

20
Titles

Moral Standards in International Relations

Outline

1. Introduction

Thesis Statements: In international relations, moral principles are paramount to attain global peace and prosperity.

These principles are often undermined by the power politics, economic interests, nations' security and survival concerns.

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It can be improved in international relations by strengthening the international law, institutions, along with promoting the ethical diplomacy.

2. Understanding the significance of moral standards in international relations

3. Factors undermining the moral principles in international dealings

a. Power politics and political dominance erode moral frameworks

b. Nations prioritize national interests over ethical considerations

- c. The pursuit of state survival often overrides moral principles
- d. Economic interests take precedence over global ethical commitments
- e. Alliances are formed based on strategic or ideological affiliations

4. Consequences of weak moral standards in international relations

- a. Loss of trust and credibility between nations
- b. Escalation of global conflicts and relations
- c. Marginalization and exploitation of weaker states
- d. Ineffectiveness of international institutions and agreements
- e. Undermining of global justice and human rights efforts

5. Ways to restore moral standards in international dealings

- a. Advocating for inclusive and equitable decision making at international forums
- b. Strengthening the role of international law and norms

c. Enhancing the accountability for the violation of international moral standards

d. Promoting ethical leadership and moral diplomacy

6. Case Study: Norway's mediation in the Oslo Accords, in consonance with global moral principles

7. Conclusion

"States operate in a self-help atmosphere, in which the best way to survive is to be powerful, even at the cost of moral policies."
(John Mearsheimer)

International relations operate exactly on the parameters explained by the American political scientist John Mearsheimer. States form international alliances, sign international accords, to jointly pursue what aligns with their national policies. Moral principles aim to keep international relations closer to justice, equality and global peace. However, the power politics

~~And idea of state survival undermines the moral frameworks. It's a game of economic growth and global dominance that dictates the nature of state relations between states. Ideologies and strategic alliances take precedence over the principles of morality and ethics. Resultantly, states lose mutual trust and get into conflicts. Such conflicts are often escalated due to the absence of mutual trust and shared respect. Powerful states exploit the marginalized states and international institutions also lose their credibility to effectively resolve state conflicts. As a whole, it undermines the global justice system. Moral standards can be incorporated in international relations by ensuring the inclusive decision making at international forums, ^{and} by strengthening international law. Above all, moral standards can be incorporated by promoting ethical leadership and moral diplomacy. In international relations moral standards are paramount to attain global peace and prosperity. These principles are often undermined by power politics, economic interests, nations' security and survival~~

Concerns. It can be engaged in international relations by strengthening the international law and institutions, along with promoting the ethical diplomacy.

In international relations, moral standards are the principles of equality, justice, promotion of human rights and the protection of global peace. Violation of these principles, resulted in WWI and WWII. Whereas the world peace was protected during Cuban Missile crisis in 1962, by adhering to the ethical and moral principles. One may question that "Is not it the moral principles which preserve the world order?" also "Are not moral principles put at the last by states to gain illegitimate interests?" It is visible from the current state of the world that non-performance of moral responsibilities have shaken the world order.

International dealings work along the lines of power politics. States try to foster their political dominance by eroding moral frameworks. During Election campaign of Donald Trump he raised a slogan of "America

First. It implies that to maintain dominance of America, its leadership is ready to compromise over moral and ethical ideas. A realist political scientist ^{Hans Morgenthau} endorsed this ~~whole~~ principle by saying that "Universal moral standards cannot be applied to the state due to its absolute universal formulation." Hence, international relations adhere to power politics and moral frameworks.

Besides power politics, nations prioritize national interests over ethical considerations. National priorities are often misguided with good intentions of the states. For instance, ~~USSR~~ invaded Afghanistan to get a hold on uranium reserves. Similarly, US invaded Iraq in 2003 and labelled it as saving the Iraqis from Saddam Hussain's dictatorship. Later on, US military chief operations in Iraq, John P. ~~Bozale~~, endorsed that "it's all about oil, and we cannot deny it for long." To simply put, it's not ^{to} saving the humanity, but for national interests that nations invade other nations. A state's highest interest is its survival.

that often overrides the moral principles. State survival is a pursuit for which a state attacks and occupies the other state. In international politics the survival formula is simple that "either you expand or you expire." Russia invaded Guinea in 2014 to expand its territory, to increase its territorial strength in the end. Therefore, states survival overrides the moral principles.

This survival is also necessary in economic sense. Economic interests of states take precedence over ethical commitments. It happens across the regions. For instance, 20 countries are a part of "Belt and Road Initiative" of China, despite the fact that China is involved in Human Rights violations in Hong Kong and Uyghur. Similarly, Iran has economic and strategic interests e.g., Chabahar port associated with India, and does not pay heed to human rights violations happening in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. In a nutshell, economic interests of the states take precedence over global ethical commitments.

Not only the economic interest

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content is also relevant

states form alliance to feed their strategic and ideological interests. After two world wars, many political scientists have predicted that third war will be a "war of civilizations." The current tensions between China and US is a tension between democracy and communism. US is a supporter of individualism, in which democratic rights of an "individual" are protected. On the contrary, China is a follower of "collectivism" which gives preference to the collective good by undermining the democratic freedoms. These ideologies have created ideological blocs and different states are part of these blocs for their own interests and not for the promotion of moral standards in international relations.

The personal preferences of the states, in maintaining relationships with other states, have dire consequence on the ethical considerations in international settings. States easily lose interest, trust and credibility for each other. Their territorial, legal, and national sovereignty remain under a constant threat. There is a lack of trust between

US and Russia, US and China, India and Pakistan, South Korea and North Korea and India and China. Though, there are no permanent friends and enemies in international relations, however for the time being tensions between states create an atmosphere of animosity. Therefore weak adherence to morality principles feeds mistrust amongst nations.

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This mistrust leads to the escalated global conflicts. Most of the states operate in synergy. Attack on one state means the attack on allied states. Its most prominent examples are the two on-going wars Ukraine vs. Russia and Israel vs. Palestine. In Russia vs. Ukraine war, China, US, North Korea are proxies. Likewise, in Israel vs. Palestine war, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen are the proxies. In fact, this war has escalated to the whole Middle East by October 2024. Hence proved that weak moral standards result in the escalation of global conflicts. Additionally, often the power states marginalize and exploit the weaker states to maintain their hegemony. Foreign policy

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are designed in a way that one state can easily interfere in other state's political business. India's foreign policy is hostile to its neighbouring countries. It continues to have a rigid and exclusionary policy towards Pakistan, and developing a competitive policy towards China. It has occupied territory of Nepal, and even Maldives showed resentment towards India's influence in its domestic matters. In Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina Wajid was an ally of Modi and was finally ousted ~~by~~ after violent protests. None of the policy goals of India fulfil the criteria of ethical and moral principles.

This non-adherence by states results in the ineffectiveness of international institutions and agreements. International law is a soft law that demands active involvement of the states for its effectiveness. For human rights promotion and protection, it is mandatory that the states practically endorse its command. For instance, the climate justice demands from Global North to financially, scientifically and technologically help the Global South.

Interestingly, it took 7-years to the Global North to provide \$100bn to the Global South. Again, the debate is going on the unfair aid of \$300bn by 2035 to climate stricken countries. Global South is unsatisfied with unreasonable allocation and calls it a failure of the COP forum. Ergo, absence of moral standards weakens the working of international institutions and agreements.

Furthermore, it undermines the global justice and human rights efforts. State allies try to protect each other at the cost of ethical principles like justice and human rights protection. US has been vetoing resolutions against Israel in UNSC, despite Israel's war crimes in Gaza. Since the inception of UN, 320 resolutions were vetoed, out of which 20 alone were vetoed by US to protect Israel. It, overall, undermines the prevalence and application of justice and war criminals get a chance to commit genocide, mass atrocities, and crimes against humanity.

By taking concrete steps, moral standards can be restored in international relations. First of all, there is a need of inclusive and equitable decision-making at international forums like UN. France and India have proposed models to reform the Permanent members structure that exist just to exercise the veto power. France's suggestion that veto power should have a limited exercise, like it cannot be exercised against war crime, genocide, and acts of mass destruction. It can save the world from the use of nuclear weapons, and modern means of warfare. Resultantly, human rights, peace, and prosperity will be ensured.

Secondly, international law and norms need to be strengthened. International law is a soft law with weak enforcement mechanism. States violate its charter and escape from taking the responsibilities. "International Criminal Court" and "International Court of Justice" have issued arrest warrants of Vladimir Putin and Netanyahu however, Russia and Israel are not a member of these forums therefore ICC and ICJ do not have jurisdiction.

to execute their orders. To strengthen international law it is necessary to revise the jurisdictional issues, so that in case of the breach of moral standards international law can come into play.

Thirdly, accountability mechanism should be strengthened to not only hold the states accountable for war crimes but also for climate accountability.

Climate accountability is a need of the hour, because climate stricken countries are not ^{being} fully treated by the developed states. In fact, Global North is doing the bare minimum to get away with its responsibilities to assist the Global South. With accountability human rights will be protected, justice will be provided and states will jointly move towards prosperity.

Fourthly, it is recommended to give special heed to ethical leadership and moral diplomacy. States should be encouraged to resolve their disputes through dialogue, negotiations and soft diplomacy. It will strengthen states relationships and promote moral values. Politics is the root of possible, so instead of

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creating regional hegemony by interfering in other states' domestic matters, it is better to peacefully keep a dominance over states. Moral diplomacy can restore the confidence of developing states in the international system of relations.

Norway, is the best example of moral diplomacy. Back in 201990s, it acted as a mediator to resolve point of contention between Palestine and Israel. Though, Oslo Accords were not a success, however, Norway received global appreciation. It stayed neutral, gave equal opportunity to both parties to present their stance, did not bow down to global pressure, and treated the parties on equality principles. The whole negotiations process was conducted amicably in full adherence to global morality principles.

To sum up the discussion on the topic, it is evident that international relations are shallow without moral and ethical standards. It determines the way of dealing between states in consonance with peace, justice, equality, freedom and application of human rights. Economic interests, power politics, ideological

affiliations and pursuits of survival derail the states from adhering to these principles. Resultantly, the states develop a mistrust, weaker bodies are exploited, international agreements are violated and global justice is breached. However, the international relations can only be strengthened by reforming the bodies like UN, ICF and ICE along with promoting the moral diplomacy. At the end of the day, it takes nothing except the ethical leadership and moral diplomacy to restore viable relations amongst the states.

"Great leaders are willing to sacrifice their own personal interests for the good of the team"
(John Wooden)