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KAUTILYA'S VIEWS ON SECRET ACTIVITIES OF INTELLIGENCE IN ARTHASASTRA AND ITS CURRENT RELEVANCE

By:

Ni Made Sumaryani

Indonesia Defense University

E-mail: aryachandrani198@gmail.com

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Abstract

Kautilya's Arthashastra is considered the best political and war discourse was ever written in prose. Dating from the 4th century, which contains views on elements of war tactics and covert activities. Political science contains law, combat techniques, attack strategy, defense strategy, including intelligence. Kautilya has outlined the principles of intelligence by emphasizing the importance of spies in securing and defending a country. This paper tries to study the intelligence aspects established by Kautilya and tries to solve modern age problems such as terrorism, internal conflict, armed insurrection, and ultimately guarantee one's safety. Intelligence activity was directly under the authority of the ruler with the formation of secret service organizations, through the recruitment of secret agents from all groups and the deployment of secret agents in two basic groups (samstha and samchār). The method of spreading secret agents in Arthashastra aims for early detection in one's own country, an enemy country, a friendly country, and a neutral country to find out the strengths and weaknesses of each element of the country.

Keywords: Kautilya, The Arthashastra, Intelligence, Secret Activities, Defense Strategy, Threat

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, events that have caused the loss of life, damage to infrastructure, riots, and activities that threaten the safety of all Indonesians. This requires early detection and prevention efforts. This task is carried out by intelligence as the eyes and ears of the state.

The practice of intelligence is generally perceived as something that is "empty of value", in which its practices neglect all means to achieve a goal. The practice of intelligence that removes ethics for

intelligence and works not in the interests of the state is called "black intelligence". Black intelligence is an operation carried out without authorization (self-tasking) or control from the intelligence authority (Hendropriyono, 2013). Such intelligence practices are not appropriate if public safety, order, and safety are the main points.

Intelligence also can not appear scary and seem to haunt the public. Intelligence must embrace the public through covert activities to jointly build the country's defense and become the eyes and ears of the

state in responding to the emergence of indications of a threat to state sovereignty. This covert activity not only aims to strengthen internal defense but also creates conflict and dissension between enemies.

This secret activity was discussed in the discussion of political science in Kautilya's Arthashastra. Arthashastra is a treatise containing four categories of knowledge (*catur vidya*), namely *daṇḍanīti* (politics), *varta* (economics), *veda* (Ṛg, Sāma & Yayur), and *anvikṣaki* (philosophy). Kautilya compiled Arthashastra based on several ancient Hindu political literature, political traditions, and life experiences. The past Arthashastra concepts were reinterpreted as concepts that are still relevant today. This text is written for a strong monarchy without reference to a specific historical period, but many of the ideas contained therein are still relevant for modern democratic governments.

Secret agent arises because of a lot of struggles over land, wealth, and resources. After mastering martial arts, military formations, politics, and so on, there was an increase in the need to learn the art of espionage to deal with the conspiracy and collusion of neighboring kingdoms. Intelligence duty to report to the king about the activities, affairs, conspiracy, and the daily operations of political enemies, those bureaucrats who are disloyal or harmful, and foreign agents masquerading as citizens in their activities. This helps the authorities in knowing the strengths, weaknesses, and abilities of each foreign ruler.

Arthashastra as an ancient Hindu treatise is not merely a matter of spying, killing, and poisoning. Kautilya also includes techniques for manipulating public opinion and is commonly known as copyright conditions. Even the Kautilya principle is also used by modern diplomats, namely the *sama* (persuading), *dana* (buying), *danda* (punishing), and *bheda* (exploiting weaknesses) to achieve their goals (Sarin, 2015). So, this research will be examined more deeply about intelligence activities in

the Arthashastra text to enrich the science of state intelligence.

II. METHOD

This study is a text study that examines the values and ideas of intelligence in Arthashastra. This research focused on the secret activities of intelligence in Arthashastra and its current relevance. This study uses the Paul Ricoeur Interpretation Theory. In his theory, Paul Ricoeur seeks to bridge the problem of discourse that has been going on for a very long time and has become a problem by Plato and Aristotle. Ricoeur (2012, p. 12) says this is the first context in which the concept of discourse is known, that mistakes and truths are the affection of discourse and discourse to establish two basic signs, one noun and one interrelated verb in the synthetic form (meaningful) behind the well said a word.

In this modern linguistics, the problem of discourse becomes an original thing because today's discourse can be contradicted by a contradictory term that is unknown or not justified by ancient philosophers (Ricoeur, 2012).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Arthashastra as a knowledge that contains about state administration, economic policy, military strategy, governance, and state administration was written by Kautilya or Vishnugupta identified as Chanakya (370-283 BC) during the Maurya Empire (Mabbett, 2016). In the introduction to Arthashastra, it is stated: "This book (Arthashastra) is a summary of knowledge about Arthashastra from ancient teachers to obtain, maintain, expanding the earth." Because this is the ultimate gold, then Arthashastra is intended for top executive candidates.

Chanakya compiled Arthashastra based on several ancient Hindu political literature, political traditions, and life experiences. Arthashastra consists of 15 *adhikarana* (books) with 150 chapters, 180 *prakarana* (sections) aimed at specific topics and 6000 (Chati et al., 2018). The essence of

Arthasastra is related to the four knowledge (*catur vidya*) namely *daṇḍanīti* (politics), *varta* (economy), *veda* (*Rg, Sāma & Yayur*), and *anvikṣaki* (philosophy). *Catur vidya* must be controlled in general by a leader (Astana & Anomdiputro, 2003).

Arthasastra outlines intelligence in the first *adhikarana*. Where in *adhikarana* 1 *prakarana* 7 and 8 discuss the appointment of people in the secret service and regulations for secret officers (intelligence agents). In the *prakarana* (section), there will also be a lot of discussion about raising in their area and enemy areas.

Arthasastra mentions a unique profession with a high level of confidentiality with the term *guda* (concealed or hidden). The term *guda* applies to men and women (Rangarajan, 1992). *Guda* or hidden person refers to the identity of the agents, activities carried out and data obtained. In modern terminology, this is called intelligence.

Arthasastra views intelligence as very important so that intelligence becomes an inseparable feature and an integral part of efficient administration involved in diplomatic and military affairs. No foreign policy or action on external issues has been taken without spying on this issue. The secret agent continues to tell the king about the activities, affairs, conspiracy, and the daily operations of political enemies, those bureaucrats who are not loyal or treacherous, and foreign agents masquerading as citizens in their kingdom (Sharin, 2015). It also made the rulers aware of the strengths, weaknesses, and abilities of each foreign ruler.

This was also revealed by the Head of the State Intelligence College (STIN) in the essay titled *Intelligence and Strategic Environment* states that intelligence is the eyes and ears of the government in all respects (Pedrasan, 2019). So that intelligence is demanded to be able to gather information quickly and accurately to carry out an early warning, minimize and even eliminate threats, disturbances,

obstacles, and challenges to national stability.

As the eyes and ears of the authorities, intelligence has a special department directly under the king called the Secret Service Organization. The leader of the secret service organization is called *gudapurusha*. The composition is as follows:

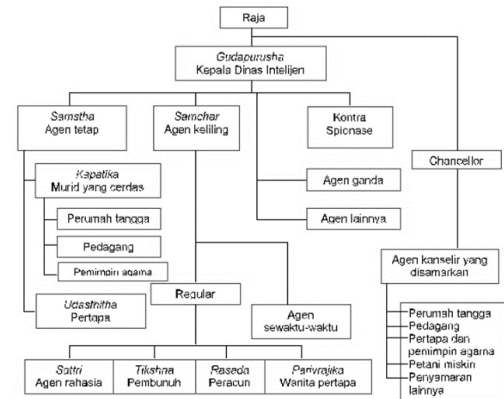


Figure 1. Organization of the Secret Service
Source: Kautilya The Arthashastra (Rangarajan, 1992, p. 464)

Arthasastra does not provide fixed criteria for recruiting secret agents. Officers of intelligence, skills, martial arts, and decision-making skills before installing them as secret agents (Sharin, 2015). The recruitment of intelligence members cannot be compared between one era and another, even between agencies in the same era that have different criteria in recruiting intelligence members.

This applies to all agents recruited, while other skills are tailored to recruitment interests. As for the groups recruited as intelligence agents, in Arthasastra it is stated:

*Upadābhiḥ śuddha amātya vargo
gūḍha puruṣān utpādayet kapaṭika
udāsthita gr̥ha patika vaidehaka
tāpasa vyañjanān sattri tīṣṭha rasada
bhikṣukīś ca* (Arthasastra, 1.11.1).

With a council of ministers that is proven honest through secret examinations, (the king) should appoint people in the secret service (namely), *kapaṭika* *chatra* (intelligence officer), *udhasita*

(renegade priests), *grihapatika people* (who pretend to be house worker stairs), *vaidehaka* (who pretended to be traders) and *tapasa* (religious leaders), as well as *sattri* (secret agents), *tikshna* (mercenary), *rasada* (poison giver) and *bhiksuki* or *parivrajika* (female ascetics).

Chanakya recruited these agents from various backgrounds to be able to embrace all aspects so that these agents no longer needed lengthy training to carry out certain professions.

These agents are divided into two basic groups of agents, namely *samstha* (agents based in one place) and *samchār* (those who are sent wherever they are requested or roving agents).

a. Agents based in one place (*samstha*)

Samstha is tasked with monitoring cabinet ministers, finding influential citizens in the kingdom, gathering confidential information, and surveying various corners of the kingdom for general trends. So they are also called "King's Five Eyes" by Kautilya. Consisting of:

- 1) *Kapatikachatra* (intelligence officer), tasked with reporting dissatisfaction and conspiracy that develops among young people;
- 2) *Udasthita* (monk), tasked with building another ascetic network that reported problems throughout the country;
- 3) *Grhapatika* (householder), tasked with reporting the loyalty and dissatisfaction of the farming community. Besides, peasant spies are expected to create a network of informants taken not only from farmers and landowners but also among farm laborers;
- 4) *Vaidehaka* (merchant), expected to recruit business informant networks and use their business trips to gather information about other entrepreneurs, market conditions, and dissatisfaction; and

- 5) *Tapasa* (religious leaders), the construction of a religious center (*ashram*) allied to use other spies to discover community secrets and the weaknesses of other religious institutions and leaders. It also aims to see the influence of other ideologies channeled through religion.

b. Roving agents (*samchār*)

Samchār is in charge of collecting and sending information through codes so it is not known who the collector is. These traveling agents must be recruited to act as spies according to several categories, including:

- 1) *Sattri* (secret agents), this group of spies is categorized based on their abilities, knowledge, reputation, social status, and talents. Based on this categorization, these spies are then assigned to monitor cabinet members, army generals, aristocrats as well as other key officials and administrators;
- 2) *Tikshna* (assassin), placed in workplaces that are close to the target, including litters, grooms for carriages and horses, umbrella carriers, fan carriers, and other professions that require physical closeness to espionage targets;
- 3) *Rasada* (poisoner), includes chefs, masseurs, barbers, beauticians, and others who provide domestic and personal services; and
- 4) *Parivrajika*, *Munda-Vrishala* (peripatetic nun), Kautilya also recommended that these women be drawn from an educated background, not because of class reasons but because of their ability in easy social interaction that could help them access the homes and wives of the elite.

Dissemination of intelligence agents to various places aims to obtain information relating to the stability of the country and potential threats that will emerge. So the information submitted to the user must be

valid and real. Thus Arthasastra assigned three agents who did not know and know each other in the same mission. If the information submitted to the head of the intelligence service (*gudapurusha*) is different from one another and even incompatible, then the data is considered invalid.

Kautilya suggested the use of spies not only to gather information but also as a state aspect that could be used to trap the opposition, convince the population of certain goals and ideas, and use them as provocateurs to create controlled disturbances (copyright conditions) that are beneficial to the state (Singh, 2011).

Intelligence as an important component in detecting and evaluating threats as intelligence tasks contained in article 1 paragraph (1) of UU No.17 of 2012 concerning State Intelligence that intelligence is tasked with carrying out early detection and warning to prevent, deter and mitigate any threat to national security.

Detecting and carrying out early prevention is the main task of intelligence members. Arthasastra described this activity as an effort to gather information about possible threats and to prevent them from coming to the surface. Kautilya spoke of the duty of a spy. One of the most important tasks is state protection (Prabhu et al., 2015).

Early detection by intelligence aims to find out the possibility of irregularities towards something that can arise as a threat. Early detection is an initial activity carried out by intelligence through observation by humans and objects such as satellites, social media, cyberspace, and so forth. The secret service (*guda*) of Arthashastra has three main strategic objectives, namely: informing the situation at home and abroad, damaging internal and external enemies through covert operations, and maintaining internal discipline and bureaucratic and military loyalty (Atwan, 2006).

Meanwhile, early prevention by intelligence aims to prevent people from

threats. Arthasastra mentions secret methods such as paralysis, smuggling, poisoning, and murder carried out to prevent threats to many people and the state. The methods used in this prevention can not be denied also to use the methods of violence. The ways of violence in Arthasastra become a dilemma if faced with the current vulnerability of human rights violations.

Intelligence, in this case, plays an important role as the eyes and ears of the authorities to obtain information about the loyalty of their officials, citizens, and friendly countries, enemies, and neutral states. Intelligence is close to the king and is widespread throughout the country and also abroad to maintain the stability of a country.

Intelligence is assigned to the interests of the country, ensuring that those around the king are not double agents who try to destroy the order or also those who are unable to carry out their duties.

Secret activities conducted by intelligence aim to strengthen national defense and prevent threats from other parties. In particular today, covert activities can also be carried out to prevent the threat of terrorism from surfacing. Before this prevention activity was carried out, the current intelligence agencies, especially the Indonesian intelligence agency, investigated to detect all possibilities through the Intelligence Turnover Wheel consisting of planning and direction, collection of information, processing, use, and distribution (Saronto, 2018).

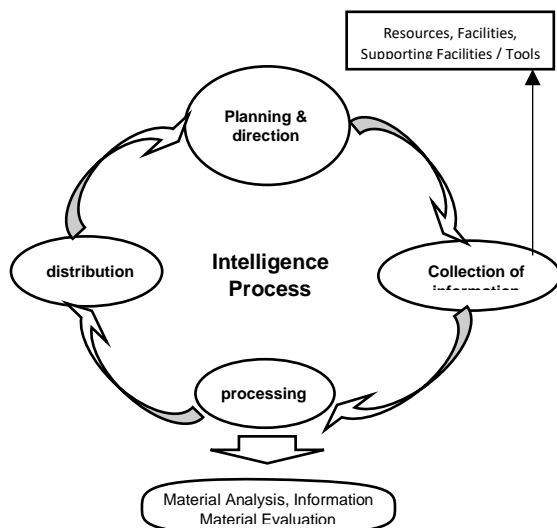


Figure 2. Circle of Intelligence

Source: Intelijen: Teori Intelijen dan Pembangunan Jaringan (Saronto, 2018).

a. Planning and direction

The first stage is carried out to identify data to present an intelligence product to the user (Saronto, 2018). It is at this stage that plans are made which must be made by field agents. This can be the initial stage as well as the final stage of decision making about something. Arthasastra asserted that a secret mission should not be carried out by one secret agent, so in *adhikarana* 1 chapter 12 sloka 15 mentioned three spies who did not know each other were given the same mission.

b. Information collection

This stage is the process of gathering basic information to be processed into intelligence products (Saronto, 2018). Information is collected from various open media such as television, radio, online media, newspapers, and the like that are easily found, and also closed information obtained through clandestine activities. Information collected by secret agents comes from inside and outside the country. At this level, Arthasastra mentions two main categories of agents deployed, namely *samstha* (agents based in one place) and *samchār* (roving agents).

Agents serving in one place in the present can monitor the socio-political conditions in the country and report on the performance of ministers and local governments to the leadership. However, it

seems that this activity is only for personal consumption and not followed up in the interest of the state. Things like this can bury the seeds of corruption, the use of positions, and the like which is one of the internal threats.

While agents placed wherever they are asked are more inclined to intelligence tasks to spy on the enemy, both in the form of state and non-state. This is aimed at overthrowing the enemy's internal social politics and making each other conflict. It not only appears in physical form but can also be done through social media propaganda and also carry out biological warfare (through disease, unhealthy food ingredients, various harmful substances in food and beauty equipment, and even health).

c. Processing

At this stage, the information collected is analyzed into intelligence reports (Saronto, 2018). This stage is done by Arthasastra by assessing information received from three secret agents who are ordered in the same mission but do not know each other if the information obtained is different from one another, then planning and redirection will be carried out. During this time, the technique can still be used to ensure that field agents provide concrete information.

d. Distribution

This stage is the end of the intelligence circle or RPI activities, intelligence products are distributed to users as an open or closed policy. Besides, this intelligence product can also be the essential element intelligence (EEI) which is then developed in the next operation.

Intelligence products related to threat detection can be executed by law or by under law. Threats such as betrayed officials or corruption can be handled through positive law. While the threat of terrorism should be dealt with through covert operations (by under law). Handling state threats is very important to be implemented to maintain national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national safety.

While intelligence products that contain bad intentions from other countries can be handled through counterintelligence, either by creating disputes between them or exploiting the weaknesses of the enemy. Besides, the community must still be given a sense of security so that their trust in the government is impartial.

Intelligence (*guda*) in this case served as a collector of information and analyzed it until it was ready to be submitted to the authorities. Arthasastra asserted that a king must prioritize the welfare of the people as mentioned in adhikarana 1 chapter 19 sloka 34. People's welfare is the key to the success of a ruler.

IV CONCLUSION

Intelligence in Arthasastra's duty is to collect information and create conditions in the form of a dispute between enemies. Secret activities carried out by intelligence in preventing the emergence of threats according to Arthasastra are carried out through the recruitment of secret agents from all groups, spreading secret agents in two basic groups (*samstha* and *samchār*), and promoting the welfare of the people. In general, the method of spreading secret agents in Arthasastra has similarities with today's intelligence. These agents are tasked with early detection in their own country, enemy countries, friendly countries, and neutral countries to find out the strengths and weaknesses of each element of the country, and prevent early through various secret means both by raising soft and hard.

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