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**Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*: A Classic Text of Statecraft
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Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*: A Classic Text of Statecraft and an Untapped Political Science Resource¹

Michael Liebig²

ABSTRACT:

The Kauṭīlyā Arthaśāstra – written at the turn of the 4th to the 3rd century BC – is a classical work of political theory and International Relation theory. However, Kauṭilya has so far remained on the sidelines of the international political science discourse in spite of Max Weber's repeated references to the Arthaśāstra and Hans J. Morgenthau's own statement that his theory of political realism is (also) based on ancient Indian philosophy. The Arthaśāstra is a theoretical and normative work which features six pivotal idea clusters: 1) state power, 2) raison d'état, 3) correlation of forces between competing states based on 4) the saptāṅga theory of the seven "state factors" (prakṛti). The correlation of forces predetermines which of six alternative foreign policy options – the 5) śāḍguṇya theory – will be selected. The background of Kauṭilya's 'realist' statecraft is 6) matsya-nyāya theory – a political anthropology which features anarchy, conflicts of interest and power struggle.

Kauṭilya's idea of political realism anticipates much of the modern notion which is associated not only with Machiavelli and Hobbes, but particularly with Hans J. Morgenthau and also with Max Weber, Helmuth Plessner and Friedrich Meinecke. The Kauṭīlyā Arthaśāstra is an untapped conceptual resource for theory building with respect to political theory, theorized statecraft and IR theory. The Kauṭīlyā Arthaśāstra is also key for understanding the politico-strategic culture of modern India.

Keywords: *Kauṭilya, Arthaśāstra, Indian political thought, saptāṅga theory, raison d'état, political realism*

INTRODUCTION

The *Arthaśāstra* can be characterized as the foundational work of the theory of political realism and Kauṭilya's theoretical achievements are (at least) on a plane with Machiavelli.³ Nevertheless, the *Arthaśāstra* has either been ignored or 'orientalized' in the Western political science discourse – as typified by the absurd formula of Kauṭilya being the 'Indian Machiavelli'. (cf. Behera 2007) Until very recently, the *Kauṭīlyā Arthaśāstra* has been marginalized even in Indian social science. (cf. Bajpai/Pant 2013; Bajpai et al. 2014, 10) Kauṭilyan ideas and concepts represent an untapped conceptual potential that can be used to tackle political science puzzles. That goes both for the history of political thought and for theory building with respect to current questions and puzzles of political science, including International Relations theory.

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³cf. Weber 1988 and 2008, Sarkar 1919, Nehru 1981/1944, Drekmeyer 1962, Modolski 1964, Parmar 1987, Roy 1987, Sil 1989, Mehta 1992, Boesche 2002, Müller 2006, Watson 2009, Gautam 2013a

Max Weber was the first Western social scientist to recognize the importance of the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*. He did so in his *Politics as Vocation* and in his sociology of religion studies on Hinduism. (Weber 1988, 555; 2008, 620f , 687) It is a reliable assumption that Hans J. Morgenthau's knew of Kauṭīliya. In *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau states that his theory of political realism is (also) derived from ancient Indian political philosophy and quotes from Weber's 'Hinduism study' which contains several references to Kauṭīliya and the *Arthaśāstra*. (Morgenthau 1978, 4 and 9)

Probably written around 320 BC, the *Arthaśāstra* is an "encyclopedic work" (Zimmer 1973, 46) covering the (patrimonial) state, public administration, economics, law, foreign policy/diplomacy, military affairs and intelligence. The *Arthaśāstra* is a theoretical and normative work – no historiographical description of the Mauryan Empire. The 'Kauṭīliyan state' is an ideal-type construction, but not an 'utopian' design in the sense of Thomas Morus or Campanella. The *Arthaśāstra* is grounded in Kauṭīliya's extensive experience as a political actor in the creation of the Maurya Empire which for the first time politically unified most of the Indian subcontinent.⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru's treatment of the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* in his *Discovery of India* has made the work and its author part of modern India's politico-cultural narrative. (Nehru 1981, 122-127) The core ideas of the *Arthaśāstra* are a significant factor of influence in modern India's politico-strategic culture.⁵ The Kauṭīliyan influence is latent in the sense of semi-conscious, 'habitual' dispositions and preferences with respect to the thought and behavior in the field politico-strategic affairs – in the sense of the "modernity of tradition" in India. (Lloyd & Lloyd 1968). The reference to Kauṭīliyan ideas is also explicit and discursive in the sense of the "re-use of the past" in addressing current political and strategic problems. (Mitra 2011) Thus, the adequate knowledge of the endogenous politico-cultural resource *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* is key for understanding the politico-strategic culture of modern India in the multipolar world system at the beginning of the 21st century. The theoretical engagement with Kauṭīliyan ideas and concepts and their induction into the political science discourse – without reducing them to mere larvae-like 'precursors' of modern Western theories in political science – is a desideratum in political science.

METHODOLOGICAL PUZZLES AND METHODOLOGICAL/THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The *Arthaśāstra*'s authoritative translations into English (R.P. Kangle) and German (J.J. Meyer) were made by Indologists. Also, the secondary literature on the work comes almost exclusively from the Indologists.⁶ The Indological perspective is focused on Sanskrit philology, but with respect to specifically political issues, Indologists are (probably, inevitably so) 'semantic generalists'. Sanskrit philology has made the *Arthaśāstra* accessible to social science, but the philological meticulousness of Indologists cannot substitute political science terminology – which is the prerequisite for an adequate understanding of Kauṭīliyan ideas. The problematic is not merely one of proper translation in terms of political science terminology, but brings up the issue of interpretation in the sense of adequate reconstruction of (latent) ideas or 'complexes of meaning' in the *Arthaśāstra* and the 'transposition' of such ideas into modern categories.

⁴cf. Kulke/Rothermund 1998, Kulke 2005, Witzel 2010

⁵cf. Sidhu 1996, Dixit 2004, Kim 2004, Zaman 2006, Jones 2006, Michael 2008, Menon 2012, Liebig 2014

⁶Hillebrandt 1923, Meyer 1926 and 1927, Jayaswal 1943, Kangle 2010/1965, Scharfe 1968, Ritschl/Schetlich 1973, Zimmer 1973, Kühnhardt 1988, Rangarajan 1992

The methodological challenge therefore is to grasp and explicate the key ideas of the *Kauṭīlīya Arthaśāstra* with the help of modern political science concepts and vocabulary – without compromising the originality and conceptual eigenvalue of these ideas. For example, the idea of *raison d'état* takes a central position in the *Kauṭīlīya Arthaśāstra* – but it is not systematically explicated as category.⁷ In order to explicate this (latent) Kauṭīlyan idea, the modern category of *raison d'état* has to be used as 'analytical tool' and a 'conceptual repository'.

The selection of categories of modern political science for the explication of the *Kauṭīlīya Arthaśāstra's* central ideas is made under the assumption of structural homology between such categories and Kauṭīlyan ideas. This heuristic approach follows Helmuth Plessner's concept of "covariance". (Plessner 2003) The German-Jewish social philosopher and sociologist Plessner (1892-1985) held the view, that substantive achievements in culture and science can occur in historically and culturally distant contexts. Structurally homologous ideas and concepts are not identical, but intrinsically related. In his 1931 study *Macht und menschliche Natur*⁸ [Power and Human Nature], Plessner rejects the suppositions of mono-linear scientific progress and of an 'European exceptionalism' in culture and science – without, however, adopting a position of cultural relativism (in the 'postmodernist' sense). Plessner covariance approach promises a meaningful and productive correlation of Kauṭīlyan thought with modern concepts of modern political science – without retroactively projecting the latter upon the first.

It needs to be emphasized here that the methodology adopted here, is not the only conceivable approach, however one that is indispensable. In order to do justice to the ideational content of the *Kauṭīlīya Arthaśāstra* the covariance/homology approach ought to be complemented by one that situates Kauṭīlyan ideas in the history of ideas of ancient Indian politico-strategic thought.

In this essay, the following text-immanent concept clusters will be analyzed and explicated by utilizing homologous theoretical concepts and categories of modern political science:

1. *matsya-nyāya*: the political anthropology of conflict of interest and power struggle
2. the *saptāṅga* theory: state capacity defined via “the seven state factors” (*prakṛti*)
3. (state) power: the aggregate of the seven *prakṛti*
4. *raison d'état*: the optimization of the seven *prakṛti*
5. the correlation of forces between states (in terms of the seven *prakṛti*)
6. the choice of foreign policy – among six alternatives (*śāḍguṇya*) – based on the correlation of forces
7. the threefold normative dimension of Kauṭīlyan statecraft and the dialectics of purposive rationality and normativity
8. grand strategy and the comprehensiveness of Kauṭīlyan's theory of the state and statecraft

⁷Similarly, in Machiavelli's *Il Principe* and his *Discorsi* the category of *raison d'état* is not explicitly articulated, yet the idea of *raison d'état* permeates the work

⁸Would be in English: 'Power and Human Nature'; most unfortunately, no English translation available

These text-immanent concept clusters will be analyzed and explicated by utilizing homologous theoretical concepts and categories of modern political science, including:

- Max Weber's concepts of power, power struggle, conflict of interest and (patrimonial) state.⁹ In addition, Weber's sociology of religion studies on Hinduism and Buddhism serve as a 'theoretical foil' featuring his concepts of the "Hindu social and life order," the ancient Indian "patrimonial state", ancient Indian "Machiavellianism" and ancient Indian "cameralism". (Weber 2008, 533-845)¹⁰
- Friedrich Meinecke's concept of *raison d'état* as developed in his *Die Idee der Staatsraison in der neueren Geschichte*. (Meinecke 1963/1924)¹¹
- Helmuth Plessner's concept of "political anthropology" centered on the concept of "boundary" with respect to individual human bodies and 'social bodies' (family, tribe, state) (Plessner 2003/1931)
- Hans J. Morgenthau's theory of political realism based upon the above concepts of Weber, Meinecke and – as a reliable assumption – Plessner.¹²

The assumption that these concepts of modern social/political science meet the criteria of structural homology with the *Arthaśāstra*'s core ideas has been tested and, at least preliminarily, verified. (cf. Liebig 2014, forthcoming)

MATSYA-NYĀYA: KAUṬILYA'S POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The precariousness of human existence – individually and collectively – is an indisputable fact of life for the sober realist Kauṭilya who possesses the "trained the recklessness of the look into the realities of life, and the ability to endure them and to cope with them." (Weber 1988, 558, transl. ML) The political anthropology of the *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra* rests on two basic assumptions:

- lust, greed, striving for domination are central features of man's anthropological constitution. Man as an individual has an anthropological disposition for 'egoism' and 'social bodies' of human beings too are 'selfish'.
- these anthropological dispositions lead inevitably to conflicts of interests and power struggles, therefore man's political world is one of anarchy and insecurity within and among political communities – *matsya-nyāya*.

Kauṭilya submits his view of the basic anthropological features of man at the very beginning of the *Arthaśāstra*. He speaks of instinct- and affect-driven behavior – “lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance and fool-hardiness” as the “six enemies” which need to be controlled, channeled and sublimated through education and (self-)discipline, ethics and (criminal) law. (I, 6, 1; VIII, 3, 66)¹³ But being part of human nature, man's drives and affective impulses cannot be eradicated – neither by morality nor force. So, the “six enemies” have first to be acknowledged as facts of life before trying to control and channel them. If prostitution, drinking and gambling cannot be eradicated, the

⁹cf. Weber 1956, Weber 1988

¹⁰Very unsatisfactory English translation: Max Weber: Religion in India: Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 2012

¹¹English translation: Friedrich Meinecke: Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and its Place in Modern History, Transaction Publishers, St. Louis, 1962

¹²cf. Morgenthau 1978, 2012; Frei 1994; Scheuerman 2009, Reichwein 2010

¹³The Latin number designates the book within the *Arthaśāstra* and the Arabic number the chapter thereof (in total fifteen); when there is an additional Arabic number, it refers to the *sūtra* number within the respective chapter in Kangle's English translation (2010a/1972)

state should at least regulate them – and tax them for the benefit of state treasury. (cf. II, 25 and 27)

Particularly, Kauṭilya argues, human beings must be allowed to act out their striving for wealth and social recognition/domination – within the boundaries of the established social and political order, of course. For Kauṭilya, *artha* – the pursuit of material wealth and social/political power – comes first in human existence: “Material well-being [*artha*] alone is supreme, says Kauṭilya.” (I, 7, 6) For him, *artha* is the logical and practical condition of the possibility of *dharma* (ethics) and *kāma* (sensual pleasure) This materialist-realist position stands at the core of Kauṭilya's political anthropology. Due to their 'selfish' disposition, human beings get constantly in conflicts of interests with each other. If men are left to themselves, these conflicts are usually resolved by the stronger party enforcing its will against the resistance of the weaker one. For Kauṭilya, this is the 'natural' state of human existence: *matsya-nyāya* – the stronger fish devouring the weaker. (cf. I, 4, 13-14; I, 13, 2-14) *matsya-nyāya* means 'law of the fishes' which corresponds in western terminology to 'law of the jungle', 'might is right' or 'anarchy'.

This anthropologically derived basic situation of anarchy and arbitrariness among human beings can, however, be 'managed' in a 'social contract' mode. Submitting a kind of 'contract theory', Kauṭilya argues: as men have increasingly suffered from the condition of *matsya-nyāya* – fearing for their life and property – they concluded that a ruler with supreme executive power – i.e. armed with the “rod” of force and punishment – was needed. (cf. I, 4, 5) In agreeing to install a supreme ruler, the *matsya-nyāya* principle of 'might makes right' is monopolized by the ruler resp. the (patrimonial) state. Endowed with the monopoly of the use of force, the state punishes any person who would illegally use force (in the form of murder, assault or robbery etc) within its territory. In the *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya lets a secret agent tell a crowd that their forebears feared for their life when *matsya-nyāya* ruled, so they decided to install a king who would enforce order and end violent anarchy. Thus the people should be grateful for having the king and should not complain about paying taxes to him. If the state were incapacitated, *matsya-nyāya* would return. (cf. I, 13, 2-14) However, while the state 'contains' *matsya-nyāya* on its territory by monopolizing the use of force, in interstate relations anarchy remains unrestricted. For Kauṭilya, the world of political entities/states is divided and conflicted and interstate relations are characterized by unrestrained *matsya-nyāya*.

Following our heuristic approach of structural homology, let's now correlate Kauṭilya's political anthropology in the *Arthaśāstra* with Helmut Plessner's concept of political anthropology. The fact that the social philosopher and sociologist Plessner had also studied biology, is relevant here.

As for all biological nature, self-preservation is constitutive of human beings. Plessner sees the self-protection of the human body defending the integrity of its (bodily) “boundaries” against the “outside” and “others” as the most fundamental anthropological impulse. After all, he emphasizes, man does not only 'have' a body, but 'is' a body. The human body is forcing man to acquire physical objects: food, clothing and shelter for (individual) survival. In addition, man is forced to develop tools and weapons to ensure food supply and physical safety against predator beasts and violent fellow-human beings. In view of these fundamental anthropological facts, Plessner views the use of normatively charged terms like 'egoism' and 'selfishness' as inappropriate.

While human beings always remain individuals within the boundaries of their bodies, they are, at the same time, created biologically out of a community – father and mother

– and are socialized in a community – the (extended) family. Thus, despite the physical 'boundaries' of the body separating men from fellow-men and the 'self-interest' in one's own self-preservation, man is not principally anti-social. Nevertheless, from the primacy of (individual) self-preservation, inevitably conflicts of interest arise between human beings -- especially when it comes to scarce goods like food, clothing and shelter which are critically important for survival. These conflicts of interest can and often do turn into power struggles which lead to domination and subordination.

The basic anthropological principle of “boundary” and self-preservation applies not only individuals, but also to social structures: family, clan, tribe and later political communities such as the (patrimonial) state. All of these 'social bodies' defend their boundaries against external intrusions of 'others'. The community acts like the individual in counter-posing a “familiar, native sphere to an unfamiliar, alien sphere”. (Plessner 2003, 231; transl. ML) From the basic anthropological fact of the particularity of human beings within the community and the particularity of human communities vis-à-vis other communities result frictions, conflicts of interest and power struggles. Such conflicts can intensify to an extent that they become a friend-foe relationship. For Plessner the friend-foe relationship is initially not a political category, but an anthropological fact: “The enemy is to man what is detrimental to his interests... [I]t is the most natural and most familiar thing in the world. But this familiarity and self-evidence of conflicts of interest that cause everyday quarrels and disputes about the smallest and the biggest things, also demonstrates... the entanglement of the One with the Other.” (Plessner 2003, 194, transl. ML) This dialectic of the friend-foe relationship and mutual entanglement/dependence marks the demarcation line between Plessner and Carl Schmitt who absolutises the friend-foe relationship and postulates it as the central normative principle which politics must pursue under all circumstances.

The basic message of Plessner's political anthropology is that in this world there cannot be a political community that is free of conflicts of interests and power hierarchies and the same goes for interstate relations. In human existence, there is no power vacuum, but power struggle – albeit increasingly in 'civilized' forms and in judicial garb. For Plessner, the sober and impartial recognition of the entanglement of politics and human nature makes it possible to conduct politics as the "art of the possible." In this understanding, political anthropology is exactly not the "program of an pessimistic, anti-rational and conservative advocacy of pure power politics", but rather it provides the "anthropological foundations of statesmanlike action as a welcome help for the leader who has to stay sober and prudent, and needs to know when to start the fight at the right moment and when to terminate it." (Plessner 2003, 145f; transl. ML)

In Kauṭilya's political anthropology, the (political) world is divided, conflicted, and anarchical. His conclusion is that this state of political affairs must be adequately taken into account when acting politically. That means that all politics come down to the issue of enforcing one's own will upon an other or others.¹⁴ In order to enforce one's will against resistance, Kauṭilya sees four – no more and no less – basic methods of political behavior – the four *upāyas*:

- 1) *sāman* (friendliness, cooperation)
- 2) *dāna* (gift, ingratiation)
- 3) *bheda* (divide et impera)
- 4) *daṇḍa* (use of force).

¹⁴That corresponds to Max Weber's understanding of 'political struggle' and 'power' (Weber 1956, 27 and 38)

These four methods of politics do not originate with Kauṭilya, but go back to much earlier political thought in ancient India. The *upāyas* are not only echoed by Weber, but also Morgenthau who states that „international Politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” and defines power as „man's control over the minds and actions of other men“ (Morgenthau 1978, 29 and 30) P. K. Gautam pointed to the section „Different Methods of the Balance of Power“ in Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* which exhibits an astonishing similarity to the *upāyas* in the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* (cf. Morgenthau 1978, 185-188): „Interestingly, without any reference to Kauṭilya, the 20th century pioneer of power politics theory Hans J. Morgenthau, in the chapter of different methods of balance of power in his book *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (1966) mentions that 'The balance of power can be carried on either by diminishing the weight of the heavier scale or by increasing the weight of the lighter one.' His chapter has sections on: 1.) Divide and Rule; 2.) Compensation; 3.) Armaments; and 4.) Alliances. The four sections are very close to the Kauṭilyan concepts of *bheda* (divide and rule), *dāna* (compensation), *daṇḍa* (armaments) and *sāman* (alliances).“ (Gautam 2013b)

Let us take the question of Kauṭilya's political anthropology and his (anthropologically rooted) political realism as a reference point for the conceptual homology between Kauṭilya on the one side and the modern social scientists Weber, Plessner and Morgenthau on the other side, but let's also look at the intellectual connectivity among the latter. We do not go here for a (conceptual) 'content analysis', but limit ourselves to circumstantial evidence:

Max Weber did read at least some of R. Shamashastry's essays on the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* in *Indian Antiquary* between 1905 and 1910. (Weber 2008, 621) This reading is reflected in Weber's repeated references to Kauṭilya and the *Arthaśāstra* in his sociology of religion studies on Hinduism and Buddhism. From this work (with its references to Kauṭilya), Morgenthau is citing in *Politics Among Nations*. (Morgenthau 1978, 9) He was also familiar with Weber's *Politics as Vocation* which too references Kauṭilya. In private remarks, Morgenthau wrote: "Weber 's political thought possessed all the intellectual and moral qualities I had looked for in vain in the contemporary literature inside and outside the universities " (quoted in: Frei 1994, 96).

But Morgenthau was also familiar with Helmuth Plessner's political anthropology: he mentions Plessner's 1931 book *Power and Human Nature* in his 1933 study *The Concept of the Political*. (Morgenthau 2012, 106) William Scheuerman notes: "Reminiscent of the conservative German theorist Helmuth Plessner, author of an influential book on politics and human nature, Morgenthau argued that an antagonistic model of politics required a deeper grounding in psychology and philosophical anthropology. Not only did a realistic or sociological approach demand recourse to the laws of politics, but basic political laws derived from fundamental features of human nature." (Scheuerman 2009, 37)

THE SAPTĀṄGA THEORY: THE SEVEN STATE FACTORS

The outcome of conflicts of interest or friend-enemy relations both within a political community and between political communities is determined by power. It is power that decides who wins the struggle and dominates and who is the loser and has to back down. First, it should be noted that Kauṭilya – undoubtedly a theorist of power politics – refrains from any ideological and/or rhetoric idealization of power. For Kauṭilya, power is first of all the obvious attribute of the ruler: the “rod” with which he can strike at those who don't submit to his will. Power is the ability of the ruler to use force – first personally, then through 'executive organs' (body guards, police, military) against insubordination. The monopoly of the legitimate use of force enables

the ruler to establish order in his kingdom and to control *matsya-nyāya*. And in this sense, power is constitutive of the state because a powerless state – i.e. without the monopoly of the use of force – ceases to be one. Such a 'state' will disintegrate internally and fall back into *matsya-nyāya* or, even more likely, such a 'state' will be conquered and annexed by another, more powerful state. In Kauṭilya's basic view of power as the capacity to use force as the means to enforce one's will against the resistance of others – be it within a state or against another state – there is an evident homology with Max Weber, Plessner and Morgenthau.

However, Kauṭilya's concept of power transcends the basic equation of power being the state's (exclusive) capacity to use force. There is a second dimension of Kauṭilya's concept of power, which is of particular interest for us: the *saptāṅga* theory. Kauṭilya's *saptāṅga* theory of (state) power refers to the seven *prakṛti*. The term *prakṛti* is translated by Kangle as “constituent element of the state” and as “state factor” by Meyer:

- 1) *svāmin*: the ruler
- 2) *amātya*: the Minister [government and administration]
- 3) *janapada*: the people [in the countryside]
- 4) *durga*: the fortress [capital]
- 5) *kośa*: the treasury [economy]
- 6) *daṇḍa*: armed might
- 7) *mitra*: the ally [in foreign policy]

For Kauṭilya, the seven *prakṛti* constitute (state) power: “The king and his rule [state], this is the sum-total of the constituents [state factors].” (VIII, 2, 1) State power is the aggregate of the seven state factors. With Kauṭilya's *saptāṅga* theory the state is no longer defined solely by its monopoly of the use of force, because there are six other 'power factors' beyond *daṇḍa*. How powerful a state is, is determined by the given status and the developmental trend of all the seven *prakṛti*. This new understanding of state power is one of Kauṭilya's outstanding theoretical achievements.

The sequence of the seven state factors indicates the relative weight Kauṭilya assigns them. An incompetent ruler produces disastrous consequences for all six consecutive state factors, while a good ruler can bring them into optimal condition. “And when the king is possessed of excellences, he makes the [other six] constituents perfect with their respective excellences.” (VIII, 1, 16) The ranking of the seven *prakṛti* is an expression of a logical and substantive hierarchy and generative principle: the state factor *svāmin* factor is the 'generative condition' of the state factor *amātya* – without ruler no 'government' advising him. Ruler and 'government' constitute the institutional framework of the state territory and the people living and working therein (*janapada*) – “the undertakings of the fort, the treasury, the army, the water-works and the occupations for livelihood have their source in the country. And bravery, firmness, cleverness and large numbers are found among the country people.” (VIII, 1, 29-30)

The first three *prakṛti* combined are the prerequisite for the state factor *durga* – fortress, residence and capital city. In the capital, where the ruler resides with his government, also the state treasury (*kośa*) is located – into which flows the tax revenue of the working population. A well-stocked treasury is the condition for financing the armed forces (as well as police and secret service) – state factor *daṇḍa*. And the *prakṛti* 1 to 6 are the precondition of successfully conducting foreign policy (*mitra*). We see that the seven *prakṛti* are logically and practically interrelated.

Moreover, Kauṭilya's *saptāṅga* theory means that state power is no longer an abstract, relational magnitude, but an aggregate of material and immaterial variables. That

implies that state power can be operationalized by breaking it down into its seven components. Thus, state power can, if not precisely measured, at least be adequately evaluated and estimated. That includes assessing the positive or negative developmental trends of each of the seven *prakṛti*.

For an objective assessment of one's own *prakṛti*, the Kauṭilyan state commands a comprehensive census system. The state bureaucracy collects and documents demographic, real estate, economic, fiscal and other data. Thus, the state factors *janapada*, *durga*, *kośa* and *danḍa* can be estimated fairly accurately. For example *janapada*: how many peasants produce what agricultural output, what is their surplus product, what tax revenue do they generate. What mines do produce what output of what type of ore? Or what is output of timber, elephants or herbs from the forest land? Is the trend of these economic indicators positive or negative? Or, what is the size of the armed forces (*danḍa*), their weapons systems, equipment, logistics or combat morale? Or, evaluating the quality of the state bureaucracy (*amātya*): what level of training, competence, efficiency or honesty? However, Kauṭilya advises the ruler to use the secret service when it comes to tracing corruption, embezzlement and abuse of power within then state bureaucracy. And, Kauṭilyan statecraft requires that the ('absolutist') ruler must judge soberly and self-critically his own political performance in collective policy deliberation with his advisers. "Rulership can be successfully carried out only with the help of associates. One wheel alone does not turn. Therefore, he should appoint ministers and listen to their opinion" (I, 7, 9) Kauṭilya does vehemently reject 'lonely decisions' of the ruler, who, instead, should consult with advisers and "should ascertain their different opinions along with their reasons for holding them". (I, 15, 35)

Evaluating and estimating the *prakṛti* of foreign states is the task of the Kauṭilyan (foreign) intelligence service. Spies, diplomats and intelligence informants have to collect open and secret data and information on the state factors of other states – friendly, neutral or hostile. These 'raw' intelligence data then have to be analyzed and assessed by the ruler and his political advisers as to gain the knowledge base for their strategic planning.

State power as an aggregate of the seven *prakṛti* it is not just the summation of 'material' factors, which might include: a) human resources, for example, the number of tax-paying peasants or the number of literate and trained administrative bureaucrats; b) physical resources, for example size of the grain or rice harvest or annual output of iron; c) financial resources, for example, annual tax revenue or the budget surplus/deficit. Also, non-material, mental resources are part of (aggregated) state power, ranging from the mastery of statecraft by the ruler and his close advisers to the skill and productivity of farmers in the countryside and and artisans in cities.

So Kauṭilya provides a substantive concept of state power, which is comprehensive as well as differentiated in itself. This is important to avoid an over-fixation and over-estimation of one or two state factors in assessing state power – i.e. ignoring their quasi-genetic dependency on other state factors and fact that state power is determined by the totality of the seven *prakṛti*. When we look at the power potential of state we may find that the military power factor of this state appears to be very strong: its armed forces are quantitatively large. But intelligence analysis may uncover that that this same state is rather weak in economic power and financial resources which translates into missing pay, low-grade equipment and insufficient supplies – atrophying the army's combat power. Conversely, a territorially and demographically small state with modest armed forces might become a powerful state in a relatively short time span. That can happen if the state factors *svāmin* and *amātya* are of excellent quality, which means promoting and expanding the economy in the countryside (*janapada*) and in

the city (*durga*) thus increasing tax revenues (*kośa*) allowing the armed forces to be upgraded (*daṇḍa*) and conducting a wise foreign policy (*amātya*).

Kauṭilya's concept of state power as the aggregate of the seven state factors is homologous with Morgenthau's concept of "national power" whose components are the geographical setting, population size, raw materials, agriculture, industrial potential and the armed forces of a state. While these are material and quantitatively measurable factors, Morgenthau also includes immaterial factors to "national power" which are "national character", "national morality" and the "quality" of government and diplomacy. (cf. Morgenthau 1978, 107-170) Even if the homology between Kauṭilya's concept of state power as the aggregate of the seven *prakṛti* and Morgenthau's concept of "national power" is evident, Kauṭilya's *saptāṅga* theory was developed 2300 years prior to Morgenthau's concept – a truly outstanding theoretical achievement.

SAPTĀṅGA THEORY, CORRELATION OF FORCES AND THE ŚĀḌGUṆYA CONCEPT CLUSTER

The *saptāṅga* theory is also of critical importance in operational statecraft. In foreign policy, the *saptāṅga* theory provides the benchmark for the assessment of one's own resources and capabilities on the one side and the capabilities of external actors on the other side. The result is an 'estimate of the situation' the bottom of which is the correlation of forces between states: "ascertaining the (relative) strength or weakness of powers". (IX, 1, 1) The concept of correlation of forces is central in the *Arthaśāstra*, because Kauṭilya wants to eliminate non-reflective, impulsive and arbitrary action in foreign policy. Via the *saptāṅga* theory, Kauṭilya establishes a substantive and objective criteria for assessing the correlation of forces between states. And this assessment, in turn, predetermines which foreign policy course the ruler should adopt.

Kauṭilya offers a spectrum of six basic approaches in foreign policy – the *śāḍguṇya* theory: "The circle of constituent elements [the seven *prakṛti*] is the basis of the six measures of foreign policy [*śāḍguṇya*]." (VII, 1, 1) Depending first and foremost on the assessment of the correlation of forces (in terms of the respective *prakṛti*), there are the following action strategies in foreign affairs:

- *saṃdhi*, peace > the rival state is stronger and will remain so in the foreseeable future
- *vigraha*, war > the rival state is vastly inferior in power
- *āsana*, neutrality > the correlation of forces is balanced
- *yāna*, war preparation, coercive diplomacy > one's own power is rising vis-à-vis the rival state
- *saṃśraya*, alliance building > the rival state's power is rising faster than one's own
- *dvaidhībhāva*, diplomatic double game > the constellation among rivals and allies is very fluid

Kauṭilya insists there are these six – no more and no less – action strategies in foreign policy "These are really six measures, because of differences in the situation, say Kauṭilya." (VII, 1, 5) What is of critical importance with respect to the *śāḍguṇya* theory is its intrinsic connectivity with the *saptāṅga* theory.

- the *saptāṅga* theory provides the benchmark for the correlation of forces between rival states.
- the correlation of forces (in terms of the seven *prakṛti*) preselects, if not

determines which of the six action strategies (*śāḍgunya*) is to be chosen

“Situating within the circle of [the seven] constituent elements, he [the ruler] should, in this manner, with these six methods of [foreign] policy, seek to progress from decline to stable condition and from stable condition to advancement in his own undertakings.” (VII, 1, 38) And: “He who sees the six measures of policy as being interdependent in this manner, plays, as he pleases, with the [rival] kings tied by the chains of his intellect. (VII, 18, 44)

KAUṬILYAN RAISON D'ÉTAT: THE OPTIMIZATION OF THE SEVEN PRAKṚTI

The *saptāṅga* theory also provides the key for the idea of *raison d'état* in the *Arthaśāstra*. As mentioned above, Kauṭilya does not use the term literally, but the idea of *raison d'état* pervades the entire *Arthaśāstra* if we define it as "the unconditional imperative of the state's self-preservation" (Münkler 1987, 49; translation M.L).¹⁵ Kauṭilya's most explicit dictum with respect to the idea of *raison d'état* is: "The source of the livelihood of men is wealth, in other words, the earth inhabited by men. The science which is [explicating] the means of the attainment and protection of that earth is the Science of Politics." (XV, 1, 1-2) This understanding of *raison d'état* corresponds to Giovanni Botero's 1589 definition of *ragion di stato* as "the knowledge of the means and measures that are necessary to establish, preserve and enlarge a state." (Botero, *Della Ragion di Stato*, quoted in: Münkler 1987, 169; transl. ML) However, both Münkler's and Botero's definitions of *raison d'état* remain abstract as we are not told what the "means and measures" actually are that "establish, preserve and enlarge a state." Even Friedrich Meinecke, who has systematically analyzed the historical and intellectual genesis of the category *raison d'état* or *staatsraison*, deals with it as an abstract principle:

“*Staatsraison* is the maxim of state action, the state's law of motion. *Staatsraison* tells the statesman what he has to do in order to keep the state in a condition of health and power [...] The well-being of the state and the people enclosed in it are the value and goal [of *staatsraison*], power, securing and expanding power, are the means to that end.” (Meinecke 1963/1924, 1 and 3; transl. M.L)

In contrast, Kauṭilya's much earlier idea of *raison d'état* transcends the abstract principle of state preservation. Kauṭilya does indeed 'tell the statesman' what he needs to do in order to 'keep the state in a condition of health and power'. It is – once again – the *saptāṅga* theory which gives the idea of *raison d'état* a substantive content. Kauṭilya 'operationalizes' the abstract notion of (state) power via de-aggregation into the seven state factors and then arrives back at a well-defined and substantive notion of (state) power via aggregating the seven *prakṛti*. Each of them is thoroughly analyzed in the *Arthaśāstra*, but Kauṭilya is not only interested in the given state of the seven *prakṛti*. Much more he is interested in the state factors' trend of development and their potential for change – positively or negatively. The status of the *prakṛti* is fluid: they can grow and improve or they can deteriorate. A state's power potential might stagnate for a while, but sooner than later it will either increase or shrink.

The developmental trend of the *prakṛti* – and this is the crucial point for Kauṭilya – is not beyond human control. The directionality of six resp. five state factors can be determined or at least be influenced by the ruler and the state administration. Kauṭilya's

¹⁵As mentioned earlier, the idea of *raison d'état* permeates Machiavelli's works, but – as in the case of Kauṭilya some 1800 years earlier – the notion of *raison d'état* is not explicitly articulated by him.

central focus is to link the *prakṛti* with agency. The *prakṛti* have a potential that is open to political 'voluntarism'. Therefore:

- The ruler should provide the best possible political leadership.
- The 'government' should give the best possible advice to the ruler and excel in the political-administrative implementation of state policies.
- The people in the countryside are to engage in farming as to generate the largest possible agricultural surplus product and corresponding tax revenue as well as expanding the area under cultivation.
- In the capital, artisans are to be as skilled and productive as possible, traders (and the 'service sector') should have strong sales and pay high taxes correspondingly and the city's fortifications should be impregnable.
- The surplus of government revenues over expenditures should be as large as possible, so that the state treasure might be well-endowed
- The military should have the best training, weapons and supplies – i.e. superb combat power.
- As for the exogenous factor *mitra*, the allied state's *prakṛti* should be exploited to the maximum extent to one's own benefit.

Keeping the state in a condition of health and – growing – power means the expansion and improvement of the seven *prakṛti*. Thus, the optimization of the seven state factors is *raison d'état*. With an unambiguous emphasis on agency, Kauṭilya postulates:

“A king endowed with personal qualities endows with excellences the constituent elements [*prakṛti*] not so endowed. One not endowed with personal qualities destroys the constituent elements that are prosperous and devoted to him. Then that (king) not endowed with personal qualities, with defective constituent elements, is either killed by the subjects or subjugated by the enemies, even if he be the ruler up to the four ends of the earth. But one, possessed of personal qualities, though ruling over a small territory, being united with the excellences of the constituent elements, and conversant with (the science) of politics, does conquer the entire earth, never loses.” (VI, 1, 16-18)

Political action in the sense of Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* means optimizing the *prakṛti* and thus upgrading the power of the state and the welfare of the people. *Raison d'état* in terms of the *saptāṅga* theory provides an operational and substantive concept on which statecraft can be based upon. Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* demands of the ruler to remedy deficits and defects of the state factors and their continuous upgrading. Or, to put it in modern IR terminology, 'internal balancing' has priority before 'external balancing' because it is the immediate and direct way of making and keeping the state healthy and powerful. Kauṭilya advises the ruler: first bring own house in order – and only thereafter think about the role other actors might play in your political schemes. (cf. VII, 6, 12)

But Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* in terms of the *saptāṅga* theory applies equally for *mitra* or external balancing. Foreign policy in accordance with Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* means the 'indirect' optimization of one's own *prakṛti* by exploiting for a time the state factors of an allied state to one's own benefit – either by providing protection against a third state of superior power or helping to conquer a third state of inferior power. In first case, one's own state factors are being kept intact or can be improved behind the 'shield' (of *prakṛti*) made available by the allied state. In the latter case, the ally is helping in the conquest of a third state which means the 'incorporation' of that state's *prakṛti* into one's own – i.e. the optimization of the own state factors by enlarging them with those of the conquered state.

“On thus perceiving the presence of excellence in a gain or a portion of a gain, which is definite, he should march after making pacts with confederates, being intent on achieving [only] his own object.” (VII, 9, 53)

Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* can be operationalized into concrete policies for optimal 'internal balancing'. Based on a thorough assessment of the situation in term of the status and developmental trend of one own's *prakṛti* and those of allied, neutral and enemy states, concrete policy decisions can (and have to) be made as to which of the *prakṛti* most urgently need to be upgraded quantitatively and/or qualitatively. The order of priority and the ways of implementation with respect to the optimization of the state factors is a matter of the political skill of the ruler and the specific, tactical situation. But for all these contingent political considerations and resulting policy measures, there is a substantive benchmark: *raison d'état* in terms of the optimization of the state's *prakṛti* – quite the opposite of 'Asiatic' inertia and stasis.

Throughout the *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya tells us that there is no standstill in the political world. Change is what is constant in politics. States always go into a certain direction: “decline, stability and advancement” (VI, 2,4) States may stagnate, but it won't take long before decline or ascend becomes discernible. There are no permanent friends, foes or neutrals. Interstate relations are fluid: today's friend is tomorrow's enemy and vice versa. Kauṭilya insists that the ruler must know about the changes in the political situation, preferably before they have fully manifested themselves. “He, who is well versed in the science of politics, should employ all the means, viz. advancement, decline and stable condition as well as weakening and extermination.” (VII, 18, 43)

KAUṬILYAN RAISON D'ÉTAT AS THE POLITY'S 'BASIC NORM'

Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* seems to be situated outside the realm of normativity. Securing and expanding the power of the state via the optimization of the seven state factors appears to be undiluted purposive rationality – 'pure power politics'. In contrast, the normative sphere of Kauṭilyan statecraft appears to be summed up in an ethical dictum that seems far distant to and incompatible with 'power politics':

“In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to himself is not beneficial to the king, but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial (to him).” (I, 19, 34)

This normative dictum should not be seen declaratory. But, if Kauṭilya is serious about it, how can it coexist with Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* in the sense of securing and expanding the power of the state? Kauṭilya is unambiguous that policies dictated by *raison d'état* do involve wars (of aggression), extrajudicial killings, deception, lies and breach of treaty. Such unethical behavior features prominently in the *upāyas* and the *śāḍgunya*. And such state policies, which differ radically from generally accepted ethical norms, are hardly compatible with the happiness of the people. The basic canon of morality, as defined by Kauṭilya, is: “abstaining from injury (to living creatures), truthfulness, uprightness, freedom from malice, compassionateness and forbearance.” (I, 3, 13) However, for Kauṭilya, even highly 'unethical' state action, if guided by *raison d'état*, has not only a normative eigenvalue, but serves the people. For him, strengthening state capacity is the *conditio sine qua non* for the happiness of the people.

Kauṭilya takes a position which denies that there is a dichotomy between purposive rationality and normativity if one accepts his understanding of *raison d'état*. Indeed, when looking at the premise of the Kauṭilyan state – preventing the relapse into

matsya-nyāya – the question arises whether this premise is purposive-rational or normative in character? Or, is it both? Indeed, for Kauṭilya, maintaining and strengthening the power of the state and ensuring the happiness of the people are two sides of the same coin. For him, both are political necessities (in the sense of purposive rationality) and both have a political-normative dimension. Albeit in a paradoxical fashion, the previously mentioned central dictum of the *Arthasāstra* expresses the dual character (political rationality and normativity) of Kauṭilyan *raison d'état*: “Material well-being [*artha*] alone is supreme,' says Kauṭilya. For spiritual good [*dharmā*, ethics] and sensual pleasures [*kāma*] depend on material well-being.” (I, 7, 6-7) In other words, without exercising political power and pursuing material wealth, there won't be morality in the political sphere. For Kauṭilya, there is no 'stand-alone' morality in politics separated from power and wealth. Instead, in the political sphere, power and wealth on the one side and ethics on the other side are dialectically interrelated.

The optimization of the seven *prakṛti* originates from the purposive-rational political calculation of maintaining and expanding power of the state. At the same time, the power of the state is the prerequisite for meeting the normative requirement to ensure the happiness and welfare of the people. Without the optimization of the *prakṛti* – driven by purposive political rationality – the people would sink into poverty and *matsya-nyāya* would loom – the very opposite of the happiness of people. The paramount duty of the ruler (or the state), to strive for the happiness of the people and to prevent *matsya-nyāna*, has an intrinsic normative character resp. eigenvalue. At the same time, this political-ethical obligation of the ruler is an expression of purposive political rationality: growing state power by optimizing the *prakṛti* – notably with respect to the economy – will also make the people materially saturated and politically content which guarantees of the stability and power of the state. Materially saturated and 'happy' people will keep quiet and gratefully accept the ruler and his government as legitimate. They welcome a powerful state which is capable of preventing *matsya-nyāya* – both domestically and with respect to foreign powers.

In the paragraph “Causes Leading to Decline, Greed and Disaffection among the Subjects,” Kauṭilya gives an detailed account of 'bad governance' like “discarding the good and favouring the wicked”, “starting unrighteous injuries”, “doing acts that should not be done” or the “destruction of well-being [*artha*]”. (VII, 5, 19-16) Such political practices, if they occur outside the constraints of *raison d'état*, are evil in normative terms. But engaging in them, is equally counterproductive, if not self-destructive in political terms. In other words: he who submits to 'normal' evil in politics, is acting not only immorally, but commits the supreme crime of political life: stupidity. Outside the narrow path of *raison d'état*, immorality in politics is plain stupid. The following citation demonstrates the dialectical entanglement of purposive political rationality and normativity that characterizes the *Arthasāstra*:

“Subjects, when impoverished, become greedy; when greedy they become disaffected; when disaffected they either go over to the enemy or themselves kill the master. Therefore, he [the ruler] should not allow these causes of decline, greed and disaffection among the subjects to arise, or, if arisen, should immediately counter-act them.” (VII, 5, 27-28)

In Kauṭilya's dialectical entanglement of purposive political rationality and normativity lies a significant difference to Meinecke – in spite of the homology between the Kauṭilyan idea of *raison d'état* and Meinecke's. Let's recount that both for Meinecke and Kauṭilya, *raison d'état* has a normative and a purposive-rational dimension: “The well-being of the state and the people enclosed in it are the value and goal [of *raison d'état*], power, securing and expanding power are the means to that

end.” (Meinecke 1963/1924, 3; transl. ML) But while Kauṭilya sees a symbiosis of political normativity and rationality, Meinecke sees an unbridgeable rift. Raison d'état as political action for the purpose of maintaining and expanding the power of the state creates for Meinecke a irresolvable normative dilemma. If the state acts with political purposive-rationality in line with raison d'état, it will inevitably commit “sins” of the most severe kind. Not so for Kauṭilya: when political action derived from raison d'état collides with the above mentioned canon of basic ethical values, he knows no hesitation: what raison d'état demands to be done, must be done. There might be regrettable, tragic consequences when acting in accordance with raison d'état, but such action cannot become an ethical dilemma. In Book I, chapters 17 and 18, Kauṭilya deals with the legitimate and politically competent crown prince repudiated by the king-father. If the alternate successor chosen by the king is also competent in statecraft, Kauṭilya says, the legitimate prince must accept his fate and retire to a life in seclusion. However, in case designated successor is politically incompetent, the crown prince should overthrow his father and kill him along with the chosen successor because they are a threat to health and power of the state. So, Kauṭilya is not masking out the tragic dimension of raison d'état, but long as the state leader adheres to it, his action cannot be 'sinful' or 'unethical'.

Through the symbiosis of political normativity and rationality, raison d'état constitutes a 'basic norm' of higher 'cardinality' in the sphere of statecraft. Raison d'état as 'basic norm' supersedes and overrides the 'regular' ethical canon. Those who accuse Kauṭilya of sacrificing morality at the altar of raison d'état, ought to keep in mind that it was Plato in the *Politeia*, who – like Kauṭilya – distinguished between ethics in general and the political ethics of statecraft. Plato's political ethics include, for example, the state's right to use 'noble lies' in politics – thus violating the supreme principle of Platonic ethics: truth. Or, another example, the Platonic state is given the right to pursue policies of eugenics including infanticide. (cf. Hillebrandt 1923, 36 and 155)

There is, however, a third normative dimension to Kauṭilyan raison d'état in addition to the fusion of maintaining and expanding the power of state and the welfare of the people. This third normative dimension covers the sphere of foreign policy. As indicated above, the optimization of the *prakṛti* with respect to Kauṭilyan foreign policy means that the *prakṛti* of other states get 'incorporated' into one's own by conquering these states or turning them into vassals. Does this kind of (exogenous) enlarging and upgrading of one's own state factors mean a policy of unrestrained military conquest and imperialist expansion? The answer is a – qualified – No.

Kauṭilyan raison d'état in interstate affairs – i.e. the optimization of one's own *prakṛti* by capturing the exogenous *prakṛti* of conquered/vassal states – draws a clear (geo-cultural) line of demarcation. Within the geo-cultural space of the Indian subcontinent, Kauṭilyan raison d'état means revisionism: all state factors (of the various political entities on the subcontinent) are to be aggregated into the formation of one pan-Indian state entity. For Kauṭilya, the 'strategic' aim of politically unifying the Indian subcontinent gains a normative quality and thus becomes a central feature of raison d'état.¹⁶ The “six methods of foreign policy” (*ṣaḍguṇya*) in the service of raison d'état are explicitly meant to facilitate the political unification of the Indian subcontinent – preferably by the five non-violent methods. But if that were not possible, war is *ultima ratio*. Within the geo-cultural space of the Indian subcontinent, Kauṭilyan foreign policy is revisionist and expansionist.

¹⁶Here lies, again, a similarity between Kauṭilya and Machiavelli whose strategic (and 'normative') goal was the political (re-)unification of Italy and its liberation from Spanish, French and German domination (cf. Dreke 1962, Meinecke 1963, Hale 1972)

However, the strategic and normative goal of politically unifying the Indian subcontinent as part of Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* has yet another normative dimension: what is valid within, is not valid beyond the Indian subcontinent. Revisionism and expansionism are completely absent in Kauṭilyan foreign policy with respect to the states located outside the Indian subcontinent. In the *Arthaśāstra*, there is not the slightest hint pointing in the direction of imperial proclivities beyond the Indian geo-cultural space. Kauṭilya's normatively charged determination for the political unification of the subcontinent 'stops' in the Himalayas and in Afghanistan. There is no desire for imperial expansion towards the Graeco-Persian Empire, Central Asia, Indochina, China or the Indo-Pacific islands. Within the (unified) subcontinent, the optimization/aggregation of the totality of *prakṛti* is Kauṭilyan *raison d'état*, but the very same *raison d'état* becomes a normative 'barrier' when it comes to politico-military expansion beyond the subcontinent. Beyond India, Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* demands a foreign policy of 'balance of power' with other states.

THE KAUṬILĪYA ARTHAŚĀSTRA: POLITICAL SCIENCE AND STATECRAFT

According to B.H. Liddell Hart, grand strategy can be understood as a 'holistic' alignment of strategic thinking on the overall constellation of the political, social, moral, economic, military and cultural resources available to a state. (Liddell Hart 1967, 322) Grand strategy means that strategic thinking and action is aimed to bring about a context-adequate mix of all state resources for the realization of state interests and goals. (cf. Kovac/Marcek, 2013) This concept of grand strategy is homologous to Kauṭilya's synoptic idea of statecraft and his comprehensive understanding of political science which, as evidenced in the *Arthaśāstra*, covers state, governance, economy, law, foreign policy/diplomacy, military affairs and intelligence. Consequently, the *Arthaśāstra* is about synthesizing military, diplomatic, legal, governance or economic strategies into grand strategy in accordance with *raison d'état*. (cf. Bozeman 1992)

What we see here, is the “modernity of tradition” (Rudolph & Rudolph 1968) – as represented by ancient Indian political thought which is (uniquely) articulated by Kauṭilya in the *Arthaśāstra*. He lays out conceptual building blocks of timeless relevance for political science and grand strategy. The Indian tradition of the intellectual “re-use of the past” (Mitra 2012) for current political challenges is both undertheorized and underutilized in (modern) political science. Thus, the intellectual vibrancy of this classical text of political theory and statecraft should induce us to engage with the *Arthaśāstra's core* ideas productively, albeit critically:

- with the *saptāṅga* theory the power of the state gets a substantive content: the aggregate of the seven *prakṛti*.
- the optimization of the seven state factors constitutes Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* which facilitates not only the strengthening of the power of the state, but also the welfare of the people – therefore gaining the character of a 'basic norm'
- the third normative dimension of Kauṭilyan *raison d'état* is the determined thrust towards 'regional' political unification, however coupled with the 'normative barrier' against exogenous imperial-expansionist designs
- the *śāḍgunya* theory based upon the concept of the correlation of forces in terms of the *saptāṅga* theory defines a spectrum of foreign policy strategies for enforcing state interests and goals in the sense of grand strategy.

Kauṭilya's ideas and concepts in the *Arthaśāstra* represent an untapped reservoir of ideas and concepts that can be used to tackle political science puzzles. That goes both for the history of political thought and for theory building with respect to current questions and puzzles of political science, including International Relations theory. The portfolio of such research questions could include: factors constituting state capacity, the dialectics of economy and security, strategic autonomy and nonalignment, 'the non-imperial great power', the concept of multipolarity, or research issues with respect to 'neoclassical realism' in IR theory and theoretical questions in the field of Intelligence Studies, notably with respect to intelligence analysis, assessment and estimates. The analysis and explication of the central ideas and concepts of the *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra* with the help of 'covariant' or structurally homologous categories of political science should be a – long overdue – contribution to introducing a 'de-orientalized' *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra* in the political science discourse internationally.

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