The crisis of ethics and morality in Internation politics

1) Introduction

There is a serious crisis of ethics and morality in International politics today. The prevalence of realistic ideas coupled with weak institutional arrangements, and a global economic inequality have contributed to this crisis. Thus, by developing strong ethical codes and leadership along with robust accountability mechanisms, the crisis of ethics and morality can be alleviated.

2) Understanding the crisis of ethics and morality in International politics

3) How ethics and morality are in a crisis in International politics

   a) Self help system and survival
   b) Anarchy and weak institutions
   c) Nationalism and populist rhetoric
   d) Rise of AI and propaganda tactics
   e) Global capitalism, MNCs and economic inequality
   f) Erosion of multilateralism and rise of bloc politics
   g) Ideas of cultural relativism

4) Impact of the crisis of ethics and morality in politics

   a) Selective application of Human Rights and double standards

b) Weaponization of International law
c) Failure of accountability
d) Weapon proliferation and arms trade
e) CClimat change and environment degradation
f) Ineffective conflict resolution

5) How the crisis of ethics and morality in the international politics be mitigated

a) Trained and educated leadership
b) Enhance multilateralism
c) Institutional mechanisms and universal codes
d) Alleviate the North-South divide

6) Conclusion

Essay

In the aftermath of the Rwanda genocide, the world vowed 'never again'. Many decades later today in 2025, the world is more if not equally drenched in blood and chaos. The ideas of human right, dream of peace and development and the lofty principles of Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention echo hollowly. And the question of the time arisis = What has gone wrong with the moral compass of International politics? The prevalence of pessimistic, realist ideas of world and human nature, the growing economic and social divide of North and South along with the escalating powers of AI and cyber technology

have multiplied this crisis of ethics and morality. The product is a world marked by trust deficit and war. This crisis is being manifested at the cost of innocent civilian lives, shattered dreams and limbs alongwith a longlasting impact on environment and climate. The double standards of West are being exposed and all institutional arrangements are being used as a weapon by the powerful. However, this sad state of affairs has brought to light hope to overturn a new leaf where some of the problems can be solved and the ideas of peace can be translated into reality. By enhancing multilateralism and investing in educated leadership, the horrors of today can be mitigated. There is a severe crisis of ethics and morality in politics. The prevalence of realist school of though, global economic inequality and weak institutions are to be blamed for such a crisis. Hence, by developing an efficient framework of ethics, trained leadership and economic equality, this crisis can be alleviated.

Ethics are the rules and frameworks of etiquettes that are followed for a smooth functioning of events ranging from classroom ethics to diplomatic ethics. Morality on the other hand, is a much vague concept which stands for following goodwill and kindness even at the cost of personal interests. Ethics and morality are probably the only two ideas that are emphasized in all religions of the world today. Following of ethics & and morality leads to a good life and reward as per major religions however the developing of these ideas in politics is contested. Islam, a complete code of life, emphasizes the implementation of ethics and morality in individual and political domains but the other side of the world believes in 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to

God what belongs to God.' Moreover, the most cited and followed principle is by the Italian philosopher Machiavelli who strongly emphasized that : 'There is no state morality.' These ideas have further been backed by the pessimistic school of thought realism which propagates for survival in a self help system and the ideas of human nature.

The ideas of realism regarding state being the only rational actor in a self help system to ensure its survival has somewhat contributed to the crisis of ethics and morality in International politics. Such a pessimistic view of life calls for self interest and use of all and any means to achieve the end. Many of the territorial disputes of today are a clear manifestation of states following the principle of self help. The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and later on war with Ukraine since 2022 is an evidence of the pessimistic view of a state with regards to other states and reinforcement of the idea that state has to protect its national interest. For Russia, the expansion of NATO at its footsteps was a signal and it violated the principles of sovereignty and non interference to fulfil its interests. The mistrust developed by the realist school of thought has created an atmosphere dominated by the state, self-help and survival.

Additionally, state is the only major actor in the contemporary era. While UN exists along with many of its agencies and organs, yet such institutions have not been to establish themselves as some sort of world government which can hold anyone accountable. The failure of league of nations and the current challenges facing the UN are a stark reminder of the toothless institutions and systems. The neocomporialist allegations of IMF, critique on UN especially

UN Security Council to produce a strong resolution and the ICJ and other criminal court to hold the perpetrators of violence accountable in Gaza and Ukraine are clear cases showing the lack of authority of such institutions. The Western dominated institutions have weak base and are only show pieces for power.

There has been a rise in the nationalistic and populistic rhetoric in the corridors of world polities. The reconceptualized ideas of national interests and bringing back of glories of past are on the rise where many states are challenging the status quo. This rise in the national sentiment leads to a more narrow approach towards international polities. ~~where~~ The discourse on refugees and asylum seekers, America First doctrine by Donald Trump and Risayat e Madina by former PM Imran Khan are all evidences of the rise of populism. As per the 2024 elections data, there has been a rise in the populist leaders winning the ballot showing how nationalism or hyper nationalism decorated with populist rhetoric is creating a crisis of ethics. The ongoing Trump statements on Canada as 51st state of US and capturing Greenland are contemporary examples of violation of ethics of statehood.

The rise of AI and propaganda have had a devastating impact on ethics and morality. The widespread use of cyber and technology has blurred the lines between good and bad today. The use ranges from daily international polities to war crimes and national polities to tarnishing images of political rivals. A cyber generated news of former US VP Harris was circulated online showing her involved in a hit and run accident days before the presidential elections. In another

discovery, AI drones imitating voice of distressed women and children have been used in Gaza to kill helpers. Such a widespread use of Cyber technology has effectively paralyzed the ideas of ethics and morality in the international system.

The prevalence of global capitalism, rise in the number of Multi national corporations (MNCs) and inherent economic inequality spurred by the first two factors are a severe manifestation of the crisis of ethics. Capitalism has created a consumerism mindset and reinforced ideas that lead to rich becoming richer and poor remaining poor. Moreover, the inhumane and malpractices of MNCs in South and developing world are another horror. MNCs have been found to provide poor working conditions and minimum wages. MNC practices especially Shell company in Nigeria was found guilty of inhumane treatment of labor with devastating impact on environment. Similar practices have been found in the Papa New Guinea Gold mines by Austrialia. Such a global economic system that feeds on economic inequality of North and South has further exacerbated the crisis of morality.

The erosion of multilateralism and rise of block politics is another feature of crisis of ethics. States are now preferring their national and regional interests over the global interests. The decline of multilateralism is an evidence of states caving back to their borders to give precedence to national interests or creating bloc with similar minded states to pursue political and economic interests at the cost of global good. The creation and spread of NATO is a threat to Russia in a similar manner the meetings of QUAD affect China. Such a political bloc system creates an

imbalance in the system which exacerbates the morality. The idea of ~~multilateralism~~ declining multilateralism was reiterated by President Xi in the 14th BRICS Summit where he emphasized how bloc politics has created turbulence in the world politics and politicized all transactions.

Cultural relativism is one of the major reasons of the crisis of ethics and morality in politics. The differentiation of 'us' versus 'them' has deteriorated the idea of equality. Such ideas have been reverberating throughout history through racism and fascism to the 'Occidental vs. Oriental debate. Cultural relativism and clash of civilizations by Samuel P Huntington is an explanation for the declining ethics & morality in politics. Scholars such as Bernard Lewis who have propagated the idea of 'oriental' as an unethical, uncivilised and primitive class have had an influence on the American system. While the slave trade has ended and reprimanded all over, the West propagated modern slavery has begun. Such a differentization of us versus them has led to dehumanization of people of South thus reinforcing the divide.

The manifestation of such a crisis of ethics and morality is visible in the selective application of human rights and double standards of West. The ideas of human rights and equality were raised after the devastating of World Wars and genocides of 1990s. There have been successful cases of upholding of rights however the failure stories portray the very bias in the institutional set up favouring some of over others. The inability or rather well thought inaction in the atrocities committed by the supporters of West in Kashmir, Gaza and Syria showcase that

Western ethics and morality are limited to the white skin and interests. The swift action in Iraq and War of terror by US and continuous vetoes to resolutions for ceasefire in Gaza have brutally exposed the western hypocrisy.

In addition to the double standards, the weaponization of International law has been a stark issue of the current world. The International law was created to protect the ethical, economic and political codes of conduct however it has brutally failed in the current system. The law produced to punish the violators has been used to provide cover. The efforts to not classify various conflicts as International armed conflicts such as Kashmir issue and Gaza have led to a humiliation and ridicule of the International law. The conscious use and abuse of International law is a major outcome of the crisis of the ethics.

Moreover, the failure of accountability for the violators and perpetrators of war crimes have emboldened them. The time and again support to the Israel actions in Gaza and West Bank to the extent that US has threatened ICJ representatives evidences how the lack of fear of accountability create and propagates a system that promotes such practices. The further double standards in dealing with Saddam Hussein and Israeli authorities shows that rich and US allies have immunity from such practices.

The arms industry is one of the most influential and booming sectors today. While the political authorities condemn violations and talk about peace programs such industries promote war and add the GDP to the economic industries. The US backing of UN and Human Rights conventions

on one hand while benefits from the arms trade given that three of the ten major arms industries are US namely Lockenheed Martin, Boeing and General Dynamics. The ongoing crises in Gaza and Ukraine have been propagated by billions of dollars trade by US and its partners. Such a situation has to to space militarization and various new lethal emerging technologies.

A major manifestation of the decline of ethics and morality is being observed in the climate change and environment degradation. The rise of cold national interests, wars and conflicts, massive weaponization and energy production has led to the change in climate and fast degradation of environment. This is being evidenced in the debates about climate financing and blame games. Thus the crisis of ethics and morality has led to a deteri aation of the collective good of climate.

Moreover, personal interests and lack of adherence to principles of morality have led to a half hearted effort for conflict resolution. Many states are pursuing non-alignment and regressing back into the state rather than promoting peace. The doctrine of America First by Trump is a major case study at of such an attitude. US moving out of Paris Peace treaty, asking for more from alliances and isolating itself from bloodshed is an example of how states pursue self interests more than the principles of international morality.