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# UNIT 1 INTERNATIONAL ETHICS

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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In reading and studying this you will be able to achieve following objectives:

- to have a better understanding of international ethics;
- to define international ethics;
- to analyse international cases and issues using the international ethics ideas presented here;
- to develop your own philosophy of international ethics by discussing the various issues briefly outlined here;
- to contribute to the building up of international community and good international relations between people of different countries; and
- to know and identify the approaches taken by different authors when they discuss international issues, the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches and the fruitfulness of a particular approach.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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International ethics refers to the good that international interactions, exchanges, relations can bring to our planet earth and to all life forms and which can be

harmed by unfriendly, hostile, uncooperative behaviours. Aware that the harms that one country can do to another and to the international space and relations, international ethics offers insights into how nations and other entities treat other nations and its people. International ethics is a good which can be harmed and also knowledge of international ethics provides us with insights to assess the good and harms, the rights and wrongs, which can occur in the international space. For example, the UN has been promoting various principles of friendly and cooperative and peace related humanitarian international actions by all the member countries. This community of nations which stands to respect other nations and their interests, is itself harmed by the dominant nations willing to impose their interests and will on other poorer nations and poorer nations unwilling to cooperate without being treated as equals. Various agencies of the UN by their presence and action in various countries, promote certain universal principles that transcend the boundaries of individual nations and the ethical principles pursued by individual nations. International ethic is not simply an ethic of some dominant country, it is not simply an ethic of a powerful country having obligations towards others because of the power they have over others.

International ethics may be fruitfully defined as that which enables one to participate more actively in shaping and building good international community. The vision of international community that every country has and reality of an international community provides us with food for thought on what ought to be the nature and purpose of investing in international relations to build an international community. The challenges of international conflicts have to be addressed with courage to embark upon studying what international community promotes and builds, whether perpetual peace and justice provide the much needed foundation on the basis of which it can thrive and flourish. What would be necessary for the existence of such an international community of peace and justice between nations and people?

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## **1.2 INTERNATIONAL SPACES OVER TIME**

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Nations and multinational organizations were the first ones to cross the boundaries of national domestic spheres to trade or interact with other nations and organizations. Every nation had its own focus, as nations adopted the production methods, technologies, political systems and legal systems from other nations, similar problems began to appear in almost every country. These were not regarded as shared problems that required joint action by all those affected by it. Each country was largely responsible for problems occurring within it guided and directed by its own governments, culture, politics, legal systems, institutions, etc. But overtime today we see more and more interconnectedness between people and nations, we see greater interdependence and greater shared responsibilities which have emerged and their number has increased and which call on nations and other multinational organizations having presence in more than one country to act jointly. In many spheres international joint action becomes necessary. International ethics may be seen as responding to this need for international action. International ethics guides international relations and resolution of international conflicts. International ethics guides the international environmental effort to fight against ozone depletion, global warming, etc which are common shared problems and which require actions from many nations who are major contributors to forces generating such problems.

International spaces have been filled with governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations having ownership and /or control over issues and aspects that are central to life. There have been democratic governmental organizations and non-democratic governmental organizations interacting and operating in that space. There have been for profit business corporations (MNCs, TNCs, etc) and not-for-profit non-governmental organizations operating in the international space.

International spaces are filled with goods and services that are global commons, global public goods and services, collective goods and services that are owned or controlled by more than one individual organization, that are central to human life. These spaces are low on individual collective power over nature and the social world, but are high on coalition (of) collective powers. Who is excluded from the international space and who is included in the international space and the reasons and rationality of those exclusions and /or inclusions have a bearing on the expanding nature of the international space and the quality of international relations existing and those continue to be built in it.

Recognizing the power that human collectives have over nature and economic and social goods and services in the international spaces, it is easier to see how different organizations may be working at counter purposes, and / or competitive purposes. It is also easy to see how and why harms may be done by one against another and without any hope of international justice except those which are accepted as human rights. Many issues which have deep ethical implications are present in international spaces that we create or in which we participate in many different ways. International spheres / relations can easily thrive in a global system renewed constantly by greater levels of and sensitivity to international ethics.

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### **1.3 SIZE OF THE NATION AND THE ECONOMY**

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The size of the nation in terms of population appears less of an influencing factor as the population is contained by migration policies inhibiting or prohibiting international movements in search of economic opportunities. This may be challenged in the future years. Nations with older generations and less younger generations will experience an imbalance of the need for labour. So also nations with younger generations and less older generations will also experience an imbalance. International policies favour movement of talented and highly capable populations. Countries gain an advantage in inviting them and having them as part of their populations. Various levels of cultural exchanges also take place as people carry their culture with them and learn other people's language and culture as well. International understanding develops and grows. People move across national boundaries and their international overseas interaction and experience provides a dimension to international relations guided by international ethics.

The size of the economy is even more influential driver of international influence and relations. As international trade increases this sphere of international relations grows, interdependence increases, institutions that facilitate this growth and maturity provide the international ethical guidance necessary for growth and maturity of international relations. Particularly nations which have large export sectors or large import sectors are dependent on other economies for survival and growth and are vulnerable to developments in the international sphere.

For example, in August 2010, the Press was full of news about China becoming the second largest economy overtaking the Japanese economy which becomes the third largest. The USA remains by far the single largest economy, but it is already feeling the heat of Chinese military might and is revising its international strategy. The rise of China was only a matter of time, but the size of its economy may not mean much for some time as China has large inequalities in incomes. The Chinese influence in the global economy and in international relations between nations will be on the rise and will find its rightful place in time as it competes with the USA for supremacy. Chinese economy is about four times larger than that of India and has been growing at a faster pace than India's. In international relations China is more influential than India and China will likely to continue to lead India well into most of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

China is a very distant second place economic and military might to USA, a superpower no doubt with the highest population on earth. India not even in the top 20 countries yet, and its economic size is less than that of a state like California, in USA, is likely to overtake China in about 2040 as the most populated country and possibly also likely to compete for third place in economic strength by then. It is likely that USA will do everything in its power to see that China does not come near to its strength while pursuing friendly relations and cooperative relations with China. China is also likely to do everything in its power to see that India does not come near to its strength while pursuing more friendly and cooperative relations with India than they were possible until recently. There are other countries such as Brazil, South Africa, Russia, etc. who are also growing economies having credible influence on world affairs. A combination of countries like the BRIC is expected to outgrow the size of the developed countries by the 2050. It is likely that we see more changes in the world order. If the international ethics pursued by dominant nations so far continues to hold or gets imposed then we would likely to see new superpowers overshadowing and overtaking the influence of existing ones. If this is not to happen, then there will be "new ethics" projects floated by various interested parties and groups. It is good to have an idea of the entire ethics project that underlies various offerings of international ethics pursuits. The size of the economy and the size of the international exchanges (trade and other interactions) define the space for international relations. Something which is good for two or more countries increases their strategic interdependence on each other, and strengthens them against outside competitive challenges and threats.

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## **1.4 COMPETITION BETWEEN NATIONS**

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Nations compete in the international space and national advantages are the drivers of the space of international ethics and what happens to it. National disadvantages will work against the expanded role of that nation, while national advantages are likely to facilitate its expansion. It is easier to grasp the international problems and the ethical issues associated with international problems when keeping the picture of various nations competing with one another for (natural) resources, competing for markets, competing for investments, competing for talents, competing for technology and education. Even competition for health and related services is not far behind. Nations have been ranked on the basis of how competitive they are and how they are enhancing their competitive edge for the long term future. Nations that do not show potential for competitiveness appear to be left behind, partly due to its own policies and political interests.

Dominant nations, their strategies appear to be the ones that are meeting any kind of success. Other nations are not so fortunate. The measure of success of a nation in international and global space is indicated by several indices such as “the freedom index”, “human development index”, “happiness index”, “the human capital index”, “the natural capital index”, “the standard of living index” etc. These aspects along with other indices such as “poverty index”, “the inequality index”, “sustainability index” etc., give a fairly good idea of competitiveness of a country compared to others. The wide differences between nations are causes for concern and it is also a driver as nations take actions domestic and international actions which are aimed at achieving improved ranking and positions compared to others. Nevertheless competition is everywhere and nations have begun to learn from each other and are competing to be better nations with better governments.

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## **1.5 COMPETING FOR ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM ADVANTAGES**

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The impact of human activity primarily in terms of how they live and what economic activities they carry out in nature have been critically assessed by scientific establishments and which have been incorporated into national and international action and policy. Mitigating the effects of environmental and economic changes is necessary due to such impacts of human activity. Nations are competing for ecological system advantages by doing what they believe will help the environment to preserve its natural capacity and vitality and which will secure for nations an ecological and economic advantage.

Philosophical reflection on the natural environment has truly become international and global along with its counter parts the social, cultural, economic and political philosophical reflection. Various insights are available from each of these fields for critical reflection on what harms human beings are doing through the activities they carry out, through various operations and the consequences of such activities.

Almost every nation has made vision plans for long term future envisaging the changes necessary say for 2020 or say for 2050 or say for 2100 etc which have domestic and international implications and effects. That is governments have learnt to project what the countries stand for and what the countries aim to achieve in the future in the international arena which go well beyond their terms in office. Such measures of “good will” are to be examined for what they are. International ethics has this task to accomplish. Are such vision plans which have serious implications and effects for life on this planet earth normative in any sense and what is the normative structure that follows and emerges from them? All such vision plans by various countries are drivers of international and global ethics, they are fundamental claims and promises which are meant to be realized and fulfilled.

Economic and social advantages are sought in terms of social equity within and between generations within a nation and across international boundaries. Ecological systems concerns offer advantages to various nations for their social and human wellbeing. Environmental or Ecological ethics claims that the only way humanity can survive is by having a new concept of eco-system ethics

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Explain the insights of realism, idealism, constructivism, and cosmopolitanism

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- 2) How do you understand International Law?

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**1.6 INTERDEPENDENCE, COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION**

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In the shadows of dominant countries, other nations have evolved certain international cooperation and collaboration agreements for a variety of reasons. We are used to seeing one country (a super power) having a dominant role in international relations between nations. International cooperation and collaboration are a measure of countries interdependence with other nations. Such international cooperation provides a measure of international order between them.

It is simpler to conceive of international ethics in the context of cooperation and collaboration as these are based on recognition of their mutual interests in each other. What one country has done to the people of another country, what one group has done to another group provides the general field for international ethics. There may be several fields in which international cooperation has worked well and thus provides the basis for further cooperation and collaboration. Turning hostile relations and atmosphere of distrust between nations and their establishments can be turned into cooperation which can ensure some level of international peace between people. Interdependence between nations through cooperation and collaboration, can provide the basis for a “law of peace” to be established for relations between people. International relations can be guided by the law of peace.

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**1.7 DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING**

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A small piece of every nation is in every other nation through its diplomatic presence and is immune from the domestic laws of the country in which it is

present. Diplomatic initiatives are always available for nations to resolve their differences and come to agreements that ensure peace and security and also to further their rights and interests and to share duties and responsibilities. The movement of people can be facilitated by the diplomatic presence and provides another driver for international relations and international ethics which guides it. Each country may have its own interests in another country and or in promoting ties with other countries. In each country recognizing the other, there is the “international law of peace”, even though it may not resolve all conflicts between nations. A rule of reason can prevail under such circumstances.

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## **1.8 DEFENCE AND MILITARY ENTERPRISE**

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Every country may be seen as using the power it has to achieve its global interests. International ethics can also be regarded as the use of power by one country against another country to achieve its global goals and protecting its national interests. When aggressively pursued it may lead to certain conflicts. Military involvement and military strengths, strategies and calculations may drive in part international presence, international relations, and influence international ethics through its (propaganda) media.

International conflict and wars are still a possibility and it may even be influenced by the defence related establishments which have international reach and influence. Countries choosing to live side by side by the “law of war” cannot easily be persuaded to give up war or preparations for long term uncertain wars. International conventions on “international law of war” may be binding only when international community scrutinizes and insists on it. For example, the recent news flash about “China-Pakistan Nuclear Deal” provides a competitive nuclear flash point counter to “USA-India Nuclear Deal” making the region more vulnerable to military presence in the Himalayas or border regions, and thus putting a counter weight to world peace and security and international relations.

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## **1.9 THE POVERTY AND WEALTH OF NATIONS**

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Nations in search of having more wealth, have to reckon with poverty which hinders them from being active and responsible international actors involved and participating in emerging international issues. Poverty may be a domestic issue, but casts a deep shadow over what a country can do internationally or how inviting a country is for the rest of the world. Reduction in poverty would be welcomed internationally. “International law of justice” may be invoked to have nations pledge to reduce and remove poverty wherever it is found, through responsible joint actions. The UN framework on Millennium Development Goals calls on nations to reduce poverty to half by 2015 and continue to reduce poverty around the world. Recognizing that the poor of world have a share in the world in which they live and that they have a share in the domestic and international economic and social development is an important aspect of our increasingly global world.

Poverty measures, poverty indices, are available to guide policy. What happens to the world’s poor is certainly a driver of international ethics. Several international NGOs operating in this field to remove poverty have frameworks for making decisions and choices which offers another field of international ethics and can drive the values of global solidarity and justice.

In international ethics one would like to see richer nations helping poorer nations. One would also like to see relations between them be transformed into win-win relations for both and more beneficial to least advantaged nations.

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## **1.10 THE INEQUALITY OF NATIONS**

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There are various dimensions that one can compare nations and their strengths, the wellbeing of their population etc. We are in an unequal world and facts point out to a world growing in inequalities. Inequalities point to certain conflicts which may be domestic in origin or international, but they are indicators of disturbing trends. In an unequal world, expectations of equity, international equity are high. In other words, demands of justice may require that we prefer a more equitable world to a less equitable world brought about by international action. It would possibly imply that any international action must aim at benefiting the least advantaged nations more than that would be expected for a most advantaged nation. Otherwise, it would appear there would not be an incentive for less advantaged or least advantaged nations to participate in international actions. In cases of such failures, only those international actions which are powered by dominant nations will be carried through creating and endorsing a more divided world with even a greater possibility of future conflict. International ethics has to guide and deal with how international power is used (or else it is likely to be abused). International inequalities imply that some nations have international power while others do not have. There may have been even historical injustices involved in the rise and fall of nations and their international power. It is important to see international ethical sensitivities harnessing international power for international growth and development, peace and security etc

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## **1.11 FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

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Freedom of speech involves religion or world religions, the world press or international press and media, the education sectors, the cultural expressions, exchanges and products. Religions are influential actors in international relations and international peace and security. The international press provides scrutiny though it may also need to scrutinize its ways gathering and spreading “news”, interpreting it to propagate its own agendas and selling of its own ideas. The international press is an actor and can blow the whistle on nations and their covert or overt activities, revealing uncomfortable or unpalatable truths to the international publics. Scrutiny of international relations, international power etc are welcome and may be guided by rules of international media ethics which would be part of international ethics as well. The cultural exchanges provide a mutual appreciation of different culture and cultural differences and a welcome richness of diversity and social inclusion rather than the rampant social exclusion and discrimination. The education sectors provide the foundation for true sustainable societies and a better world for everyone. The future of the world is driven by what happens to the education sector which spans internationally as people move to countries to gain access to education they desire for their future well being.

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## **1.12 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

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Another driver for international ethics and international actions or actions with international implications and impacts is the international and global flow of

information. Underlying such actions and activities are the issues of technology, particularly information technology and to what use information and information technology is put internationally and nationally by individuals and countries. Information can confer advantages, so various international gatekeepers can control the flow of information and thus the advantages or disadvantages or create destruction of informational advantages. Information technologies and their use also may be directed by ideas of international ethics.

Information technologies not only regulate the availability and flow of information, they also make it easier for nations and people to communicate conveniently, easily, without any government or individuals interfering in their “private” conversations. Of course this may threaten some as it is possible to carry out “suspicious activity” from the supposedly safe borders of another country against some other country. Information technology has blessings and also dangers for any country because any country and individual can be reached potentially from anywhere and anytime. To what use such power is put is not entirely determined by national domains. If nations can use their power so also individuals can use technology against certain countries and states to counter such powers. Such games may be going on which are harmful. Information has “flat” world to deal with, as is well explained by “the world is flat”. The ethics of this “flat” world is also a driver of the international ethics and international and global developments.

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### **1.13 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AGENDAS AND PROJECTS**

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Science has been a driver of international and global developments. Every country has its community of scientific advisers to offer best science advice to their governments and these are in constant international and global contact with their counter parts in exchanging ideas and scientific research trends and information that could be strategically employed. International ethics may be influenced and driven by developments in the scientific research fields. Different research fields have different contexts and so research ethics may be more contextual and international ethics then follows various contextual offerings and multidimensional. This is not just a matter of its scope but also of the very nature of international ethics that it is constantly challenged by international and global research in various contexts.

Our scientists in every field have made critical progress in scientific discoveries and through filtered policies both domestic and international and through educational interchange and exchange, some benefits are offered to humanity as a whole. But scientific theories are still being fundamentally challenged and new (revolutionary) theories that have ripple effect internationally and globally drive scientific progress and educational progress in every country. International ethics may have also a lot to do with new and current “epistemologies” that are bound to shape the thinking of present and future generations. The question of discovery of “scientific truths” or “scientific laws” may be also a matter influenced in some respects by ideas on international ethics.

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## **1.14 POWER AND INTERNATIONAL ETHICS**

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At various times the world attention, gets itself focused on the most powerful nation, both domestically and internationally, a nation that is willing to impose its powerful will on the world, taking into task any nation that challenged its authority and its interests. Many wars and conflicts are indeed triggered by the unilateral moves of dominant nations against other nations that threatened its global interests. What powerful nations have done to other nations cannot be forgotten. International ethics is influenced by various philosophies of international and national power and how this power is played out.

There are beliefs in some quarters that power does not follow any rules and this reasoning (thought faulty) is extended to apply to international spaces and relations. In its so called “anarchy” nature, this belief in power, particularly power not following any rules tilts the global balance in favour of powerful nations and entities and is unfavourable to less powerful nations and entities. What prevails is simply the anarchy of a dominant power imposing its will at will on other nations and entities. Under such assumptions, naturally, justice follows national boundaries without any space for international or global justice.

In contrast to “anarchy” nature of power, that is, power which does not follow any rules, we can have alternative belief that, yes there is international power, but that power follows certain rules which provide an international order which is qualitatively different from the previous case of anarchy. Power that follows rules of international order is better than power that does not. Some philosophical questions may still be raised: Why power and why follow rules if one has power. International humility and patience are indeed rare, true. But the question can still be asked regarding the dynamism of (dominant state) power.

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## **1.15 PHILOSOPHY OF INTERNATIONAL ETHICS**

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Realism focuses on a single reality, international power. It is the power that one nation has to influence another nation directing and shaping its destiny in the direction it desires namely into a kind of tacit servitude of serving and protecting its interests at the cost of the other. In the international realm, realism holds that the only thing that really matters is power – what power a country has. Nothing else matters – morality, ethics, law, and political systems, legal systems, cultural systems – are all irrelevant. The argument appears to be that in international sphere human nature is such that no one can be trusted each seeks to dominate the other. Either one country will dominate the other or the other will try to dominate the first, so it is better to be the dominating or dominant country. The realist approach to international sphere or international relations is simply to deny any role for common or shared ethics, and create an ethically neutral zone or an ethics free zone which can be filled by the power of one who is dominant.

Obviously others will perceive realist conception of international space, international relations based solely on the principle of power as quite unjust. There is nothing in realist conception or in realism that prevents someone from making an ethical assessment of the power motivation and the dominant actions of the dominant country and be able to withstand such pressure and claim it to be unethical or unjust. For many people, the attempt to control other people and direct their

destinies in the international sphere is repugnant and demoralizing. The old saying may be invoked implicitly, that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. When power is the sole basis of international relations and international action, assessments will be coloured by such perceptions.

Realism conceives the international sphere as a space where “anarchy” prevails and there are no rules. Why would anyone follow rules made externally or made by another? What binding power those rules have that are not made internally? Is a country free if it follows the rules made by another? This claim that there are no binding rules in the international sphere that international relations are committed to follow appears questionable. What if there were agreements between international parties, would those agreements be binding and if so would the rules on the basis of which such agreements made appear to hold. As a test case, consider “human rights” or “human dignity”. Do these rules hold in the international sphere and in international relations? Who will enforce them if they hold? Who will hold another accountable for their violations? Thus in realist conceptions, if power is the only thing that works in international relations, then human rights violations or human dignity violations will continue to occur and there will be no one to stop them except a power greater than itself. Thus the realist position or realism tends towards a preference for war as the ultimate way to resolve international conflicts to bring about international order by imposing the order of the winners of the conflict. Realism sentiments within Nations may make it rational to pursue power, create power distance and dominance over its neighbours and at the same time seek to balance power by aligning sufficient number of states for a country to counter the power influence of those nations opposed or against it. In this way realism, in thought, word and deed, creates and spawns a world fundamentally divided into two. There will be no unipolar world for sure, the fact that one exists after the collapse of the Soviet Union is only a temporary phase, somewhat illusory. The world soon responds by restoring and creating balance of power. What exists, through the realist conception is only a multiplicity of different bipolar worlds and their coalitions. Such a world where balancing power exists certainly will not rule out world wars or wars in general.

Pursuing realism and realist policies will be detrimental to our common world with its common vision of a humane future for everyone. Realism is incapable of enabling such an achievement. Realism as a field is necessary ingredient for creation of a superpower and a relative independence or servitude as the case may be for others in relation to it. Since currently only one country still retains the status of a superpower, and others are expected to follow its lead, the silent dreams of many others to be superpowers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are just fantasy illusions. The power flows have rules. Realism contradicts in so far as it conceives of power in terms of “anarchy”, without any rules. Philosophy hopefully uncovers and lays bare the rules that power follows to exert its control and its direction.

Realism is a theory of balance of power that maintains the power balance in the world. All we can expect is that the most powerful nation on earth will have no one to challenge its power and so there will be peace. This is just a conventional thinking. Deeper reality shows, its power is already being challenged, the name and form of war has changed, shadows overcast over many relations have not disappeared, they remain. There is no real peace.

Realism does well in terms of trade as trade terms are set by the powerful against the weak to reflect the power imbalance and the power advantages. That's how the world works perhaps, but it is hardly a philosophy for what ought to be, it is hardly a philosophy of normative considerations. There will be some international sphere, limited and defined by trade relations and by wars. International ethics then, in so far realism is concerned is just the field of international trade wars and international war and peace and the necessity of having some kind of "international justice" dictated and dominated by the rule of the powerful, the dominant country in the relation.

### **Idealism and International Ethics**

Idealism focuses on "common interests" between nations, and not necessarily at the power or power distance or at power balance. It seeks to build the international sphere on the basis of idealist values that are of common interests to nations participating in any international issues and problems. Idealism built on common interests appears to be stronger in power than unilateral power of realism and hence can have the potential to replace realism in thought, word and deed and as a philosophical thought. Idealism has the potential to create more lasting hopes of peace and of a growing international sphere where mutual interests and common concerns are addressed more earnestly in the true spirit of pursuing what can be regarded as human purposes of human flourishing. Thus the rise of idealism holds out a promise, even though conflicts remain.

Idealism points to trade interests between nations as common interests and as platforms to build better, growing and mutually beneficial international relations. The rise of international and global market place and the growing interdependence between nations are shown to be aiding and being supported by idealism. Human beings and humanity as a whole is capable of displaying high levels of idealism. In idealism, the international system, international order and the international sphere follow rules, laws and institutions. In idealism, thus ethics, morality, laws, legal systems, international institutions all have a central place. Thus idealism contrasts sharply with realism which emphasized only power. The world becomes less dramatic and less dangerous, even though conflicts are far from removed.

International treaties, the UN organizations and the system, have a central role and supports idealism and idealist thinking endorses it. These provide international ethics guidance, even though it is voluntary, it has rational force of assent and appeal to conscience to be accepted and guided by it. All different institutions of the UN may not have the same force, but in their respective contexts, the values and beliefs expressed and communicated do hold respect.

Idealism may hold out the "olive branch", a symbol of the covenant between God and Man by offering the best humanity has to offer collectively for the world and for the future of the world for its future generations. Idealism is a movement towards peace and peace initiatives and strategies, as opposed to outright power play in wars or through wars. International sphere includes more than power and politics. It challenges the dominant views of realism which holds that war is a necessary consequence or necessary evil too easily justifiable by the powerful. Idealism does not rule out the possibility of war, but holds out an "olive branch" to those who can see reason and faith.

### **Constructivism and International Ethics**

Constructivism focuses on things like foreign policy, diplomatic initiatives, etc to shape international relations and the international sphere where a country has credible influence. In these things the focus is on domestic politics and how it shapes foreign policy with what goals in mind. It is more pragmatic with domestic political regimes as seats of international action and initiators of international action and its implementation. Every nation and every state create a sense of national identity in various ways and nurture it through historical and cultural celebrations and means. Thus national identity is constructed and it in turn is said to influence the way the nations interact. Basically constructivism allows for influence of national identities and its constructions on the international sphere. A flavour or dimension is added through identity politics into international sphere and relations. International sphere can also be a place where various identities can melt into more humane understanding between people in and through the 'give and take' of identity respects and exchanges.

Constructivism shows that nations resist any threat to their identities, nationalism, national sovereignty that are perceived. They need not be real at all. This works against attempts to make the world a better place or to change world systems or world order. All such attempts by other nations, however rational they may be, will be resisted if national identity is not respected. All desires to transform the world by any nation are sacrificed at the altar of identity, politics, and constructivism of other nations. Constructivism gives more power to individual nations through its focus on national identity (rather than national interest), which is politically a more powerful instrument to having less to do with other nations in the international sphere than with what furthers and promotes its own identity. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is rise of identity politics and political power arising out of it harnessed by interested parties for their own advantage. What happens in the international sphere and international relations is far from certain.

National identities based on religious domains span across countries and will be able to define international relations. Religious "fault lines" of conflict may open up and trigger problems not only in the international sphere but within a nation itself as a result. It will spread the fire of violence and anger rather than the sparks of peace and humane relations. Identity tensions will be strongly felt and whatever feeds identity tensions and forms them is far from allowing people to be truly free and open in shaping the one world destiny of all of human kind. We may be unconsciously constructively pursuing the "Huntington Dream" of an international conflict based on the identity politics of world religions. Cultural identities may not all be good, but they are to be respected even when critically assessed for their role in shaping international spaces, international sphere and international freedoms.

### **Cosmopolitanism and International Ethics**

Cosmopolitanism shares something in common with idealism, namely, do the right thing. The right thing to be done is to behave as you would want others to behave. Behave in ways that you think others should behave. It focuses on how we interact in a global community. What is relevant is the global community since we interact with people in other countries. It holds that since we interact with other countries, we have a moral duty to treat people of that country morally as moral people. Hence the prescription in cosmopolitanism is to "do the right

thing”. Cosmopolitanism thus empowers international ethics and the development of “global values and ethics” fully.

Cosmopolitanism argues for following morally lawful behaviour. Where rules and laws do not exist, it would require that we come together and negotiate the rules and laws that are ethical to follow and follow them in our relations with people of other countries and in our interactions with people of other countries. Cosmopolitanism is able to welcome people of all origins and identities without any discrimination or treatment of them as means to some ends. It will give importance to people, their freedom and rights rather than sovereignty of nation states. Some may even use it to argue for a world government which overrides national interests and boundaries. It is certainly capable of universality in thought, word and deed, although we may not yet see the development of such possibilities today.

Cosmopolitanism focuses on the international community as having an important and in some cases decisive role on determining what a country or nation should or should not do morally. Such developments may be resisted by nations who feel they are at the receiving end of world opinion or world politics and which prefer their national identity and sovereignty sentiments.

### **Constrained Choices and International Ethics**

International ethics guides our choices in the international sphere, but evidently our choices are constrained rather than free. The choices may be constrained by the necessity of pleasing the domestic political support and widening the support for the ruling party or coalition. The choices may be constrained by the identity politics. The choices may be constrained by power equations and balances. Many practical constraints may also be present, surely economic constraints and national interest constraint will not be missing when choices have to be made. Some have argued for preference given for national interests when it is a choice of national interests versus global interests. It means that governments are expected to value the welfare of their citizens more than that of others. While accepting in general that a country’s goals must be defended as morally right thing to do, a country’s goals and interests are several and may be in conflict within themselves without any clarity and more confusion that the general acceptance that it is moral to defend a country’s goals becomes meaningless. It has no normative force.

It is no doubt that morality implies choice between two or more alternative states of action. It is sometimes argued that if the practical necessities or constraints are such that they concern the survival or extinction of a state or its identity, any such constraints make morality or ethics, or law or political systems, irrelevant. Obviously as in the case of realism, that is the premise of a threat experienced by a power from another stronger or super power. In the end, ethics and morality considered as constraints or as practical constraints really means that ethics and ethical goals and objectives are not pursued to start with. The objective is something else. In such cases agreeing to such international ethics is to begin with a failure. Ethics must reflect as a central concern to be pursued as a basis for all other international action.

### **Equality of Life and International Ethics**

Every life may be considered as having equal moral weight. In this belief, valid if one holds such beliefs, it is the global interest that count as much as domestic interests. No preference is given by governments or by anybody else to the welfare of citizens of that country. There are no differentiating factors recognized by such governments that distinguish between the welfare of its citizens and those belonging to another country. Everyone has equal rights. Everyone is treated equally in equal respects. In such cases and in the context of such beliefs of equality of life, it becomes meaningful to make sacrifices for others. People rarely sacrifice themselves for their own near and dear ones. But people sacrificing themselves for others in the international space are truly worthy examples of human greatness and the greatness to which human spirit can rise.

Respect for life of the unborn in the international sphere implies that countries do not push their own agendas under the guise of controlling rising populations in their own and other countries. Respect for life should guide international ethics, in thought, word and deed. When that day comes when we respect the right to life of the unborn, it will be truly a day of universal peace. If you have to make decision about which world you want to live in, without knowing what position you will be in, you would choose a world that protects the weakest of the weak, the least advantaged. Such a world is full of meaning of life and in such a world equality of life will be an accepted principle. Such a world would accord the unborn right to life, in the principle of equality of all life.

### **Economic, Social and Environmental Frameworks and International Ethics**

Though context may differ, there are a number of frameworks available for making decisions concerning international actions which have economic, social, and environmental consequences and impacts over future generations. There is a gap between any system of global and international values and international ethics on the ground, because of the widening gap in ground realities between nations and international organizations due to levels of difficult conflict. The frameworks are evolved to provide a way out of the conflict and they are useful to deal with a number of conflicting ideas on international ethics.

The framework provided under UN by its various UN agencies, for example, the framework of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the framework of Universal Declaration of Human Genome and Human Rights, the various international declarations and conventions do provide the necessary framework for cooperative and collaborative international action necessary to solve international problems. Essentially universal value based frameworks are most helpful as they provide space for all participants to make their representation and contribution. There are several global institutions concerned with the global economic order, others with the global information order, still others with the global environmental regimes or order, etc. Each of them offers frameworks within which its members are expected to make their choices and decisions and those choices are respected and supported by virtue of the frameworks agreed upon.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Analyse the relation between peace and justice.

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2) What are the Environmental concerns of the nations today?

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**1.16 LET US SUM UP**

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The study of international ethics makes clear the normative structures, the approaches, and the frameworks available for making decisions and choices ethically in the international and global sphere. These help resolve some of the major international problems, issues, and provide insight into international conflicts. There is much understanding of “international crises”, “shared problems” requiring international cooperation and joint action. The technical details of securing international cooperation are also available though not included in this paper. Our world is so much better if we have a growing international community of persons. International ethics directs us in the direction of building an international community in which every other community can actively and fruitfully participate and flourish. International regimes may be assessed and evaluated in terms of the international ethics they employ in solving international problems. In a way international ethics will continue to evolve and there will likely to be more narratives added to the story of international ethics.

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**1.17 KEY WORDS**

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- Human Rights** : Universal understanding of every human being having fundamentally certain rights.
- International Law** : The legislative regulation applicable for all the nations of the world.

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## 1.18 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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