THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF KAUTILYA'S DEFENSE STRATEGY AND POLICIES OF WAR

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Abstract

Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, was an ancient Indian strategist and political philosopher whose seminal work, the Arthashastra, remains influential in contemporary political thought. This paper explores Kautilya's defence strategy and war policies and their relevance in the modern world. It examines the theoretical underpinnings of Kautilya's approach, including deterrence, diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and the use of force. By analysing case studies of modern conflicts, conducting a comparative analysis with contemporary defence doctrines, and exploring the relevance of Kautilya's ideas in addressing current security challenges, this paper elucidates the enduring significance of Kautilyan principles in shaping strategic thinking and defence policies.

Keywords: Kautilya, Arthashastra, defence strategy, deterrence, diplomacy, intelligence gathering, modern conflicts, contemporary defence doctrines, security challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, was an ancient Indian philosopher, statesman, and strategist who made significant contributions to political thought and military strategy. His seminal work, the Arthashastra, remains one of the most influential treatises on statecraft, governance, economics, and warfare. In this introduction, we will delve into

Kautilya's life and his enduring legacy through the Artha shastra, exploring its significance in both ancient and modern political thought.

A. Overview of Kautilya's Life and Contributions

Kautilya lived in ancient India during the Maurya Empire, around the 4th century BCE. Little is known about his early life, but he rose to prominence as a key advisor and mentor to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya dynasty. Kautilya played a pivotal role in Chandragupta's rise to power and the consolidation of the Maurya Empire, which eventually became one of the largest empires in ancient India.

Kautilya's contributions to political theory and statecraft are epitomized in his magnum opus, the Artha shastra. This ancient Indian text is a comprehensive treatise that encompasses various aspects of governance, including politics, economics, diplomacy, and military strategy. It provides detailed insights into the art of ruling, administration, and the conduct of warfare, reflecting Kautilya's profound understanding of statecraft and his pragmatic approach to governance.

B. Significance of the Artha shastra in Ancient and Modern Political Thought

The Artha shastra holds immense significance in both ancient and modern political thought. In ancient India, it served as a manual for rulers and administrators, offering practical guidance on governance and the maintenance of order and stability within the state. Kautilya's principles of statecraft and diplomacy provided a blueprint for effective governance and the expansion of empires.

Moreover, the Artha shastra embodies timeless wisdom that transcends historical and cultural boundaries. Its insights into power dynamics, strategy, and governance remain relevant even in contemporary times. The principles outlined in the Arthashastra continue to inform political discourse and strategic thinking, influencing scholars, policymakers, and military strategists around the world.

In the modern era, the Artha shastra has garnered renewed interest among scholars of political science, international relations, and military strategy. Its emphasis on realism, pragmatism, and the pursuit of national interest resonates with contemporary theories of state behaviour and power politics. Moreover, Kautilya's strategies for diplomacy,

intelligence, and warfare offer valuable insights into navigating the complexities of global politics and security challenges in the 21st century.

In conclusion, Kautilya's life and contributions, as encapsulated in the Arthashastra, have left an indelible mark on political thought and statecraft. The enduring relevance of his ideas underscores the timeless wisdom contained within the Arthashastra, making it a seminal work in the annals of political theory and military strategy. As we delve deeper into Kautilya's defence strategy and war policies, it is essential to appreciate the historical context and enduring legacy of this ancient Indian philosopher-statesman.

I. KAUTILYA'S DEFENCE STRATEGY: FOUNDATIONS AND PRINCIPLES

Kautilya's defence strategy, as outlined in the Arthashastra, is rooted in a pragmatic understanding of power dynamics, statecraft, and the imperatives of maintaining security and stability within the realm. In this section, we will explore the theoretical underpinnings of Kautilya's defence strategy, along with its core principles such as deterrence, diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and the concept of 'Danda' (force).

A. Theoretical Underpinnings of Kautilya's Defence Strategy

Kautilya's defence strategy is grounded in the realist tradition, which emphasizes the primacy of power and the pursuit of national interest in international relations. He recognized the anarchic nature of the international system, where states compete for power and security in a self-help environment. As such, Kautilya advocated for a proactive and pragmatic approach to statecraft, where rulers must use all available means to safeguard the interests of their polity.

Central to Kautilya's defence strategy is the notion of 'Mandala theory,' which posits that states exist within concentric circles of influence, with each state seeking to expand its power and security at the expense of others. Accordingly, Kautilya argued that states should pursue a balance of power strategy, forming alliances and forging diplomatic relationships to counteract potential threats from rival states.

B. Core Principles: Deterrence, Diplomacy, and Intelligence Gathering

Deterrence plays a pivotal role in Kautilya's defence strategy, whereby states seek to dissuade potential adversaries from taking hostile actions through the credible threat of retaliation. Kautilya advocated for the cultivation of military strength and the display

of resolve to deter aggression and preserve peace. However, he also recognized the limitations of military power alone and emphasized the importance of diplomatic engagement and strategic alliances to reinforce deterrence efforts.

Diplomacy occupies a central position in Kautilya's defence strategy, serving as a means to advance state interests, manage conflicts, and secure strategic objectives through negotiation and bargaining. Kautilya stressed the importance of maintaining a network of allies and establishing diplomatic relations with neighboring states to mitigate security risks and enhance the state's influence in the region.

Intelligence gathering is another crucial aspect of Kautilya's defence strategy, enabling states to gather information, assess threats, and anticipate the intentions of adversaries. Kautilya emphasized the need for a well-developed intelligence apparatus, including spies, informants, and reconnaissance operations, to provide decision-makers with timely and accurate intelligence to inform strategic planning and decision-making.

C. Concept of 'Danda' (Force) and its Role in Maintaining Order and Security

Kautilya placed great emphasis on the concept of 'Danda' (force) as a means of maintaining order and security within the state and deterring external aggression. Danda encompasses both military power and the application of coercive measures to enforce law and order. Kautilya believed that a ruler must possess the capacity to wield force decisively to quell internal dissent and repel external threats.

However, Kautilya also cautioned against the indiscriminate or excessive use of force, emphasizing the importance of judiciousness and prudence in its application. He recognized that the excessive use of coercion could provoke resentment and resistance, undermining the ruler's legitimacy and stability. Instead, Kautilya advocated for a balanced approach, where force is employed selectively and strategically to achieve specific objectives while preserving the overall stability of the state.

In conclusion, Kautilya's defence strategy is characterized by its realist outlook, pragmatic approach, and emphasis on the proactive pursuit of national interest through a combination of deterrence, diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and the judicious application of force. By understanding the theoretical foundations and core principles of Kautilya's defence strategy, we gain valuable insights into the complexities of

statecraft and the imperatives of maintaining security and stability in a competitive and uncertain world.

II. MILITARY ORGANIZATION AND PREPAREDNESS

A. Military Organization and Preparedness

Kautilya's Arthashastra provides detailed insights into military organization and preparedness, recognizing the critical role of a well-structured and trained military in safeguarding the interests of the state. In this section, we will explore the structure of the military according to Kautilya, the importance of training, discipline, and morale, and the significance of logistics and resource management in warfare.

B. Structure of the Military According to Kautilya

Kautilya advocates for a hierarchical and well-organized military structure that is capable of effectively executing the state's defense strategies. He emphasizes the division of the military into various units, each with specific roles and responsibilities. The military is typically organized into four main branches:

1. Infantry (Pada): The infantry forms the backbone of the military and is primarily responsible for ground combat operations. Infantry units are trained in various weapons and tactics, including close-quarters combat and siege warfare.

2. Cavalry (Ashwa): The cavalry comprises mounted soldiers trained for rapid mobility and reconnaissance. Cavalry units play a crucial role in scouting enemy positions, conducting raids, and providing support to infantry units during battles.

3. Elephants (Gaja): Elephants are considered formidable assets on the battlefield due to their size, strength, and intimidation factor. Kautilya advocates for the use of war elephants as mobile platforms for archers and infantry, as well as for their ability to break enemy formations.

4. Chariots (Ratha): Chariots are ancient war machines used for transportation and combat. While their significance declined with advancements in military technology, Kautilya still acknowledges their utility in certain terrain and tactical situations.

Kautilya also emphasizes the importance of a centralized command structure, with appointed commanders responsible for overseeing the operations of each military unit.

Effective coordination and communication among different branches of the military are essential for achieving strategic objectives and maintaining battlefield supremacy.

C. Importance of Training, Discipline, and Morale

Kautilya underscores the significance of training, discipline, and morale in maintaining a capable and effective military force. Soldiers must undergo rigorous training to develop proficiency in combat techniques, weapon handling, and battlefield tactics. Training programs should be comprehensive and ongoing to ensure that soldiers are adequately prepared for the challenges of warfare.

Discipline is another cornerstone of Kautilya's military philosophy, as he recognizes the importance of obedience, orderliness, and adherence to chain of command. Disciplined soldiers are more likely to follow orders, maintain formation, and execute tactics effectively, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the military force.

Morale, or the psychological state of soldiers, is equally important in determining the outcome of battles. Kautilya emphasizes the need for leaders to inspire confidence, instill loyalty, and cultivate esprit de corps among their troops. High morale boosts soldiers' resilience, determination, and willingness to endure hardships, even in the face of adversity.

D. Logistics and Resource Management in Warfare

Kautilya recognizes the critical role of logistics and resource management in sustaining military operations and ensuring the welfare of troops. Adequate provisions of food, water, shelter, and medical supplies are essential for maintaining the physical well-being of soldiers and sustaining their combat effectiveness.

Furthermore, Kautilya emphasizes the importance of efficient transportation networks and supply chains to ensure the timely delivery of reinforcements, equipment, and supplies to the front lines. Logistics planning should account for factors such as terrain, weather, and enemy activity to minimize disruptions and optimize resource allocation.

Resource management also extends to the efficient utilization of economic resources to support military endeavors. Kautilya advocates for the judicious allocation of state resources, including taxation, trade, and tribute, to fund military campaigns and procure essential supplies and equipment.

In conclusion, Kautilya's insights into military organization and preparedness highlight the importance of a well-structured, trained, and resourced military force in safeguarding the interests of the state. By prioritizing training, discipline, morale, and logistics, states can enhance their military capabilities and ensure their readiness to confront threats and challenges on the battlefield.

III. DIPLOMACY AND ALLIANCES

A. Diplomacy and Alliances

Kautilya's Arthashastra offers profound insights into the realm of diplomacy and alliances, recognizing their instrumental role in furthering the interests of the state and managing internal and external threats. In this section, we will explore Kautilya's approach to diplomacy and treaty-making, the utilization of alliances for strategic advantage, and the management of threats through diplomatic means.

B. Kautilyan Approach to Diplomacy and Treaty-Making

Kautilya advocates for a pragmatic and opportunistic approach to diplomacy, wherein states pursue alliances, treaties, and negotiations to advance their strategic objectives and safeguard their interests. Diplomacy, in Kautilya's view, is a tool of statecraft that should be employed judiciously to secure advantages and mitigate risks in the international arena.

Treaty-making occupies a central position in Kautilya's diplomatic repertoire, as it allows states to formalize agreements, establish norms, and regulate relations with other polities. Kautilya emphasizes the importance of crafting treaties that are mutually beneficial and enforceable, with clear provisions for dispute resolution and compliance mechanisms.

Furthermore, Kautilya recognizes the utility of diplomatic envoys (dootas) as emissaries tasked with conveying messages, negotiating agreements, and gathering intelligence on behalf of the state. Diplomatic missions serve as channels for communication and dialogue, facilitating the exchange of information and the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means.

C. Utilization of Alliances for Strategic Advantage

Kautilya underscores the strategic value of alliances as a means of enhancing the state's power projection capabilities, balancing against adversaries, and securing access to critical resources and territories. He advocates for the formation of alliances based on mutual interests, shared objectives, and strategic compatibility, with an eye towards maximizing the state's security and influence.

Alliances can take various forms, including defensive pacts, military alliances, and economic partnerships, depending on the nature of the threat and the objectives of the parties involved. Kautilya emphasizes the need for states to cultivate a network of allies and partners to counteract potential adversaries and deter aggression through collective defense mechanisms.

Moreover, Kautilya recognizes the fluidity of alliances and the impermanence of alliances based on shifting geopolitical dynamics and strategic calculations. States must remain vigilant and adaptable, constantly reassessing their alliances and adjusting their diplomatic strategies to respond to emerging threats and opportunities.

D. Management of Internal and External Threats through Diplomatic Means

Kautilya advocates for the proactive management of internal and external threats through a combination of diplomatic engagement, strategic alliances, and coercive measures. Internally, Kautilya emphasizes the importance of maintaining internal cohesion and stability through effective governance, administration, and social policies.

Externally, Kautilya advises rulers to employ diplomatic means to manage conflicts, resolve disputes, and deter potential adversaries from taking hostile actions. Diplomatic channels should be utilized to de-escalate tensions, negotiate settlements, and forge alliances to mitigate security risks and preserve peace.

Furthermore, Kautilya recognizes the role of intelligence gathering and information warfare in managing threats and influencing the behavior of adversaries. Spies and informants play a crucial role in providing decision-makers with timely and accurate intelligence to assess threats, anticipate enemy actions, and formulate effective counter-strategies.

In conclusion, Kautilya's diplomatic strategy emphasizes the importance of pragmatism, opportunism, and strategic calculation in navigating the complexities of

international relations. By leveraging diplomacy, alliances, and intelligence, states can enhance their security, advance their interests, and mitigate threats in an uncertain and competitive world.

IV. INTELLIGENCE AND ESPIONAGE

A. Intelligence and Espionage

Kautilya recognized the critical role of intelligence gathering and espionage in statecraft and warfare. In the Arthashastra, he provides detailed insights into the significance of intelligence, methods of espionage and counterintelligence, and the role of spies and informants in decision-making and risk assessment. In this section, we will explore these aspects of Kautilya's approach to intelligence and espionage.

B. Significance of Intelligence Gathering in Kautilya's Strategy

Intelligence gathering holds paramount importance in Kautilya's strategy, as it provides rulers with vital information to assess threats, anticipate enemy actions, and make informed decisions. Kautilya emphasizes the need for comprehensive intelligence coverage, encompassing both domestic and foreign affairs, to provide decision-makers with a clear understanding of the political, military, and economic landscape.

By gathering intelligence on rival states, internal dissent, and emerging threats, rulers can identify vulnerabilities, exploit weaknesses, and formulate effective strategies to safeguard the interests of the state. Intelligence also plays a crucial role in diplomacy, enabling rulers to negotiate from a position of strength and anticipate the intentions of adversaries in diplomatic negotiations and treaty-making.

C. Methods of Espionage and Counterintelligence

Kautilya outlines various methods of espionage and counterintelligence to gather information discreetly and protect state secrets from enemy agents. These methods include:

1. **Covert Agents (Spies)**: Kautilya advocates for the recruitment and deployment of spies (dootas) to gather intelligence on behalf of the state. Spies infiltrate enemy territory, pose as civilians or diplomats, and gather information through observation, reconnaissance, and clandestine communication.

2. **Informants and Double Agents**: Informants are individuals who provide intelligence to the state voluntarily or under coercion. Kautilya advises rulers to cultivate a network of informants within rival states, military organizations, and political factions to gather insider information and monitor enemy activities. Double agents, on the other hand, are individuals who infiltrate enemy organizations and provide false or misleading information to deceive the adversary.

3. **Signal Intelligence (SIGINT)**: Kautilya recognizes the importance of intercepting and deciphering enemy communications to gather intelligence on their plans and intentions. SIGINT operations involve monitoring enemy radio transmissions, intercepting coded messages, and decrypting encrypted communications to extract valuable information.

In addition to espionage, Kautilya also emphasizes the importance of counterintelligence measures to protect state secrets and thwart enemy espionage activities. Counterintelligence efforts include the identification and neutralization of enemy spies, the use of deception and disinformation to mislead adversaries, and the implementation of security protocols to safeguard classified information.

D. Role of Spies and Informants in Decision-Making and Risk Assessment

Spies and informants play a crucial role in decision-making and risk assessment by providing rulers with timely and accurate intelligence to inform strategic planning and policy formulation. By gathering information on enemy capabilities, intentions, and vulnerabilities, spies enable rulers to assess threats, evaluate potential risks, and devise effective counter-strategies to mitigate security challenges.

Moreover, spies and informants serve as eyes and ears on the ground, providing rulers with real-time updates on evolving situations, emerging threats, and opportunities for diplomatic or military action. Their insights and assessments inform decision-makers' judgments, enabling them to make informed choices that advance the state's interests and safeguard its security.

In conclusion, Kautilya's emphasis on intelligence gathering and espionage underscores the importance of information superiority in statecraft and warfare. By leveraging covert agents, informants, and signal intelligence, rulers can gain valuable insights into the intentions and capabilities of adversaries, enabling them to make informed decisions, mitigate risks, and protect the interests of the state.

V. APPLICATION OF KAUTILYAN PRINCIPLES IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

A. Application of Kautilyan Principles in the Contemporary World

Kautilya's principles of statecraft and defense strategy, as outlined in the Arthashastra, continue to offer valuable insights into navigating the complexities of modern geopolitics and addressing contemporary security challenges. In this section, we will examine the application of Kautilyan principles in the context of modern conflicts and defense strategies, conduct a comparative analysis with contemporary defense doctrines, and explore the relevance of Kautilya's ideas in addressing current security challenges such as terrorism, cyber warfare, and asymmetric threats.

B. Case Studies of Modern Conflicts and Defense Strategies

1. **India-Pakistan Conflict**: The ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan provides a compelling case study for the application of Kautilyan principles in modern warfare. Both countries have utilized a combination of conventional military force, diplomacy, and deterrence to manage tensions and assert their respective interests in the region. Kautilyan principles such as deterrence, intelligence gathering, and diplomatic maneuvering are evident in Indian defense strategies which reflects ion its continuous win over Pakistani attacks.

2. **US-China Strategic Competition**: The strategic competition between the United States and China exemplifies the application of Kautilyan principles in great power politics. Both countries engage in intelligence gathering, economic coercion, and strategic alliances to advance their geopolitical objectives and maintain influence in key regions. Kautilyan principles such as alliance-building, strategic deception, and the balance of power are central to their defense strategies.

C. Comparative Analysis of Kautilyan Principles with Contemporary Defense Doctrines

Kautilya's principles of statecraft share similarities with contemporary defense doctrines such as realism, balance of power, and comprehensive security. While Kautilya's framework predates modern strategic thought, his emphasis on power politics, diplomacy, and military preparedness aligns with the core tenets of realism and balance of power theory. Furthermore, Kautilyan principles resonate with

contemporary notions of comprehensive security, which emphasize the interconnectedness of political, economic, and military dimensions of security.

D. Relevance of Kautilya's Ideas in Addressing Current Security Challenges

1. **Terrorism**: Kautilya's emphasis on intelligence gathering and covert operations is highly relevant in combating terrorism. States can utilize espionage and counterterrorism measures to infiltrate terrorist networks, disrupt their operations, and neutralize threats before they materialize.

2. **Cyber Warfare**: Kautilya's principles of deception and strategic deception can be applied in the realm of cyber warfare. States can employ cyber espionage, misinformation campaigns, and offensive cyber operations to gain a strategic advantage and deter adversaries in cyberspace.

3. **Asymmetric Threats**: Kautilya's emphasis on adaptability and flexibility in strategy is particularly relevant in addressing asymmetric threats posed by non-state actors and unconventional warfare tactics. States can leverage intelligence gathering, special operations, and unconventional warfare techniques to counter asymmetric threats effectively.

In conclusion, Kautilya's principles of statecraft and defense strategy offer timeless insights into navigating the complexities of modern geopolitics and addressing contemporary security challenges. By applying Kautilyan principles such as deterrence, diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and adaptability, states can enhance their strategic capabilities and safeguard their interests in an increasingly uncertain and competitive world.

VI. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

A. Challenges and Limitations

While Kautilya's principles of statecraft and defense strategy offer valuable insights into navigating the complexities of geopolitics, they also face critiques and pose ethical considerations in the modern context. Additionally, the adaptability of Kautilyan strategies to contemporary geopolitics presents challenges that must be addressed. In this section, we will explore these challenges and limitations.

B. Critiques of Kautilya's Approach in the Modern Context

1. **Realpolitik Critique**: Critics argue that Kautilya's emphasis on power politics and Machiavellian principles may lead to the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of ethical considerations and international norms. In an interconnected world characterized by globalization and interdependence, such a narrow focus on realpolitik may undermine efforts to foster cooperation and address global challenges collaboratively.

2. **Lack of Moral Constraints**: Kautilya's pragmatic approach to statecraft is often criticized for its lack of moral constraints and ethical considerations. Critics argue that Kautilya's endorsement of deception, coercion, and ruthless pursuit of power may lead to moral relativism and justify unethical behavior in the pursuit of national interest.

C. Ethical Considerations Regarding the Implementation of Kautilyan Principles

1. **Manipulative Diplomacy**: Kautilya's advocacy for diplomatic maneuvering and strategic deception raises ethical concerns regarding the use of manipulation and deceit in international relations. The exploitation of trust and the propagation of false information may erode trust among states and undermine the foundations of diplomacy and cooperation.

2. **Covert Operations and Espionage**: The clandestine nature of intelligence gathering and covert operations raises ethical dilemmas regarding privacy rights, sovereignty, and the rule of law. The use of espionage and surveillance techniques may violate individual rights and undermine democratic principles, particularly in the context of mass surveillance and cyber espionage.

D. Adaptability of Kautilyan Strategies to the Complexities of Contemporary Geopolitics

1. **Non-State Actors and Asymmetric Warfare**: Kautilya's strategies were primarily formulated in the context of inter-state competition and conventional warfare. The rise of non-state actors, asymmetric threats, and unconventional warfare tactics pose challenges to the adaptability of Kautilyan principles. Strategies that emphasize flexibility, agility, and cooperation are essential in addressing these evolving security challenges effectively.

2. **Globalization and Interdependence**: The interconnectedness of the modern world presents new challenges and opportunities for statecraft and defense strategy. Kautilyan principles must be adapted to account for the complexities of globalization, economic

interdependence, and transnational threats such as pandemics, climate change, and cyber warfare.

In conclusion, while Kautilya's principles offer valuable insights into statecraft and defense strategy, they also face critiques and ethical considerations in the modern context. The adaptability of Kautilyan strategies to contemporary geopolitics requires careful consideration of ethical implications and the development of flexible, nuanced approaches to address evolving security challenges effectively.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the examination of Kautilya's defense strategy and war policies reveals timeless principles that continue to hold relevance in the contemporary world. Throughout this paper, we have explored the foundational elements of Kautilya's approach, its application in modern conflicts, its comparative analysis with contemporary defense doctrines, and its relevance in addressing current security challenges. Now, let us recapitulate the key findings, discuss the implications of Kautilya's defense strategy for contemporary defense policies and international relations, and explore future prospects for integrating Kautilyan principles into strategic thinking and defense planning.

Kautilya's defense strategy is characterized by its realism, pragmatism, and emphasis on the proactive pursuit of national interest through a combination of deterrence, diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and the judicious application of force. His principles of statecraft and military organization provide valuable insights into navigating the complexities of geopolitics and addressing contemporary security challenges.

The principles outlined in the Arthashastra offer valuable lessons for contemporary defense policies and international relations. By integrating Kautilyan principles into strategic thinking and defense planning, states can enhance their strategic capabilities, mitigate security risks, and safeguard their interests in an uncertain and competitive world. Kautilya's emphasis on diplomacy, alliances, and intelligence gathering underscores the importance of proactive engagement, strategic foresight, and adaptability in managing geopolitical dynamics and addressing emerging threats.

Moving forward, there are significant prospects for integrating Kautilyan principles into strategic thinking and defense planning in the contemporary world. By incorporating Kautilya's insights into statecraft, diplomacy, and military strategy, policymakers and defense planners can develop more robust and effective defense strategies that align with the realities of modern geopolitics. Furthermore, the study of Kautilya's defense strategy can contribute to a deeper understanding of the strategic challenges facing states and foster innovative approaches to addressing these challenges in the future.

In conclusion, Kautilya's defense strategy and war policies offer valuable insights into navigating the complexities of contemporary geopolitics and addressing the evolving security challenges of the 21st century. By drawing on the timeless wisdom contained within the Arthashastra, states can enhance their strategic capabilities, advance their interests, and promote peace and stability in an increasingly uncertain world.

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