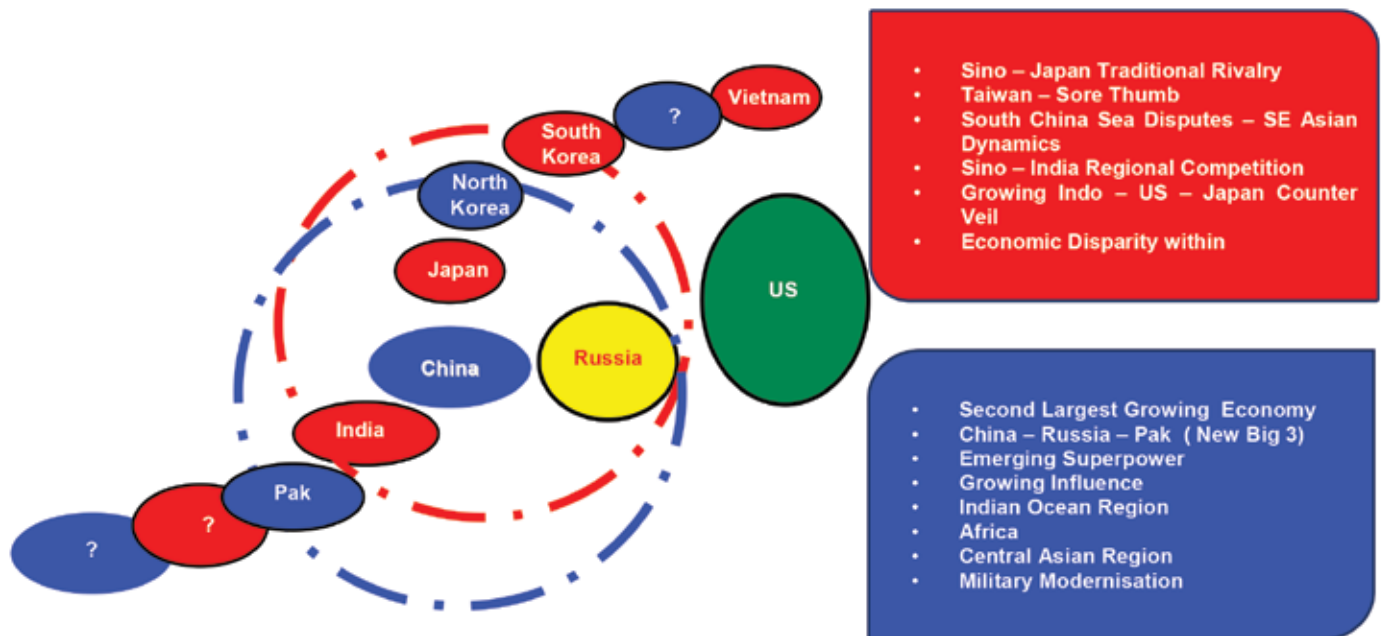
As a *Vijigishu* (would-be conqueror), China represents Kautilya's ideal of an aspiring regional power pursuing the twin objectives of "power" and "happiness." The concentration of China's internal power in the political leadership is similar to Kautilya's prioritisation of *prakṛitis*. However, unlike Kautilya's king with his social contract, China does not exhibit an obligatory leader-population contract. China's *mandala* or circle of states keeping Japan (*ari*) and India (*pārshnigrāha*) as an adversary provides a viewpoint for Asian subtleties. China's military modernisation and diplomatic offensive strategy against the US and simultaneous strengthening of economic interlinkages is in line with Kautilya's strategy against a superior state. China's foreign policies do bear certain similarities to Kautilya's various options of the *sadgunya* concept.

China's *mandala* model indicates the importance of the US (Neutral King) role in Asian dynamics. Developing alliances with India and Japan are key aspects of the US

counterbalance to China in Asia. China's lack of allies creates vulnerability in China's policies. Repeated disruptive actions in the South China Sea have renewed tensions with US-led countries in the region. Both China and Russia (Middle King) are distrusted by the West for opposing US global dominance. As well both countries do not support the values of democracy distributed by the US, Japan and India. Therefore, China is founding mutually supportive alliances with Russia and Pakistan to form together a new bipolar global order and neutralise challenges posed by the US, Japan and India.

The ideological drivers of China's growth are akin to the *Arthashastra's* objective of continued national progress through the pursuit of national power. Although the *mandala* theory oversimplifies China's international relations as shown in Figure 11, it does not provide a cohesive picture of the international power system. However, China's *mandala* can identify potential regional alliances as well as strategic alliances for promoting Chinese interests and countering the threat. Kautilya's

Figure 11: China as *Vijigishu* : An oversimplified model of *Mandala*



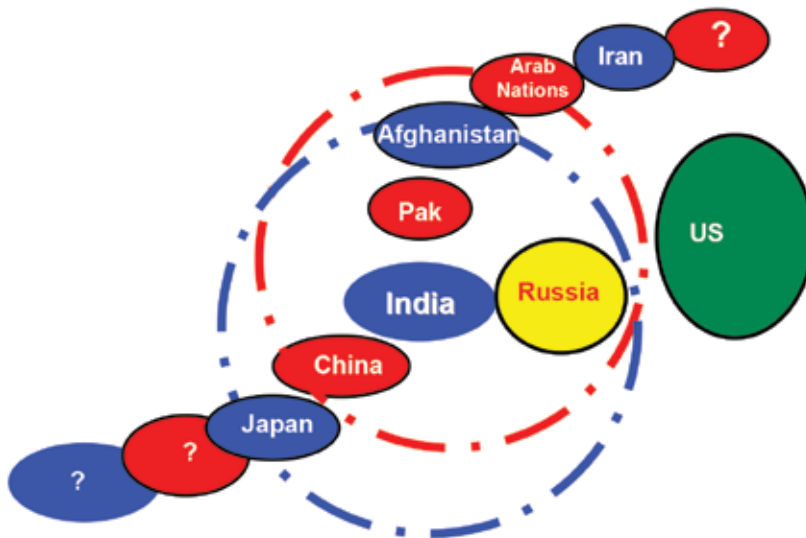
concepts of relative power and the sixfold policy also hold true for contemporary China. Consistent with Kautilya's concept of relative power, China designs its foreign policy based on the relative power status of other nations. China adopts a different approach for interacting with the US or Russia, as opposed to interactions with weaker nations like Vietnam or the Philippines. China's foreign policy choices are in line with Kautilya's *sadgunya* (sixfold) policy and his advice for a weaker state challenging a stronger state.

China's policies of military modernisation, peace treaties, and dual policy resemble Kautilya's sixfold policy. Kautilya's policy of *Yana* (Preparing for War) is similar to China's policy of military modernisation. Similar to Kautilya's concept of *Sandhi* (peace treaties), China used peace and peace treaties for progressively developing its national power. Kautilya's concept of undeclared warfare can describe China's cyberwarfare against the US. With India, China adopts Kautilya's policy of *Dvaidhibhava* (Dual Policy) by adopting

Pakistan as an ally and maintaining confrontational relations with India.

#### Indian Context

Applying Mandala Theory in the Indian Context as shown in Figure 12 and assuming India as a *Vijigishu*, Pakistan as *Ari*, China as *Parsanigraha* (Rearward Enemy), Russia as Middle King and the US as Neutral King, a number of options emerge for India. India is required to work on the *prakritis* prescribed by Kautilya. Therefore, there is a need for a stable and strong political leadership, diplomacy to work towards achieving national goals, optimum exploitation of national resources to include technology, skills and talent of the young population, secure national interests globally and protect territory against both internal subversion and external aggression, strengthen economy and emerge as economic power, maintain military to meet future challenges across the full spectrum of conflict continuum and, lastly, multiply the strength by cultivating alliances and having strong allies.

Figure 12: India as *Vijigishu*

- Strengthen - Kautilya's Prakritis
  - Political Leadership
  - Diplomacy
  - National Resources incl Technology
  - Security – Internal and External
  - Economy
  - Military
  - Ally's
- Application of Sadgunya (Six Fold Policy) and Upayas ( Four Strategems)
- Shaping Indo – Russia/ US Relations
- Managing China
- Strengthening Indo – Japan/ Afghanistan/Iran
- Neutralising Arab Nations
- Weakening Pak

In present context, it is clearly indicative as far as foreign policy goes India needs to shape the Indo–Russia and Indo–US relations by engaging across all elements as mentioned in Kautilya's *prakritis*. This will enable India to strengthen its clout by having support of Middle and Neutral King in a crisis. Moreover, it emerges that *Parsanigraha* China needs to be managed by developing military deterrence, overcoming trade imbalance and increasing counterbalance by cultivating alliances. As also, the would-be friends, i.e., Japan, Afghanistan and Iran need to be cultivated in favour of India by engaging *prakritis* of these nations. Simultaneously, there is need of neutralising Arab nations who favour Pakistan (Ari) economically and ideologically. Lastly, it is a prerequisite to keep Pakistan in check diplomatically, intellectually, militarily, economically and ultimately weakening it vis-à-vis India.

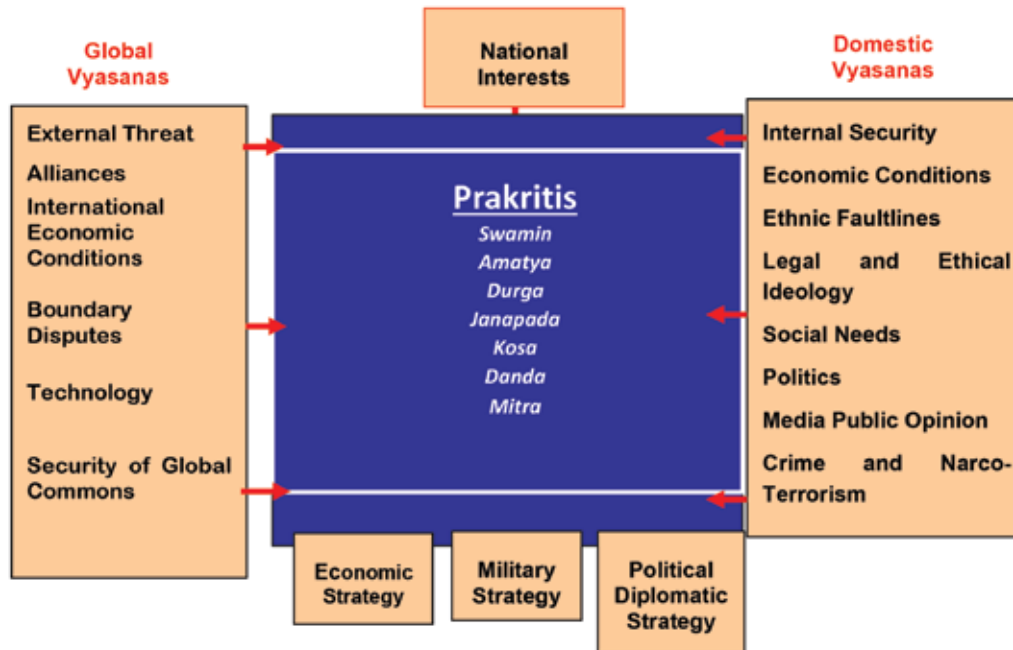
This is a simplistic application of Kautilya's Mandala theory giving out various options for India to progress as *Vijigishu*. But there is need to understand the interplay between different *prakritis*, overcoming

the *vyasanas* affecting these *prakritis* and working out multiple templates to arrive at Comprehensive National Strategy.

### National Priorities

Having gone through the *Arthashastra*, the question arises, Does India have a clear-cut National Strategy? Even though various National instruments are working towards achieving common goals, this may not be enough for an emerging power like India with national interests extending across the globe and global commons. Even the allies or the nations closer to India would want her to lay down clear-cut strategic guidelines in the form of White Paper or National Strategy. Comprehensive National Strategy is a fundamental need especially when India is facing unbalanced external environment with China, Pakistan having developed Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) for full spectrum deterrence keeping the nation at ransom with use of nuclear weapons and vitiated Internal Security situation due to sponsored terrorism. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is definitely a tool to derive Nation's Strategy and working out National Priorities.

Figure 13: Factors affecting National Priorities



Kautilya advocated overcoming *vyasanans* within the nation state should take priority over other threats and strengthening *prakritis* will enhance CNP. Hence, observing nation's priorities through Kautilya's prism as shown in Figure 13 will aid to arrive at their inter se importance. Firstly, overcoming *vyasanans* related to internal security, socio-economic and ethnic faultlines. Secondly, overcoming immediate external two-front threat posed by Pakistan and China through military modernisation and developing credible deterrence capability. Thirdly, incapacitating Sino-Pak growing nexus in the immediate future by cultivating alliances with the US, Russia and Japan. Fourthly, ensure security of global commons especially affecting nation's interests by developing appropriate force projection as well as soft-power capability to ensure sustained economic growth. Fifthly, resolution of boundary disputes though important but waiting for opportune moment is pragmatic. Lastly, tackling issues related to *janapada*, namely, ecological balance, keeping pace with technology, crime activities and narco-terrorism especially flourishing through Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent will form the priority of the nation.

### Conclusion

We have still the same distrust of one nation by another, the same pursuit of its own interest by every nation tempered only by considerations of expediency, the same effort to secure alliances with the same disregard of them in self-interest, the same kind of intelligence service maintained by one nation in the territory of another which is found to be referred to in the *Arthashastra*. It is difficult to see how rivalry and the struggle for supremacy between the nations can be avoided and the teaching of the *Shastra* which is based on these basic facts rendered altogether superfluous until some sort of a one-world government or an effective supranational authority is established. But, until that happens, the teachings of this *Shastra* would in actual practice be followed by nations, though it may be unknown to them and though it may be openly condemned by those that know it.

In so far as the nature of human beings remains the same and states behave as they always have done, Kautilya is relevant. Kautilya argued that State is fragile organisation and the statesman does not have the moral right to risk its survival on ethical restraint,

## ... its Relevance in 21st Century

therefore national interest should override moral principles in as much the moral order depends upon the continued existence of the state.

Kautilya further qualified that a well-governed state will have less to fear from subversion and revolt and will be in a better position to disrupt the domestic stability of its adversaries. It would also be able to move with greater surety towards the execution of tasks that necessitate the large-scale mobilisation of economic and military power. A state that neglects the quality of the administrative elite and institutions

upon which the execution of policy depends does so at the greatest possible peril to itself. Thus, India in the 21st Century and as emerging power needs a Comprehensive National Strategy with clear-cut enunciated National Priorities and these are required to be derived from our ancient all-inclusive treatise of *Arthashastra* written 2,400 years ago.

*"The arrow shot by the archer may or may not kill a single person. But stratagem devised by a wise man can kill even babies in the womb."<sup>15</sup>*

### Notes

1. *Arthashastra of Kautilya*, verse 1.19.34.
2. L. N. Rangarajan, *The Arthashastra*, p. 5.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
4. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, p. 20.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Paper, "The Ultimate Pragmatist: Kautilya's Philosophy on Smart Power in National Security." <http://isme.tamu.edu/ISME10/Coates-Caton10>
7. Harjeet Singh, CLAWS Paper, "Evolution of Strategic Culture based on Sun Tzu and Kautilya."
8. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, p. 129.
9. L. N. Rangarajan, *The Arthashastra*, p. 512.
10. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, p. 255.
11. Ashley J. Tellis, Christopher Layne, and Janice L. Bially, *Measuring National Power in the Post-industrial Age*.
12. L. N. Rangarajan, *The Arthashastra*, chapter X, p. 525.
13. SIPRI Data, 2017.
14. The BRICS Post, "Brics GDP bigger than G7 in purchasing power: Putin," November 14, 2014.
15. *Arthashastra of Kautilya*, verse 10.6.51.

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