

Kautilya's Arthashastra and Indian Security Policy (Seminar, WS 2017/18)

Organiser: Dr. Michael Liebig

Idea-flow across the ages – via oral or written transmission – is a key feature of South Asian geo-cultural space. The 'modernity of tradition' (Rudolph & Rudolph) and 're-use of the past' (Mitra) for tackling contemporary problems, are particularly relevant for the politico-strategic sphere in India. However, the lasting influence of ideational traditions on contemporary politico-strategic thinking and behavior can also be indirect and semi-conscious. A case in point is Kautilya's Arthashastra – South Asia's formative pre-modern text on statecraft that can be characterized as one of the foundational texts of International Relations theory.

The seminar explores if and how Kautilya's Arthashastra, has exerted manifest and latent influence on thought patterns, preferences and disinclinations in the conduct of Indian foreign and security policy. How relevant are Kautilyan thought-figures for understanding independent India's foreign and security policy conduct?

Correlating endogenous pre-modern political thought to contemporary India's political and strategic practices, is an innovative approach in Political Science. Mostly, Indian foreign and security policies are approached through the prism of International Relations theory that was constructed by the West for understanding the international relations of the West. International relations, however, like many disciplines in the social sciences, cannot be treated as either being a-historically constructed, or being value neutral. With its clear focus on endogenous politico-strategic ideas, the course:

- provides an introduction to central concepts of Kautilya's (pre-modern) theory of International Relations: the *saptanga*, *shadgunya* and *mandala* concept-clusters, the *rajadharma* normative framework, and the role of diplomacy, intelligence and covert action.
- investigates the scholarly discourse on Kautilya's relevance for Indian politico-strategic culture and foreign and security policy
- analyses selected official and semi-official documents on foreign/security policy in view of traces of Kautilyan thought-figures therein
- analyses selected Indian foreign and security policies in contemporary contexts with respect to resonances of the Kautilyan thought

Calendar:

[Recommended literature for each seminar session will be uploaded in Moodle]

Oct. 19, 2017

Introduction to the course (Liebig)

Oct. 26

'Kautilyan Realism' – understanding Kautilya's Arthashastra (Liebig)

Nov. 2

The Saptanga cluster (7 state factors constituting state power), correlation of forces between states and the Shadgunaya cluster (six methods of foreign policy)

Nov. 9

The mandala concept in the Arthashastra and Kautilya's concept tusnim yuddha ('active measures', subversion and covert action)

Nov. 16

Kautilya's doctrine of domestic security

Nov. 23

Indian Strategic Culture

Nov. 30

Echoes of Kautilyan concepts of foreign and security policy in Jawaharlal Nehru's The Discovery of India

Dec. 7

Echoes of Kautilyan concepts in the Nonalignment2.0 document on Indian Grand Strategy

Dec. 14

Echoes of Kautilyan concepts in India's nuclear doctrine

Dec. 21

Former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran's book How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century

Jan. 11, 2018

Former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon on Kautilya's relevance for India's foreign and security policy

Jan. 18

Former Intelligence Bureau Director D.C. Pathak on Kautilya's relevance for India's internal security policy

Jan. 25

'Active measures' and 'covert action' in Indian foreign and security policy

Feb. 2

Is there a Kautilyan template underpinning India's 'Nonalignment'/'Strategic Autonomy' stance?

Feb. 9

Discussion of Term Papers

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