Anvikshiki in Kautilya'sArthashastra
The Science of Inquiry

Medha Bisht
Associate Professor

Department of International Relations, South Asian University, New Delhi

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

2023

Anvikshiki in Kautilya's Arthashastra-
The Science of Inquiry∗
Medha Bisht

There are bound to be plenty of coincidences amongst great minds. But all of them should not be taken by the wise as being identical.

Anandavardhana, Dhvanyaloka

Abstract

While much scholarly ink has been devoted to Arthashastra, and the text interpreted and sometimes even usurped to belong to a specific International Relations (IR) tradition (realist and constructivist), little attention has been given to the method of inquiry employed in the classic treatise itself. This paper argues that the method of inquiry (anvikshiki) should be considered as a central pillar for reading/ interpreting Arthashastra. A focus on anvikshiki is not only significant for emancipating the agency of non-Western thought but is also helpful in pluralizing discussions around strategic studies which seem to be crowded by Western thinkers like Thucydides, Clausewitz, Machiavelli, Mahan, Mackinder amongst others˙. Against this backdrop, it is argued that understanding and giving a perspective to philosophical and intellectual roots behind a specific non-Western classic can greatly impact the reception, interpretation and relevance that these texts receive in the discipline of IR.
Key words: Arthashastra, Anvikshiki, strategic studies, ontology, critical realism

Introduction

Classics are often open tointerpretation, and while meanings and interpretations may or may not be endowed to them, revisiting them is a must for understanding the genre of epistemic practices, which stem from specific geo-cultural spaces. This paper aims to situate and highlight in this contextKautilya's Arthashastra, a text written around the 4th century BC. As an intellectual resource, composed in ancient India, the ideas embodied in Arthashastra, represent a distinct geography of thought. While attempts to theorize Arthashastra have been undertaken, it would be interesting to probe the nature of inquiry which was adopted by this classical treatise. Going by this argument, it would be appropriate to ask, whether Arthashastra holds the promise for illuminating a methodological framework? If yes, what does it have to say about the philosophy of knowledge? Further, can this philosophy of knowledge help us understand complex issues in the twenty-first century, which lie at the intersection of techniques of statecraft and governance? Questions such asthese not only make this text a curious site for investigation, but these also make it rather intriguing in terms of the canvas it covered. Seen from this perspective it would not be an exaggeration to say that this text discretely braided the micro with the macro issues of governance with concernsrelated to statecraft. Thus, for a student of IR, Arthashastra promises to be a combination of both philosophy and strategy. In other words, it holds the potential of eliciting a distinct method of inquiry, which was employed to understand the nature of political entity (the state), the international system (mandala—or the circle of states), and the functional logic or modalities that came along with this (saptanga and sadgunya theory). Significantly, the grand aimenvisaged by the text was securing the political and social order, the ultimate aim being securing *yogakshema* (security and well-being) of the people.

Thus, while much scholarly ink has been devoted to Arthashastra, and the text has been interpreted and sometimes even usurped to belong to a specific tradition[1] (realist and

---

[1] In recent years, scholarship on Arthashastra has been on the increase. Some select works on Arthashastra, but not just limited to these are, Roger Boesche, "Moderate Machiavelli? Contrasting *The Prince* with the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya", *Critical Horizons,* 3(2), 2002; Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the character of Nations and the Course of History,* London: Penguin Books, 2014; Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and his Arthashastra*, Maryland: Lexington Book, 2012; George Modelski, Kautilya:

constructivist), little attention has been given to the method of inquiry employed in the ancient classic treatise itself. I argue that this method of inquiry (Anvikshiki) should be considered as a central pillar for reading Arthashastra, as it offers distinct ontological insights. The ontological depthof going beyond mere appearances that Arthashastra offers by way of understanding objects and practices is not only significant for emancipating the agency of non-western thoughts but is also helpful in pluralizing discussions around strategic studies which seem to be crowded by Western thinkerssuch as Thucydides, Clausewitz, Machiavelli, Mahan, Mackinder amongst others.[2] In this regard, it is argued thatunderstanding and giving a perspective to philosophical and intellectual roots behind a specific non-western classic can greatly impact how these texts are received and interpreted in the Western world.

In order toaddress these aforementioned questions, this paper is divided into four sections. The first sectionopens conceptual space for situating the relevance of Arthashastra in IR by engaging with the meta-theoretical turn in the latter. The second section focuses on the significance of Anvikshiki, and the direction it offers for reading Arthashastra. The third section takes this conversation forward by engaging with concepts which often inform the framework of grand strategy instrategic studies.The fourth section concludes these arguments, by pointing out how 're-worlding' of these texts, by emphasizing their methodological tradition, can emancipate and pluralise the meaning of how the world was understood. It is argued that methods of inquiry shouldbecome the quintessential entry pointfor pluralizing and re-worldingdiscussions around texts such as Arthashastra.

Section I: Meta-theoretical turn in IR

Notwithstanding the critique against International Relations as an "American Social Science" and its euro-centric origins and assumptions, International Relations is one of the most eclectic disciplines in social sciences, and has borrowed extensively from economics,

---

Foreign Policy and International System in the Ancient Hindu World, *The American Political Science Review*,58 (3), September, 1964; Deepshikha. Shahi, "Arthashastra beyond real politik the 'eclectic' face of Kautilya", *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 2014, pp. 68-74.

[2]Balzacq and Krebs (eds), The Oxford Handbook on Grand Strategy, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. Only one chapter contains a comparision of two Asian thinkers. None of authors of individual Chapters represent countries from global South..

sociology, history, international law and psychology amongst others. It is for this reason, that IR has also been a site for employing multiplemethodologies, witnessingnumerous turns in IR—practice, communicative, spatial, visual, historiographical, among others. These turns have not onlyreinforced the significance for methodological pluralism in the discipline but have also raised an awareness on questions related to systematic organization of ideas, which is often contingent on employing a set of methods and methodological frameworks.[3] Infact, a good deal of such discussions iscaptured by the Great Debates in IR, which isalso elemental in shaping the disciplinary identity and debates associated with IR. While, a detailed analysis of these debatesgoes beyond the purview of this paper, and sincemuch has already been written on these aspects,[4] I elaborate on the meta-theoretical turn, a theme which also has animated the great debates.

A good starting point to draw attention to the meta-theoretical turn, is thetreatment given to history ofIR.One of the scholars underlining itsimportancewas Brian Schmidt who has argued that a primary limitation among scholars working at the intersection of history and IR has been the reluctance to uncover the past to illuminate the identity of IR. This limitation, as he notes,hasled to the imposition of homogenized grand narratives upon classical canons.[5]Feeling the need for reconstructingthe internaldiscursive development of IR, Schmidt attempted to throwlight on alternative histories which insist that the development of the field of International Relations can be understood beyond the external events taking place in the realm of international politics.[6]For Schmidt the perceptions towards traditions in IR, have been built on uncritical acceptance by scholars, with"no effort being made to explain the historical basis of these traditions or the manner in which writers and different centuries can be regarded as participantsin the inherited pattern of thought".[7] While the importance of the historiographical turn was that it brought upfront discussion on different methods employed

---

[3]Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: The Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics. New York: Routledge, 2011; Christopher Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations*, London: Sage, 2015.

[4]Brian Schmidt, *International Relations and the First Great Debate*, London: Routledge, 2012.

[5]Schmidt, "The Historiography of Academic Relations",*Review of International Studies* , 20 (4), Oct., 1994

[6] Schmidt, *International Relations and the First Great Debate*, London: Routledge, 2012, p.1.

[7]Schmidt, "The Historiography of Academic Relations",*Review of International Studies* , 20 (4), Oct., 1994,

p. 356

to study history it alsoopened up way for methodological awareness around plural ways that one couldemploy to investigate the history of the field.[8]

This historiographical turn can also be understood through the meta-theoretical turn which raised questions related to the assumptions one employs to theorizea specific phenomenon. In other words, commitments which are often embedded in theoretical claims, logic through which data is organized towards the theory building enterprise and the positions that scholars often take in IR, are not naïve choices. Scholarsvery much influence and impact the philosophical and political positions which theychoose for themselves.In other words, meta-theoretical questions bring upfront theory-building issuesrelated to the logic of theory, arguing that any theory-building enterprise requires a methodological grip, which gives meaning to the various ways data is organized. Infact meta theory became an animated issue for discussion amongst scholars during the 1980s, when questionsassociated with the meaning of progress and science in IR resurfaced through the Inter Paradigm Debate (IPD). One of the primary arguments of the IPD interventionwas not only to debate onlogicbehind different theoretical framework but to also analyse the 'incommensurability of paradigms', and background context or philosophical assumptions on which they were formed.[9] Hamilton argues that meta-theoretical turn in IR needs to bea central pillar for understanding disciplinary debates because they opened up conceptual space for ontological questions.[10]This is important as prior to this epistemological position were emphasized, leading to the marginalization of ontological questions, or emphasizing on grand/systemic theories for conceptualizing the international. Inother words, meta-theoretical debates made one familiar with how one's own thinking operated on an implicit level as we made sense of the world outside.

The meta-theoretical turn thus made visible ontological questions, a question taken forward by critical realism. Critical realism started an interesting but heated debate around questions associated with ontological depth thus giving meaning to certain unobservables which went unheeded by analysts. This emancipation of methodological pluralism in relation to

---

[8]S Hamilton, "A genealogy of metatheory in IR: How 'ontology' emerged from the inter-paradigm debate", *International Theory*, 9(1), 136-170, 2017.

[9]Ibid."A genealogy of metatheory in IR: How 'ontology' emerged from the inter-paradigm debate", *International Theory*, 9(1), 136-170, 2017, p. 4.

[10]Ibid., p.5.

ontological questions in IR has also given voice to certain non-western ways of thinking such as African, Latin American and Chinese.It is against this backdrop that the relevance of Anvikshiki is brought to light.[11]

Section II: Arthashastra and Anvikshiki

Derived from the *verbiksh* 'to see', Anvikshiki, can be defined as a logic of reasoning, which helpsone to perceive, reflect and investigate the real nature of entities. However, rather than making epistemologies the starting point, ontological objects are privileged. The focus being on going beyond the appearance to understand what constitutes them. Also known as a science of spiritual knowledge, Anvikshsiki is understood as the philosophy of knowledge through which appropriate decisions can be made.[12]Arthashastra notes that only by means of Anvikshiki (logical reasoning), one can know "what is spiritual good and evil in Vedic lore, material gain and loss in economics, good policy and weak policy in science of politics".[13] Not only did this logicseek to understand the meaning of knowledge in political affairsbut it wasalso suggestive ofa holistic approach, which went beyond the compartmentalization and sectoral ways of thinking.[14]

Thus elevated as a distinct branch of knowledge, Anvikshiki was defined in Arthashastra, as the lamp that shines on all sciences. The other sciences being Trayi, the three Vedas- Rig, Yajur, Atharva, Varta (commerce/economics) and Dandaneeti (law and order). Thus, when Kautilya enunciated "*Samkhya*, *Yoga* and *Lokayata* these constitute philosophy (Anvikshiki)"[15], it meant that any attempt to see, understand and evaluate the world outside had to be based on these specific philosophical traditions tethered to the logic of Anvikshiki. In other words, one can also say that the way for discerning the true nature and knowledge of

---

[11]For a primer on Critical Realism as a meta-theory see, Milja-Kurki, M and Colin Wight, "International Relations and Social Science", in Tim Dunne, MiljaKurki, and Steve Smith eds, in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Oxford: Oxford University Press,* 2007. Another recent contribution which can help understand the use of ontology in critical realism is, Roy Bhaskar (2020) Critical realism and the ontology of persons, Journal of Critical Realism, 19:2, 113-120.

[12]Kakali Roy Chowdhury,-Anvikshiki in Arthashastra: Kautilyan perspective of economy and philosophy, *IJSR,* 6 (2), 2020, P. 175-178.

[13]R.P, Kangle, *The KautilyaArthashastra, Vol. II*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* 1.2.10:6, 1992, p.6.

[14] For instance, Arthashastra has to be seen as a text on political economy;however its emphasis on the 'spiritual' and related aspect of living a good life, and emphasis on human discipline—are equally important.

[15]Kangle ibid. ,1.2.10, 1992, p.6.

entities was to employ the refractive lens of epistemological traditions of the *Samkhya, Yoga* and *Lokayata*. Appearances become important for cognitive stability or direction that they offer.However, it also suggests thatfor discerning the true nature of appearances epistemic pluralism becomes important. Significantly, the choice of the competing philosophical traditions(darshanas) merit attention in this regard.

Take for instance, the case of Samkhya. Samkhya emphasized on dualism but converged towards non-dualism. Though an initial differentiation between *purusa* and *prakriti*, gives a sense of dichotomy between material substances (prakriti)and souls or pure consciousness (purusa), its fusion into a single entity makes the mind-body dualism redundant, and the argument for discerning the identity of the entity appealing. Significantly,as Sankhya philosophy argues, *prakriti* evolves and is cognitively meaningful only after its fusion with *purusa*. Its manifestationas the three gunas (tamas, darkness; rajas, activity; and sattava, harmony), is therefore emphatic of the constitutive nature of entities. Solomon notes, "Samkhya means knowledge, discernment, discrimination…discrimination of spirit and matter, purusa and prakriti". She further notes, "the emphasis is on knowledge, discrimination (viveka) and kaivalya (isolation of the purusa or sentient principle from Prakriti, matter and its transformation).[16] The proposition offered by Samkhya then is in its argument that, effects are somehow contained in their causes.[17]Significantly, the seven *prakritis* of the saptanga theory, manifested as the state, thus are not fixed attributes, but evolve and determine the nature of the state as the inferior state and the superior state. Alternatively, *Yoga* emphasised on discipline/meditation, experiential knowledge—-recognizing the need of anubhava, and internalization of knowledge. Emphasizing the value of meditation, and against the atheism of Samkhya, Yoga gave importance to meditation-subject/object interaction, underlining the role of human agency (the king or the leader), who was advised to go through a strict disciplinary regime to cultivate human nature, and act according to the dharma (duty) of the king. The difference between Samkhya and Yoga was that the former implied liberation through knowledge of purusa and prakriti and yoga emphasized liberation through ascetic practices and techniques of interpretation.[18]Meanwhile*, Lokayata*, emphasised on materialist

---

[16] E. A. Solomon, "Interrelation of Samkhya and Yoga", in Bhartiya Samskriti, Bhartiya Samskriti Sansad Trust, 1983, p.217.

[17] David E. Cooper, *World Philosophies: An Historical Introduction, London;* Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p.23.

[18] Solomonibid. p.218.

pursuits of the state, with a focus on empirical evidence (pramana). This also became an important facet or criteria while taking decisions.

What is important here is that as a meta-theoretical lens to organize knowledge, Anvikshiki challenged the tradition of dogmatic thinking in Hindu philosophical tradition. For instance, the mention ofplural epistemological traditions (darshanas or ways of thinking) of Indian philosophy to study objectsis suggestive of exercising ontological depth and employing epistemological pluralism—an aspect which has been underlined in the meta-theoretical turn in IR.[19]

Anvikshiki thus as a form of epistemic practice is indicative of logical reasoning through which plural Hindu philosophical traditions ranging from observations to meaning and interpretations associated with these observations, were employed.[20] However, the interpretive strands were not radical, but directed towards understanding the constitutive nature of entities. One can also say that Anvikshiki makes way for an ontoepistemological way of thinking, where ontology is privileged but at the same time approached through epistemological pluralism.

Notably, the earlier Arthashastra traditions had emphasized that dandniti should be seen as the primary branch of knowledge, even claiming it to be the only science. While the school of Manu, had rejected anvikshiki, as a distinct knowledge system, it was used as an equivalent of atmavidya, being considered synonymous with the Upanishads - as branch of Vedas.[21] S C Vidyabhusana points outthat Anvikshiki's use in Arthashastra was different, as it was earlier associated with the function of atmavidya, when often dogmatic assertions were made about the soul. Arthashastra'sAnvikshihowever combined soul withhetu shastra (the theory of reasons)[22]. Onewould not be wrong to say that in Kautilya's Arthashastra- logical reasoning, aimed to syncretiseplural philosophical tradition to give meaning to realities considered as

---

[19]MiljaKurki, "The politics of the philosophy of science", *International Theory*, 1(3)2004, pp. 440-454.
[20]Medha Bisht, *Kautilya'sArthashastra: Philosophy of Science*, Routledge: London and Newyork, 2020.

[21]Braj Sinha, Arthashastra Categories in the Mahabharata: From Dandaniti to Raj Dharma, in Arvind Sharma (Ed), Essays on the Mahabharata, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2011; S.C. Vidyabhusan, The History of Indian Logic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Schools, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1920, p.5.

[22]S.C. Vidyabhusan, *The History of Indian Logic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Schools*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1920,p.5.

political (activities associated with the maintenance the economic, social and political stability)

In other words, Anvikshiki as a science of inquiry, which embraced multiple system of knowledge, is also instructiveof the fact that judgmentshould bebased on logical arguments. Later, in the text Kautilya applies this logic to multiple stratagems, which are reflective of how decisions should be based ona holistic, plural assessment. Thus, Kautilya in Arthashatsra sought to define the meaning of knowledgebeyond a compartmentalized way of thinking, where religion, economics and political sciences were not treated as separate but were intertwined with each other. Vidyabhusan appropriately sums it, "in about 327 BC, Kautilya characterized Anvikshiki (logic), as a highly useful science which furnished people with reasons for their estimation of their strengths and weaknesses, kept their intellect unperturbed in prosperity and adversity, and infused into their intelligence, speech and action, subtlety and power[23]." Later by the first century AD, Anvikshiki developed more systematically, as a part of Nyaya Shastra, where it accepted the authority of Vedas and propounded the doctrine of syllogistic reasoning, the validity of which was never challenged.[24]

This specific aspect and the mode of logic and reasoning employed by classical Hindu philosophy and religion has received much attention by many scholars. For instance, Godwin points out, "India was a civilisation of proliferating totality. She notes that the totality of the Veda itself, supposed to be complete, is notclosed permanently: it is open to commentaries (the Brahmanas) and to commentaries on commentaries (the Upanishads); so much so that Indian writing presents a positively unique case in the history of thought by nurturing a single organism behind its expansive variety".[25] Being more specific, L Dumont insists that totality represents the ontological unity in India. He further clarifies that, "totality is a multiplicity organised through its oppositions, more often than not hierarchical."[26]. Thus arguing for a more composite understanding, Godwin notes that Indian thought is more syncretic than synthetic, formed by competing thought traditions.

---

[23]Vidyabhusan ibid., p.7

[24]Vidyabhusan ibid.

[25] Christian Godin, (2000). "The Notion of Totality in Indian Thought" ,*Diogenes*, 189,48.

[26] Cited in Godin ibid., p. 189.

Given this holistic thinking which goes beyond binaries or dualisms, the reading of Arthashastra brings the philosophical and practical, the micro and the macro, simple and complex, as categories which belonged to a seamless whole. The issues discussed in Arthashastra, are thus holistic, composite and relational and cannot be isolated and reduced as separate. Strategy thus is as much anchored to philosophy as much as the ordinary is to the extraordinary. The notion of holism is thus not founded in totality of one meta-narrative, but informed by the specifics of the micro-narratives, which are in continuous interaction with each other.

What is befitting to mention here is the cosmovision, which embodied this spirit and translated itthrough the conceptualization of a distinct political and social order.Thus, it is suggested here that rather than resorting to some conventional theories in International Relations and 'fitting' theoretical paradigms and approaches to ancient Indian strategy and thought, attempt should be made towards shifting the gaze to the distinct cosmic vision, that articulated the belief system in ancient India. Against this backdrop, understanding the concept of dharma which is an integral part of Indian thought tradition becomes important. While this occasional brief does not intend to trace the continuities of this distinct tradition— a work which can appropriately be undertaken under the theme Indian strategic culture—it does try to reflect on the overarching meaning, thus holistic yet relational thinking gave to vocabularies (power, order, morality, justice etc.). Its application to strategic thinking also helps to emancipate the relational understanding of Dharma, as the prime point towards eliciting the meaning of state and statecraft, power and order, rights and duties etc.[27]

Thus, the relevance of Anvikshiki is that it is the methodological anchor in Arthashastra which helps in understanding the idea of state and statecraft, where analysing political reality demanded that one gave attention to details and the interactions, both at the macro as well as themicro level. While at a macro level, the idea of a state became a moral agency facilitating order (understood) as dharma, at the micro level the idea of state also inspired the four pursuits of life (purusharthas) – expressed as ethical goodness (dharma), wealth and power

---

[27]Medha Bisht, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Routledge: London and Newyork, 2020.

(artha), pleasure (kama) and spiritual transcendence (moksha).[28] Arthashastra elaborates on the outstanding qualities of the entity, the state through the saptanga theory and explained why and how these qualities gave way to the idea of a superior state. Multiple stratagems employed through statecraft and techniques directed towards maintaining social and political order, were very much contingent on the understanding of the state belonging to the inferior status or superior status.[29]

One can say that Arthashastra in many ways, offers a relational reading, where the object of study (ontology) are relations (examining interactions, relations, values, practices), all of which are interdependent, interactingwith each other. Following the dharma becomes the primary anchor of the constituent elements.[30] These parts were thus well connected and once in interaction with each other, their singularity could no longer be recognized, and could only be understood through the larger schema of desirable objectives, associated with the moral purpose of the state, which was *yogakshema*. Godwin's analogy is appropriate here, as she notes with regard to ancient Hindu thought thatit could be compared to the drops of water that are no longer discernable in the ocean buttheirrole as constitutive parts are nevertheless visible[31]. This relational yet composite perspective means that while reading Arthashastra, power, order, morality need to be understood in a relational, interactional manner implying that Arthashastra was directed towards achieving the theory of ends—*yogakshema*—defined as security and well-being of the people.This was the central principle for guiding the dharma of the king and informing dharma of the people, giving cohesiveness to the idea of state and statecraft.

Against this backdrop two propositions are offered for highlighting the relevance of Anvikshiki for reading, interpreting and making Arthashastra relevant to the discipline in IR. First, its relevance of informing insights, debates and interventions, that raise specific

---

[28]Rangarajan L.N. and Parel, Anthony (2008), "Gandhi and the Emergence of the Modern Indian Political Canon", *The Review of Politics*, 70(1), pp. 40–63. Rangarajan, L.N. (1992), *Kautilya: The Arthashastra*, New Delhi.

[29]See, George Modelski, "Kautilya: Foreign Policy and International System in the Ancient Hindu World", *The American Political Science Review*, 58 (3), September, 1964, for a better understanding of superior and inferior state.

[30]The seven constituent elements were the king, amatya, janapada, durga, kosha, danda, mitra. This aspect is also dealt later, while discussing the state.

[31] Godwin, ibid. p. 60.

methodological questions in the discipline of I R (an aspect discussed above). Second, its relevance towards informing the broad tradition of grand strategic thought. Infact, the second proposition serves as an example for illustrating the relevance of methodological insights as present in Arthashastra. Significantly, grand strategic thought becomes important because a reading of Arthashastra indicates a continuous pattern in terms of the interdependence and causality of variables (constituent elements) that were aimed to establish the desired end goal of regulating order. The nature of inter-dependence between the internal (state) and external (statecraft) also reveal elements of relational and holistic thinking, which can add potential value to meta-theoretical questions associated with ontological depth.

Section III: The Worlding of Grand Strategy

Often referred toas the "highest form of statecraft" and a "state's theory of victory", the meaning of grand strategy is anchored to the end-means debate.In other words, it is also the way through which limited means of the state are employed in order toachieve desired political objectives.Grand strategy has also been termed as "higher policy[32]" total victory[33]and along term view which requires, a process of constant adaptation to shifting conditions".[34] Context, which entails cultural sensitivity and subjective knowledge have been highlighted as an important aspect of grand strategy. Infact highlighting the importance of context in grand strategy, some scholars have defined culture as a grand strategy, as a precondition of all action. Ken Booth has even gone as far as to highlight that, it is important to reflect on the relationship between culture and ways of thinking. In what ways do cultural, ideational and normative influences impact the motivation of state leadersis a question which becomes important in any analysis pertaining to grand strategy.

However, the definition of grand strategy has evaded consensus between scholars. In their recent work Balsacq and Krebbs in offer some key meanings associated with grand strategy. These are (a) grand strategy as a peace time activity,(b) an activity restricted to war time situations, (c)augmenting national security rather than promoting peace, (d) art of employing national power under all circumstances, focussing on augmenting comprehensive power of

---

[32]Hart, Liddell (2003), *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, Dehradun: Natraj Publishers.

[33]Beaufre, Andre (1965), *Introduction to Strategy*, London: Fabre and Fabre.

[34]Murray, Williamson and Grimsley, Mark (1994), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

the state; (e) a theory which rationalises state policy, calculated relationship of means to larger ends and (f) a long term view that stretches over decades and centuries[35]. Kautilya's Arthashastra when seen from the lens of grand strategy offers a broad family resemblance to the meanings offered by grand strategy. However, the philosophical anchor which gave specific meaning to the vocabulariessuch as power, order, morality, justice had a distinct meaning, as they were informed by a unique cosmovision belonging to the different world of ancient India.

The concept of Dharma etymologically derives its root from *dhr*-dhairya (stability) or dharti (earth) which meant to hold together. Significantly, *Dharma*, in Hindu philosophy, was not equated with a theocratic framework but understood more as a way of life, which became the normative duty, a guide for the king and subjects in political and social affairs. It would not be an exaggeration to state that "*dharma* thus became the reflective basis for "knowing, understanding and judging" the political phenomenon.[36] The "ideal type" was not a moral ideal but a benchmark/template (as perhaps refereed by Max Weber) to identify similarities and differences.

It needs to be highlighted here that dharma was interpreted as order and how maintaining and regulating this order became the purpose behind the idea of state and statecraft. Dharma thus in many ways was the normative guide for the king and subjects in political and social affairs and became the reflective basis for "knowing, understanding and judging" the political phenomenon. Lastly, but more importantly, were the means suggested in Kautilya's Arthashastra for sustaining this order-which effectively can be considered the primary mechanisms for sustaining order at the domestic (saptanga theory) and external (mandala theory). It is for this reason that the idea of state and statecraft merits close attention.

Grand Strategy in Arthashastra: The Idea of "State and Statecraft"[37]

---

[35]Balzacq and Krebs, The Oxford Handbook on Grad Strategy, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021

[36]Medha Bisht, Alternative Cosmovision, Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research, , March 31, 2021, at https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/politics-governance/alternative-cosmovisions-the-practices-of-statecraft-in-ancient-india/

[37] This section has been taken from Medha Bisht (2020), *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, Routledge: London and Newyork.

M. M. Sankhdher writes that, "for Kautilya upholding the dharma and good governance was the main aim of the state".[38] Taking this argument further, Ritu Kohli notes that Kautilya's conception of state was so comprehensive in scope that it regulated even the minutest details like fixing the rates of washer men and even prostitutes. According to her, Kautilyan state not only subordinated moral principles to the necessities of its own existence and welfare but the same attitude was adopted towards religion which was often used as a means for accomplishing political ends".[39] The reason for highlighting these thoughts is that they point towards the end-goal of the state, as specified in Kautilya's Arthashastra. For instance it was categorically stated that the role of the state was to enhance prosperity and provide security and that the centre of all political activity was "labha and palana".[40] On similar grounds the duties of the ruler were specified as three-fold: "*raksha* or protection of the state from external aggression, *palana* or maintenance of law and order within the state and *yogakshema* or safeguarding the welfare of the people".[41] This in many ways defined the boundaries essential for sustaining the existence of the state and steps were taken to minimize factors which could jeopardize this idea.

The Idea of State

Beforeone undertakes an analysis of the Kautilyan state, it is important to understand the context within which the idea of state took roots in ancient India. Historians like Romila Thapar (2002) argue that by 600 B.C. plurality of emerging identities were visible in Indian history, being shaped by ideational and material changes. The political anarchy in the sixth century B.C. had made kings embrace amoral methods to get things done and two main schools, Brahamanism and Buddhism, emerged from this struggle. Chaulsakar writes while the "traditional Brahman religion was based on Vedic dogma and sacrifices; the anti-vedic religious teachers were individuals like Buddha, Mahavira and Gosala. The Arthashastra teachers wanted to offer a mid-way and tried understanding the cause of new change

---

[38]RituKohli,*Kautilya's Political Theory: Yogakshema, the Concept of Welfare State*, New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publication, 1995; Medha Bisht, *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, Routledge: London and New York, 2020, 54

[39] Cited in Kohli, 1995, 14. See Medha Bisht, *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, Routledge: London and New York, 2020, p. 54.

[40]Kangle ibid.p.4.

[41] Rangarajan ibid.

advocating that the forces of change could be strengthened with the help of the institution of the state"[42]

The conceptualization of the state is indicative of the plural understanding of power ranging from intellectual, economic, offensive and defensive power. Forinstance, Kautilya defined the state as constitutive of seven limbs (saptanga theory). These were: swami (king or the leader), amatya (councillors), janapada (territory and people), durg (fort), kosa (treasury), danda (army) and mitra (ally). Significantly, achieving the Excellences (outstanding features) of the constituent elements was the central objective propounded by the saptanga theory. The excellences, as termed by Kautilya himself, specified the primary parameters of each of the elements that constituted the state. Thus entities (read state) was not given, they evolved organically- and the character of entity could be influenced by its dominant features—which then led to determining the inferior and superior character of the state.

The Idea of Statecraft—The Importance of Friends (Allies) and Enemy (Adversaries)

The idea of statecraft was anchored to the concept of mandala, which was a spatial and a cognitive map for guiding strategic decision making. This helped in identifying Ari (enemy) and Mitra (friend). While spatiality has generally been reduced to geographical determinism – the contiguity and discontinuity of territory was only one element in dictating state behaviour. Infact *motivation* and *intention* of the adversary were as important indicators in identifying the category of friends and enemy in the mandala (the circle of states). Motivation was assessed by gauging internal cohesion of seven constituent elements (the prakritis of the state- swami amatya, janapada, durg, kosa, danda andmitra), i.e. the more superior a state was, the more it came to be identified as a potential threat and intention of actors could be gauged by assessing whether they were more proximate to the category of allies or the category of adversaries, whether they were status-quoist or revisionist. In other words, the characterization and classification of allies and adversaries into various typologies became important for determining the method which was needed to be employed against them.

---

[42]Ashok S, Chousalkar, "Political Philosophy of *Arthashastra* Tradition", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 42(1), January-March, 1981, pp. 54–55.

When it came to identifying allies common interest was the first principle for choosing an ally. Ability to help at times of need was an important indicator and characteristic of an ally. This help could be offered through land, money or troops. Kautilya notes, "When there is a choice between two allies, one who is constant but not under control and one notconstant and not under control and one not constant but under control, 'the one under control though not constant is preferable. As long as he helps, he becomes an ally; for the characteristic of an ally is conferring benefit".[43]Another characteristic of an ally was one with excellent qualities (internal coherence) or an ally who has been going throughtroubled times. Kautilya writes, "Troubles produce firmness in friendship".[44] Thus desirable qualities of an ally according to Kautilya were: controllability, constancy, ability to mobilize quickly and having troops concentrated at one place. The latter two can be associated with characteristics of the state, which had internal control and power, i.e. had all constituents of the state in place. Of controllability and constancy, the former was always preferred, as it increased the conqueror's relative power. On a choice between two allies under control when there is a choice between one rendering abundant help but inconsistent and one rendering only a little help but consistent, Kautilya preferred the ally who gave help but in small measures, yetwas more consistent. He notes, "the inconsistent, though capable of great help deserts through fear of (having to render) help or after giving help strives to take it back. The constant one, giving small help, but rendering the small help continuously renders greater help over a period of time[45]" How short- and long-term interests are also reconciled in the choice of choosing an ally is insightful. Kautilya suggested actors need not be chosen on the basis of mono-dimensional criteria, but theyneed to be matched with their strengths, interest and readiness of support they can provide to the conqueror.So, when it came to allies, the best ally was one who sharedcommon interests.

Similarlyan enemy or an adversary was defined as a king whose kingdom shared a common border. However,theadversarial kingwaspowerful and possessed excellent personal qualities, resources and constituents.Vulnerable enemies were the ones inflicted by a calamity (weakness of seven constituent elements). Of the most dangerous of all enemies was an enemy by intent. The characteristics of an enemy who should be destroyed were: greedy,

[43]Kangle ibid., pp.549.
[44]Ibid., p. 349.
[45]Ibid., p. 350.

vicious, trusting in fate, unjust behaviour, does harm to others, mean advisors with unhappy subjects, powerless or helpless. Note the elements of unjust behaviour as one characteristic which weakens the enemy. The inimical neighbours were a soulless enemy with intent on harming their neighbours. The enemy in the rear allied with enemy in the front is a potential source of threat. This identification was important to choose friends and identify the adversaryin order to regulate order in the fluid environment of mandala. For instance, Arthashastra notes,

> Making the king separated by one intervening territory, the felly, and those immediately proximate to spokes, the leader should stretch himself out as the hub in the circle of constituents. For the enemy situated between the two—the leader and the ally, becomes easy to exterminate even if strong.

Significantly, 72 constituent elements have been identified with the mandala, which became an important referent point for making important choices. The choices are reflected in specific stratagems (six measures of foreign policy, and upayas) articulated in Arthashastra for regulating order in Mandala, where keeping these 72[46] elements in mind was central for strategic judgement.

Further, in Kautilyan analyses, along with the vigigishu (aspiring power), allies and enemies, there were two primary categories of actors who helped in regulating order in the mandala— the neutral power and the middle power. Neutral and middle power find their relevance only with respect to the balance of forces existing between the adversary and the aspirant power. Thus one can say that, an aspirant power was identified as the one, which had its domestic seven constituent elements in place. Statecraft had to be exercised keeping these important pre-requisites in mind. For instance, how the seven elements could be strengthened and enhanced by forging external alliances (six measures of foreign policy) was the primary end goal of statecraft.What comes across from this analysis is that the idea of state and statecraft was intertwined, reflecting a relational yet holistic understanding of strategy. Strategy required political judgement which could be gauged by identifying a set of superior, equal and inferior states in the mandala and scrutinizing their relative weaknesses and strengths.

---

[46]Rangarajan ibid., p.3.

It is significant that Kautilya explains the meaning of 'success' and 'power', thus relating the two.He explains that power is the possession of strength and this determines the meaning of happiness. Thus, the meaning of success and power was closely established, as itdirected the King towards achieving successwhich was needed to sustain a dominant position in the mandala. Kautilya writes, "Thriving with these (seven constituent elements), he (king) becomes superior; reduced in these, inferior; with equal powers equal. Therefore he should endeavour to endow himself with power and success, the material constituents in accordance with their immediate proximity and integrity. Or he should endeavour to detract (these) from treasonable persons and enemies".[47] This is a very important statementfor understanding the purpose communicated through the grand strategic design in Arthashastra.

It is against this backdrop that the six measures of foreign policy or sadgunya theory, which were indicative of the range of choices need perspective. A core assumption of the stratagems was the recognition of the dynamicsand fluidity of the external environment. The six measures of foreign policy were- Peace, War, Staying Quiet, Marching, Seeking Shelter and Dual Policy.[48] It needs to be emphasized that the meaning of peace and war was subject to the emergent situation. For instance, Kangle translates peace as *panabandhan*—the framing of terms and conditions, i.e. entering into a formal treaty with specific clauses. Georg Buhler translates this term as alliance. Meanwhile, Olivelle argues that the term samdhi implied "a temporary and focused contract between two parties, aimed at achieving a specific goal, such as attacking a common enemy". War has also not been interpreted as fighting in a battle ground, but weakening the enemy through various stratagems and tactics. Olivelle argues that "vigraha meant either a formal declaration of the war against another kingdom or the initiation of hostilities against it, and that it was a political strategy rather than actual warfare".[49] Vigraha thus comes across as an instrument of political signaling, a tool to communicate one's intention to the adversary. 'Remaining indifferent', on the other hand, meant staying quiet or doing nothing. This was called asana. Yana on the other hand meant preparing tomarchfor war. Rangarajan has considered asana and yana as stages in the transition from peace to war.Submitting to another meant seeking shelter. This was resorted

---

[47]Kangle ibid.,pp. 319–20.
[48]Bisht ibid.

[49]Patrick,Olivelle, "War and Peace: Semantics of Samdhi and Vigraha in the Arthashastra" in Tikkanen and Butters (eds), *Indological and Other Essays in Honour of Klaus Kattunen*, Henlsinki, Finland, 2011, p. 134.

to when threatened from a stronger king. Dual policy, implied employing peace with one and war with another. Rangarajan points out "this was the policy of making peace with a neighbouring king in order to pursue, with his help, a policy of hostility towards the other" Dvadhibhava has been understood by Kangle as *samdhivigrahopadnam*—peace with one and war with another. He translatesthe word dvadhibhava as duplicity, which meant, "making peace for the timebeing with a view to making better preparations for war against the same enemy". Very much determined by the nature of state—whether the state was inferior, equal or superior, the aforementioned stratagems had to be exercised.

The sadgunya theory is relevant as it offers varied techniques of non-verbal communication. One can say that there is a sense of dynamism in sadgunya theory which is a guide for a state, which can find itself in different situations. Similarly the fourupayas (sama, dana, danda, bheda) were also suggestive of communicating intent to the enemy. Upayas are also suggestive of understanding the multiple channels of power, where rewards (or manipulation) played an important role. Sama and dana were examples of manipulating the other. One can also say they were relationship building strategies. Bheda and danda were not to be employed for internal affairs of the state, andwere to be extensively revoked in the case of a revolt in an immediate territory. Thus, they were relationship drifting strategies. Kautilya writes, "In case of revolt in the rear, he should make use of conciliation, gifts, dissension and force"[50] Note that, force was but one of the four options. Wisdom and limits of force have been acknowledged as prerequisites for a successful king, where maintaining order was the primary goal.

Significantly, wartoo was considered an 'ordered activity', as is reflected in the orders to be followed during marching of the troops. As an important part of deliberation, Kautilya considers place and time most important. He writes, "that in which there is terrain suitable for operation of one's own army and unsuitable for those of the enemy, is the best region, the opposite kind is the worst, alike to both is middling"[51]Regarding time he writes,

> time is of the nature of cold, heat and rain. Its various parts are night day, fortnight, month, season, half year, year and yuga. In them he should start work, which should augment his own strength. That in which the season is suitable for the operations of one's own army,

---

[50]Kangle ibid., 9.3.6:414.
[51]Ibid., 9.1.21:407.

unsuitable for those of the enemy, is the best time, the opposite kind is the worst, alike to both is middling.[52]

Thus, in undertaking any activity Kautilya deliberated on a systematic ordering of multiple factors, necessary for success.Being sensitive to power, time and place was considered important, as he dwelled on the nature (dharma) –of both humans and non-humans. The order and balance he sought to establish between physical bodies and natural processes is important for recognizing how power was a means to an end. Kautilya writes,

> At a time when excessive heat has passed, he should march with elephant divisions for the most part. For elephants sweating inside become leprous, and not getting a plunge of water or a drink of water, they become blind through internal secretion. Hence in a region with plenty of water and when it is raining he should march with elephant divisions for the most part. In the reverse case, he should march with troops consisting mostly of donkeys, camels and horses in a region with little rain and mud. In a region mostly desert, he should march with a fourfold army when it is raining. He should regulate the expedition in accordance with the evenness and unevenness of the road, the presence of water or land in it, or the shortness or the length of the march.[53]

These suggestions are instructive of the adaptability and flexibility one required in coping with the dynamics of war.Similarly, the use of force was not considered the only method in initiating war against the enemy. Kautilya considered four types of wars as important and depicts the varying dimensions of power in operation. The first was *mantrayuddha*—war by council. This meant the exercise of diplomacy in situations where the king found himself in a weaker position and considered it unwise to engage in battle. The strategy of *mantrayuddha* was to be adopted by a weaker king (weak states). While the predecessors of Kautilya believed that the weak king should remain perpetually submissive or fight with the mobilization of all troops, Kautilya suggested that the strategy of taking shelter and the principles of the superior King played an important role in determining the policy choices available to the weaker king. Kautilya suggests, in a situation, where one is inferior one should submit to the righteous one, yield money to the greedy one and in the case of a demoniacal conqueror, while yielding land and goods to him, the weaker king should take

---

[52]Ibid., 9.1.22–25:407.

[53]Ibid., 9.2.45–51:409.

counter steps, remaining out of reach himself. The second option to be exercised by the weaker king was to make a countermove through peace and diplomatic war or psychological warfare. This meant winning over the party inimical to him with conciliation and gifts. Rewards thus had an important place in garnering support for oneself in terms of adversity. The third option available to a weaker king was to secretly weaken and destroy the enemy from all sides and after performingvarious hostile acts, offer a treaty with the king. Thus, the range of choices in Arthashastra went beyond the use of brute force.

The second was *Kutayuddha*, concealed warfare, referred primarily to psychological warfare including instigation of treachery in the enemy camp, a strategy again to be adopted by a weak king (state). In many ways kutayuddha and mantrayuddha were wars for a weak king, avoiding direct confrontation.

The third, *Prakasayuddha*, was open warfare specifying time and place. Prakasayuddha was considered the most righteous of warfare. Fairness played an important role in motivating the soldiers for the righteous cause. In such a case, Kautilya writes, "the king should make troops that are possessed of bravery, skill, nobility of birth and loyalty and that are not cheated in the matter of money and honour, the centre of ranks".[54] Rewards played an important element in earning loyalty. Kautilya writes, "the commander in chief should address the ranks after they are made well-eqipped with money and honour".[55] Incentives for all categories of warriors were therefore present. On exercising caution after victory, Kautilya suggests that after victory has been achieved peace should be offered with one who is equal in strength. He writes, "while one should strike an army, which is inferior in strength, the king should not harass a broken enemy, since waging a war against an enemy who has lost everything in war could be expensive".[56]

The fourth, *Gudayuddha* was clandestine war and meant to achieve objective without actually waging a battle, usually by assassinating the enemy. In waging this war the king not only used his own agents and double agents but also allies, vassal kings, tribal chiefs and the bribed friends and supporters of the enemy.[57] Various stratagems and tactics have been suggested by Kautilya for winning over enemy primarily through the use of concealed and

---

[54]Ibid., 10.3.38:441.
[55]Ibid., 10.3.45:441.
[56]Ibid., 10.3.57:442.
[57]Rangarajan ibid., p, 636.

clandestine warfare. Kautilya writes, "after gaining new territory the king should cover the enemy's faults with his own virtues and double virtues. He should carry out what is agreeable and beneficial to the subjects by doing his own duty as laid down—granting favours, making exemption, giving gifts and showing honour. He should grant favour to the enemy as promised and more so if they had exerted themselves. For he who does not keep his promise becomes unworthy of trust for his own and other people"[58]

While these are just select examples on the limitations on use of power, it was fungible, responding to specific situations. What is significant however is that power was to be directed towards maintaining order, ensuring the survival of the state both in short and long term. It is interesting to note that in terms of engaging with war, Torkel Brekke, comments on thenature of just war tradition in classical/ancient India. Comparing the just war tradition in Christianity with other cultural/philosophical traditions, he narrows his approach to find the differences and similarities between jus ad bellum (just war) and jus in bello (just warfare). While considering Arthashastra and Kamandaki Niti-Shastra, he concludes that justice in warfare was more inclined to the latter than the former. He also prioritizes Niti-Shastra over Arthashastra, as a text which offers lessons for just warfare.[59] Such interpretations need to be revisited and Kautilya's Arthashastra needs to be looked from the perspective of the cosmological vision of dharma. This cosmological vision was anchored to the framework of grand strategic design where both state and statecraft were intertwined with each other. It needs to be noted here that the principle of righteousness was dictated with the aim of creating order in the state.[60]

Worlding and Re-worlding Dharma, Power and Order

---

[58]Kangle ibid., 13.5.3–6:491.

[59]Torkel Brekke (2006), "Between Prudence and Heroism: Ethics of War in the Hindu Tradition", in Brekke, *The Ethics of War in Asian Civilization,* Newyork: Routledge (KindleVersion), p. 127.

[60] Sinha points out that righteousness (dharma) was central to the Buddhist canon, and the king was both governed by and governed through dharma. This understanding of dharma was very different from Arthashastra, in which the principle of righteousness was not the sole criterion for governing the fundamental structure of the state. For details see, Braj Sinha, Arthashastra Categories in the Mahabharata: From Dandaniti to Raj Dharma, in Arvind Sharma (Ed), Essays on the Mahabharata, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2011, p. 372). While Sinha is partially right, he negates the important sections dedicated to the King in Arthashastra, which focuses on the importance of self discipline and the duty (dharma) of the king towards the subject. For details see, Rangarajan, L.N. (1992), *Kautilya: The Arthashastra*, New Delhi, p. 141-149.

Over the past two decades, there has been an emerging post-Western quest in IR that urges scholars to 're-world' the subaltern voice. A post-Western theory seeks out the multiple worlds and hidden voices that intersect across the world.[61]

These words by Ling are an appropriate pointer not only towards the lack of agency that non-western voices and sources have in pluralizing International Relations, but also to the need of worlding ideas, concepts and vocabularies that stem from the non-west. The term 'worlding' gained currency in the 1990s, by an increasing prominence of academic scholarshipbrought out by the Routledge Series, 'Worlding Beyond the West'. This academic project, edited by Arlene Tickner and David Blaney, aimed to explore the role of geo-cultural factors in informing concepts and epistemologies through which knowledge is produced, thus offering an alternative way for understanding the 'international'.[62] While much ink has been devoted towards establishing plural epistemological and ontological bases for the shift from the universal to the pluriversal world the concept of re-worlding has also been emphasized to reflect on how Western knowledge and IR has interpreted and appropriated specific non-western sites.[63]

One of the ways bywhich this conversation is taken further inthis Occasional Brief is to draw attention to the meta-theoretical turn, which in specific ways raises concerns on taking methods of inquiry more seriously. Anvikshiki, as a method of inquiry, which embraces pluralism offers a case of critical skepticism for questioning, interpreting and discerning the phenomenon to be observed. The meta-theoretical orientations of Anvikshiki fall very close to critical realism, which considers both ideas and material factors as necessaryguideposts for producing knowledge.

If one revisits the entire methodology adopted by Kautilya, an appropriate way to make sense of it is by identifying certain "unobservables". Critical realism directs one's attention to the

---

[61] Ling 2002, cited in Chih-yu Shih, Yih-Jye Hwang, Re-worlding the 'West' in post-Western IR: the reception of *Sun Zi's the Art of War in the Anglosphere*, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18 (3), September 2018, pp, 421–448.

[62] Chih-yu Shih, Yih-Jye Hwang, Re-worlding the 'West' in post-Western IR: the reception of *Sun Zi's the Art of War in the Anglosphere*, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18 (3), September 2018, pp, 421–448.

[63] Chih-yu Shih, Yih-Jye Hwang, Re-worlding the 'West' in post-Western IR: the reception of *Sun Zi's the Art of War in the Anglosphere*, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18 (3), September 2018, pp, 421–448.

unobservables (abductive inference) and posits why and how these unobservables play a role in explaining events in the social world. These "unobservables" (abductive inference) find a potential explanation in Kautilya's analysis towards underlining the role of constituent elements of state and statecraft, which play a causal/constitutive role in maintaining/regulating order. Kautilya's explanation in determining the code of conduct for individuals, society, states and the mandala meritsattention in this context.[64]Dharma thus becomes the fluid interlocutor mediating between concepts such as states, circle of states, power, order, morality, duty, rights amongst others.

For instance, the relationship between power and order mediating through dharmabecomes an important vantage point for understanding the purpose of grand strategic designin Arthashastra. Both, power and order were not competing concepts—they would appear to be so, if one relegates the understanding of order to the domain of state and power to the understanding of circle of states. This dualism between the inside and outside- make one arrive at a conclusion that the state in Arthashastra was coercive (order) and expansionist (power). However, when one uses the refractive lens of dharma, one arrives at the conclusion of a duty-based understanding of order, and the exercise of power to maintain and sustain that order, is what mattered.

This is an important point, and needs some deliberation as the notion of order (dharma) gives a vision of holism to Arthashastra. Maintaining law and order for the sustenance and growth of the state was a significant end goal. However, this does not mean that Kautilya's Arthashastra supported a coercive state. Critical skepticism underlined by philosophy of knowledge (anvikshiki) ensured that a balance between the material and ideational through the logic of reasoningwas recognized. This is well reflected in the way Arthashastra is composed. Secondly, at the external level, a dharma centric understanding of power was emphasized for balancing (or ordering) both adversaries and allies (circle of states). The focus was not just on the blind augmentation of power, but on power being a means to specific ends, which was yogakshema (safeguarding the well-being and security of the people), an aspect central to the very existence of the state.

---

[64]Bisht ibid., (2020).

Dharma in many ways can also be equated with 'authority', as it is more proximate to the meaning of legitimacy. According to Parekh, adhikaar is a complex and difficult Hindu concept as it meant a "deserved right". A right one deserves to possess as judged by established social norms. A ruler thus acquired *adhikaar* power to rule when he was "deemed and qualified to possess appropriate intellectual and moral qualifications".[65]

One can thus argue that Arthashastra is against inertia—and is suggestive of a dynamic approach towards state and statecraft;it is about an appraisal of the means (Upayas, Upadhas,[66]sadgunya) one needs to adopt to reach the desired end goal and it is about learning the craft of acquiring and protecting the state from both internal and external threats.

Thus, two broad conclusions that one can draw from this analysis are that the notion of order is central to the understanding of Arthashastra. This notion was anchored to the concept of Dharma. The relevance of the understanding of the discipline of IR is that it offers a revisionist case for understanding Arthashastra—liberating it from the narrow frames of real-politic.Alternatively, it places it within the context of relational thinking, well captured by discourses on grand strategy. This understanding thus gave a distinct meaning to vocabularies like morality, order, power—which were central towards making sense of state and statecraft in Arthashastra. Second, Kautilyan strategy was relational yet holistic interactionalstrategy, where connections between parts and whole become important. This network-based understanding, where the notion of relatedness informed how governance (rajniti) and strategy (kutniti) need to be perceived and reconciled, thus becomes an important lens through which Kautilya's Arthashastra could make sense and be understood.

---

[65]Parekh, Bhikhu (2010), "Some Reflections on the Hindu Tradition of Political Thought", in Fred Dallymyr(ed.), *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan., p. 112

[66]Upadhas were tests of deception. Crothers underlines the dialectical relationship between trust and deception (i.e. trust relies on deception and successful deception is predicated on certain markers of trust. See Crothers 2016, 208. It needs to be underlined here that intelligencegathering (espionage) was a critical element in Kautilyan state also becomes visible. Employing a web based approach, which focused on connections, secret tests (*upadhas*), were aimed at testing the honesty of ministers. Upadhas included 'test of piety, tests of material gain, tests of lust and tests of fear'. See, Crothers, Lisa Wessman (2016), "Trusted Deceivers, Illusion Making Ascetics, Pandits, Brahmins, Boddhisattas and the Conditions for the Dialogic, in *Arthashastra* and Jatakas and Scenarios of Rule", in Brin Black and Laurie Patton (eds.),*Dialogue in Early South Asian Religion: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Traditions*, New York, NY: Routledge.