

Chanakya and his influence on modern day espionage



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Chanakya, more prominently known as “ Kautilya”, was one of the greatest philosophers, thinkers and tacticians, not just India, but the world itself had ever seen. This “ Indian Machiavelli”, ironically, who was prominent before the times of Niccollo Machiavelli himself, had carved himself a place among the greats of Socrates, Aristotle and so on and so forth. But, despite of his significant contributions towards the soul of many constitutions, his tactics and policies being used and abused by many a rulers to make or break a state with the help of nuclear warfare and low profile assassinations, what the common man tends to miss is the link between the headlines of today’s world and the brain child of an intellectual, who had once laid the foundation of one of the mightiest empires the Common Era had ever seen, the Magadha Empire under his student and emperor , Chandraguptha Maurya. This leads any curious mind to a question, as to what had helped the empire of Magadha assert its position as one of the most dominant empires, be it on quantum of economic stability or military strength, of that era. The answer had always lied right in front of us. A closer analysis of today’s crisis and their remedies and its reference and comparison to Chanakya’s work , the “ Arthashastra” , unearths the roots of modern political and economic events, to the depths of an era existent before Jesus Christ himself. No matter how deep history tries to bury his contributions with the sands of ever changing modern conspiracies and progression, Kautilya will remain to be one among the greatest political masterminds , who has undoubtedly contributed a lot to what we, our recent fore-fathers , and the generations to come, call, called and will call,” our modern world”.

Introduction

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This research is done with an objective to determine whether the modus operandi of modern espionage agencies of various states functioning across the world has, if, ever implemented the tactics and policies, on how such an organization should be operating, prescribed by the great Indian teacher, Chanakya, also known as Kautilya, in his work, the " Arthashastra". This research primarily focuses on checking the credibility and practicality of his tactics and policies in the field of espionage, with respect to the present world scenario. This comparison and analysis is basically done with an intention to answer any question, which attempts to form a relationship, moreover a link, between Chanakya's ideas about espionage and covert operations and the modern screenshot of the latter two. The researcher has done his research with the translation of the " Arthashastra" as the base and has further relied on various online as well as print media for the completion of this analytical comparison.

Before one may jump straight onto comparing the analytical results of few incidents around today's world with that of the ideologies of the great thinker Kautilya, one may take an interest in knowing more about who Kautilya, or known better by the name Chanakya, as a person was. The origins of this great mastermind has never met the real rays of sun. But his presence throughout the golden era of Indian history had been inscribed in almost every available text from that era, both foreign and domestic.

Chanakya had a key role in the rise of Chandraguptha Maurya as the ruler of the mighty Magadhan empire , and that too at the young years of the emperor. Chanakya's ideas and philosophies is what was believed to establish and assert the power of Magadha as one of the strongest empires

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of that era, and an Indian empire which could give any other civilization a great competition in terms of economic prosperity as well as the formidability and strength of its army and the efficiency of its intelligence network. Chanakya, not only emphasized in his work, Arthashastra, to establish a kingdom where there was no political corruption or instability, no economic insecurity, but also where the threats from any enemy rulers, moves against the emperor, both internal and external attempts could be foiled in an efficient and effective manner, without the outbreak of any controversies. It is on this particular aspect of his work, his take on the role and function of espionage, in establishing a strong empire and breaking one that of an enemy, and how his work is interpreted and implemented to suit the modern era of global warfare by today's rulers. For this study to be beneficial, one must be aware of the tactics and methods of functioning of espionage organizations in the Magadha empire under the plans laid down by Chanakya himself.

The covert operations wing under the supervision of Chanakya was very much sophisticated, yet efficient in nature. After the appointment of the imperial ministers, the next important job for the king was to recruit his reliable network of spies, both to keep an eye on the minister as well as to nudge any moves against the emperor, both internally and externally with respect to the empire's territorial jurisdiction.

The duties of these spies covered acts of reporting the rumors being spread around by people, good or bad, about the emperor; news and rumors being spread about the emperor in the neighboring countries; eavesdrop on plans of attack and other political strategies to gain an upper-hand on the

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Magadhan empire by the enemy rulers; to torturing and extracting valuable information from the enemy's generals; to discreetly assassinate high officials of the Magadhan empire, who are found to be corrupt; as well as high bureaucrats of enemy states ; create political confusion in other states to gain an upper-hand over the enemy state while the emperor is staging an attack, and so on and so forth. The spy network is broadly categorized into two main headings, one would be that of the agents stationed in one place, city, town etc., while the other would be that of agents who travel around from one place to another in search of information that could be of beneficial to the progression of the state as well as very much significant to the security of the empires integrity as well as survival.

On how the secret service is to be formed, Chanakya prescribes that it is the responsibility of the king to make the potential candidates undergo through seven tests of loyalty. Any information validated through three spies shall be accepted as the truth while if any spy was found inefficient or his intelligence false, then he or she will be executed. The intelligent officer should be a person of high intelligence, sharp mind and courageous with un-doubtable loyalty to the emperor and his motherland. For his valor and loyalty, backed up with his efficient operations, he shall be rewarded by the emperor appropriately for his services.

Covers used by agents:

The spies, station both within and outside the political boundaries of the empire, blend in with the people by utilizing cover like that of a monk, a house holder, trader or an ascetic. The agents are provided with sufficient

resources, so that they can take up a cover of their choice, suiting the need of the hour and the advantages which can be possibly gained if such a cover is undertaken. So far was only about the stationed agents. The roving agents takes up the roles of Assassin, Poisoner and wandering nuns. Assassins are usually the most courageous in the land, who are usually mercenaries who are willing to put their life in the line of fire for earning a few nickels. While the poisoners, on the other hand are basically people who show no mercy or any signs of kindness to any being around him.

Transmission of intelligence:

The intelligence collected by the spies are all collected and transmitted through different means. The transmitter will not have any idea who the gatherers are, and nor will they have any clue as to what the message contains. They make sure that the message is encrypted in such a way that only the receiver can decipher it and put it into the required mode of action so as to facilitate the smooth and safe functioning of the government. They may be in the forms of songs, speech, symbols or other coded words like place names with numbers, names of goods and commodities, important ranks etc. in the absence of messengers, the agents who are assigned to a particular station might make excuses like being unwell , health wise, or any emergency had arisen at their hometown or homes, so that they can get out of the stations and directly convey their messages to the required senior officers to take further actions regarding the news.

At times, instead of deploying agents of their own inside the buildings of the enemy kings and potential enemies of the state, Chanakya also says that

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one can convert an existing official in the required zone to be an asset of the emperor. These officials maybe corrupt minister in the enemies council, generals of the armies of the enemy kings, or the staff of minister of the ministers of the emperor. To command their loyalty, it is advised that the families and loved ones of the double agent might be held hostage so that the double agent will work more sincerely and effectively so as to save the lives of his loved ones. Agents may also be deployed to observe the operations of the rulers of enemy territory, by taking up the covers of domestic help inside the houses of the enemy generals and ministers, traders and merchants in the cities, farmers in the villages and nomadic herdsmen in the frontiers. Forest dwellers were also used to keep an eye on enemy operation across the border, and they were rewarded for function efficiently on performing their assigned duties.

Counter espionage:

It was not sufficient just to have an effective spy network to keep an eye on the activities of the enemies of the state, according to Chanakya. In-fact, the state should also run a parallel network of espionage, which could prevent enemy spies from collecting important data from within the empire. To blow the enemy operatives cover, the king might take steps like assigning spies of great caliber and very low profile to investigate into such matters, post staging an act of disloyalty among the councilors so as to attract the enemy spies and take advantage of the resultant situation.

The spies, both in espionage and counter-espionage wings , may take up disguises of a variety of choices, out of which the most prominent ones

would be cart driver, juggler, fortune teller, soothsayer, prostitute, brothel keeper, rich widow, craftsman, actor, doctor, physician, lunatic, physically impaired person, merchant baker, astrologer and so on and so forth.

It is surprising to know being aware of the fact that Kautilya had spent his whole lifetime in India, the modern day espionage organization, the research and analysis wing, has not implemented any of Chanakya's tactics in the mode of operations. Holding that thought, if one was to evaluate the developments in the espionage field across the world, it may be found that the foreign governments are actually acting in accordance to what the Indian scholar planned for establishing a full efficient government. Few of the most efficient intelligence wings across would be the central intelligence agency of the united states of America, supported by their covert operations military wing, and the Secret intelligence service, more prominently known as the mi6 and its sister units in Britain, the Mossad of Israel, reputed for producing one of the most efficient assassins across the globe, and the Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki and its sister units in Russia.

The American intelligence wing:

The espionage agency of America basically comes under the command of the Cia, which directly reports to the president. The intelligence gathering is done by this organization, while its assassination duties are executed by their own trained operatives. At times, these same duties are outsourced to the covert operations units of the armed forces within the country, or of foreign nations. The covert op units of the united states armed forces includes the us navy seals, the delta force unit and so on and so forth.

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The efficiency of the United States espionage could be observed on taking 2, among the many allegedly available incidents, in the history. One of the most being the assassination of the once tagged world's most wanted terrorist, Osama bin Laden, at his secret residence in Abbottabad, in Pakistan. The intelligence with regard to his whereabouts were not available to any of the other nations, not even its closest neighbor and the one neighbor with whom the country has strong political tension, India. The CIA gathered this intelligence, allegedly, through a doctor who had been regularly visiting the mansion in which Laden had been using as his safe house. The more surprising fact, in this case if one may be biased towards the United States' claims, is that, the intelligence agency was so efficient in uncovering the whereabouts of this international terrorist, who had found his safe-house in a hotspot for insurgent issues, and that too just a few hundred miles away from the state's capital city. It is also to be noted that despite the cover provided by the Pakistan government, who was once, and still is an ally of the US Govt., and the safe-house being very next to a Pak army base camp, the US had still managed to unearth the hideout and send in special forces to infiltrate into the compound, and successfully completing the execution of the target. The means by which they entered the hostile territory, without setting off any alarm in the Pak intelligence radar, is also a towering evidence of the efficiency of their intelligence wing. But on taking a closer look at this whole event, it can be established that what the United States government and what Chanakya had prescribed in Arthashastra are both in one sense very similar. The deployment of spies, the assassination of the target, the mode of operation etc., are all very much similar.

The Mossad.

The Mossad is yet another deadly intelligence agency known across the world for producing the few among the finest and most merciless assassins in the world. The Israeli secret service had been very discreet in its activities as well as covert operations , both within its territories as well as outside it. One of the recent happenings which could indicate the presence of their spies throughout the world would be that of the assassination, or rather execution of Muhammed Suleiman, the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad's special presidential advisor for arms procurement and strategic weapons . Suleiman was shot to death , allegedly by a Mossad operative. The reports states that means of execution was by means of sniping the target and the assassin had fled with the help of a boat. The means of escape was chosen with respect to the ease of escape as well as the position and routine by which the target had moved into the hot-zone, which was in Suleiman's case, his walk along the coast side of the beach.

This is one more, among the many other examples as to how the modern world has adopted the tactics of Chanakya to deploy spies and assassinate important dignitaries of the enemy ruler by closely observing the targets and identifying the loop holes in their routines and utilizing them to the benefit of the assassin as well as the state.

Modern day Indian scenario and Chanakya.

In the present India, the intelligence wing has been divided into two main section, one the Intelligence Bureau, which deals domestic intelligence and counter intelligence functions of the intelligence wing , and the Research and <https://assignbuster.com/chanakya-and-his-influence-on-modern-day-espionage/>

Analysis Wing, which deals with the external intelligence affairs of the nation. Despite having the ideologies of a great philosopher like Chanakya himself to our rich and prominent political heritage, the modern Indian officials and Governors has failed to implement an improvised version of the great teacher's tactics of espionage in the present day scenario, which would have been of great use to preserving the stability and security of the state as a nation , not succumbing to any sorts of threats from both internal and external forces, if it had been implemented properly. Unlike its western and much advanced counterparts, the Research and Analysis Wing has no recorded significant achievements or successful covert operations to boast about other than a few controversies and corruption charges against its officials, like any other politically governed body in India. Mixing Kautilya's ideas of a perfect state with mud, the present Indian scenario depicts the picture of the Indian intelligence service as just another body which corrupt politicians of both the home and foreign nations use to their own personal agendas or laying foundation to another international controversies. One may also note that the repeated number of bombings and terrorist attacks that had happened in the metropolitan cities across the country itself is a towering indicator as to how inefficient is the present day spy network under the modern Indian government. But, one may also claim that the same lack of lustrous records could be a part of being a highly efficient intelligence organization. Yet given the picture of the present scenario of Indian intelligence, an individual may say that it is high time they stop making laws and start breaking a few , so that they could make an effective, as well as a deadly network of spies and assassins, so that they can help their nation

survive through any hidden as well as exposed and exploited crisis , and ensure the failure of the enemies of the state.

CONCLUSION

Being made aware of the similarities of the functioning of Chanakya's model of an espionage system and the system of present world scenario prevalent in different states, one may conclude that Chanakya has immensely contributed towards the establishment of effective spy networks throughout the world. Though , in today's world, espionage and counter-espionage is very much related to national security and eliminating the threats to the same , in the worm's eye view; one may look at the same from a broader perspective to find that it has partially succeeded in making the world a better , or as one may say, a safer place to live in, for the common man. But an individual may also not neglect the blatant truth that the same espionage networks and their operations are somewhat , or is alleged to be, clandestinely responsible for causing tension, or even worse, erupting wars among two or more states. Moreover, the more they make people feel secure about today's world , the more they tend to create strenuous relationships among the states throughout. But, as far as Chanakya's ideology of the existence an effective intelligence and counter-intelligence body for a state is concerned, the researcher may conclude that most of the states across the globe has succeeded in establishing efficient clandestine networks , which lives up-to he had portrayed in his work , as an efficient network.