ETHICS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A NEED FOR AN INDIGENOUS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Ethics by definition are a system of moral principles. The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, drawn from culture and religion. In today’s world in essence ethics are about how to treat others with dignity and respect and recognizing and honoring the humanity in all others. In international relations, where interactions are studied with the focus on power it is difficult to create distinction between facts and values, ethics emerge as a sub discipline and it is difficult to establish the fact that ethics should be everywhere. In a country like Pakistan, where external threats and internal issues intermingled it is very difficult to maintain a focus on the importance of ethics in international relations. The paper is an attempt to highlight the importance of ethics as a part of social sciences in general and international relations in particular to address the problems of positivist approach to inter and intra-state relations based on hard core empiricism versus morality and ethics based approach which is indigenous to the developing world. The discourse on ethics in foreign policy, in the contemporary world is dominated by the western thought and thrust which includes elements like democracy, human rights and free markets. It may even extend to abject use of force in the name of ethical intervention this has resulted in a lot of violence and a trust deficit in the world which was avoidable.

The thrust of research would especially include:

- Democracy and Ethics
- Free Market and Ethics
- The politics of Human Rights

Keywords: Ethics, Democracy, Indigenous Approach, Free Market, Human Rights, Digital Divide, Politics, Western thought, violence

INTRODUCTION

“Looking back today, what seems most surprising is the unity of purpose shown by the UN member states at the time in adopting the UDHR without a dissenting vote. Now in the face of numerous, pressing human rights crisis, there is no shared vision among world leaders to address contemporary challenges of human rights in a world that is increasingly endangered, unsafe and unequal” (Amnesty International, 2008, p.5).

“In the market place of domestic politics and in international affairs, respect for rights is the new criterion of political legitimacy” (Waldron, 1987, p.1).

“…..lack of agreement about what constitutes a human right breeds doubt about the very concept of human rights” (Campbell, 2001, p.53).

According to Stephen D. Krasner all the social environments in which human beings act, the international is one of the most complex and institutionally weak. It is characterized by a lack of authoritative hierarchies.8

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The contemporary global human rights culture, imbued with the principles of self-determination and liberal democracy, is the latest manifestation of Western globalization. One may say with only a little exaggeration that Europe has released itself from considerations of geography. ‘European’ as Michael Oakeshott tells us, ‘has become an adjective which refers to something which may be found in any part of the world’ (Oakeshott, 2004, p.436). The exportation of the values, for example, the rule of law, human rights and democracy are consciously imposed on perspective allies (if there is not some other strategic or economic consideration that may trump it) by both the European Union, and the offspring of European culture, the United States of America. John M. Headley, for example, subscribes to the idea of the Europeanization of the world. This consists on the idea of a common humanity and the principle of equality, manifest in the human rights culture; and the desirability of political dissent expressed through liberal democracy, with its emphasis upon political freedom (Headley, 2008, p.7). This tendency is welcomed, with varying allowances for sensitivity to culture difference, by an unlikely array of scholars who inhabit radically different terrains on the political landscape, for example, Francis Fukuyama (1993), Will Kymlicka (2006), and Richard Rorty (1989). Kymlicka, for example, extolling the virtues of a tamed liberal nationalism praises European enlargement, arguing that ‘Europeanization is morally progressive because it is consolidating and diffusing liberal nationhood’ (Kymlicka, 2006, p.132). He goes on to suggest that, ‘Far from transcending liberal nationhood, the EU is universalizing it, reordering Europe in its own image’ (Kymlicka, 2006, p.135).

The above discourse will be discussed on the basis of international relations in particular to address the problems of positivist approach to inter and intra-state relations based on hard core empiricism versus morality and ethics based approach which is indigenous to the developing world, and also how it complicates teaching ethics in International Relations.

Democracy and Ethics

The democratic system of governance has acquired popular support over the years and its acceptability as the system of government has universal appeal now. However, the Ethics of Democracy is a different trajectory all together. The champions and proponents of democracy have been completely comfortable dealing with monarchies and dictators, when and where it suited their respective interest of power politics. The wining of the faction in population through democratic means of groups that are on the wrong side of the powerful world has seen the same reaction, where absolutely legitimate democratic wins have been rejected on one pretext or the other. Obvious example is that of Hamas in Palestine and Brotherhood in Egypt. Even post Arab Spring, the desire to tinker with the indigenous democratic thrust is quite visible.

After the spring uprisings and Mubarak's ouster, the U.S. piled millions more into its democracy promotion in Egypt, hoping to expand efforts with direct grants to big and small groups despite years of arguments with Egyptian leaders over the practice. The U.S. approved a one-time democracy development infusion of $65 million, drawn mostly from Egyptian aid withheld because promised improvements weren't made. The money went directly to IRI, NDI and other democracy groups, including Egyptian organizations considered more liberal and more inclined to challenge Islamic interests.9

The US has maintained close relationships to numerous authoritarian regimes across the globe. At best, a few mild words of criticism were raised when certain excesses appeared on the world's media, but the US state continued its long standing policies of appeasing dictatorships when it suited their geostrategic interests, for examples in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria.

Genuine democracy often results in unpleasant surprises. Bush, along with other world leaders, was suitably shocked and outraged that Hamas won the Palestinian elections. The words irony and hypocrisy do not do justice to the sight of Bush and Blair, invaders of Iraq, stating they would not talk

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to Hamas unless it renounces violence. That Hamas is attacked over violence while Israeli state terrorism is never called what it is goes without saying. This makes the whole debate of Democracy and ethics very muddy.

Democracies seem to have scored a historic victory over alternative forms of government. The majority of the states in the world are democracies of one kind or the other. According to Freedom House, 121 out of 193 states of the world today are democracies. This is indeed a progressive trend since the third wave of democratization began thirty years ago. Democracy has become a compulsion because there are strong international pressures, both economic and political, favoring democratization. People have opted for more open forms of governance. Leaders in new democracies face the daunting problem of creating strong and sustainable democratic institutions that will fulfill the high hopes of their people for political freedom and opportunity. According to Huntington’s submission, the process of democratization is composed of two phases. The first phase is power transition and the second is consolidation of the democratic achievements. Democratic consolidations are far more challenging than the phase of transition.

The developing countries even when they are established practicing democracies face indigenous democratization challenges which remain marginally discussed in the political science community.

The democratic transition that took place in Pakistan in 2008, face serious challenges. These challenges emanate from a lot of internal issues faced by the country, but are also there because of super power constant attempts to micro manage the polity of Pakistan and constant attacks on its sovereignty, which undermine the credibility of the Democratic government. Moreover, it seems the relationship that the United States has had with Pakistani military and Pakistani civilian leadership has been largely determined by its own narrow interest and not by any chance by the norms of law, democracy or ethics. The US aid policy towards Pakistan and for that matter other developing countries is largely based on the achievement of immediate US foreign policy goals, and not necessarily towards the promotion of general democracy, rule of law or human rights.

US was very comfortable with the military dictator of Pakistan whether it was Ayub Khan, Zia ul Haq or more recently General Pervaiz Musharraf, because their policies completely suited the interest US was pursuing in the region. Post Musharraf, US government has had problems with the military leadership of Pakistan and its intelligence agencies with which it was completely cushy in the past. More recently, US have had issues with the judiciary of Pakistan because the decisions went against the US interest. For example the case of release of supposed militant Hafiz Muhammad Saeed for lack of evidence by Pakistani courts. And more recently, the case of Doctor Shakil Afridi involved in the Osama bin Laden’s case.

Democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office. The people decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in regular, free and fair elections. Government is based on the consent of the governed. However, implementation of this very western concept of democracy remains problematic. There are variants forms of definition of the concept as viewed by various schools of thought, simply because democracy as perceived in the west may not necessarily have the same perception in the Eastern World. For example, the Russian President in his reaction to Western critiques on the Russian

11 Baqai, Huma, “Transition to Democracy in Pakistan: A Comparison to Rustow’s Thesis”, Presented in an International Conference on Pakistan: Challenges to Democracy, Governance and National Unity held on 24 to 25 October 2011, at Punjab University, Lahore
The conduct of election was that “if the international system has found a wrong doing is another thing but, the issue of Russian political system is none of their business.” There is a huge variety of cultures and religions in the world, therefore the way democracy is practiced in the West may not necessarily be the same in Iran, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan or Malaysia. For instance, a popular slogan in Pakistan today is that we want electricity and not democracy reflective of a major people’s need that remained unmet after four and a half years of a democratic government.

The basic idea of democracy should be based on popular consensus as such; the system or procedural pattern of governance in a given state does not necessarily have to be the same as in another. This is purely due to ideological, cultural and possibly religious differences and even variation in economic capability and class differences of the various nations.16

The most common and acceptable form of democracy world over is the Liberal type of Democracy. The idea of liberal democracy seems to suggest that democracy being the end of history has been achieved in current pioneer Liberal societies. However, it can be argued that the liberal societies of today are still democratizing. Larry Diamond (2008, p.23) for example refuse to accept democracy in states like Iran calling such societies illiberal, forgetting the fact that democratic ethics in one country may not exactly be the same or even operate perfectly like the others, simply due to historical and cultural differences. Thus, democratic operational process in United State does not necessarily have to be the same with that of Islamic Republic of Iran, thus the most important aspect of democracy to be given due consideration and to be referred as Liberal is the level or degree of consensus.18 Ideally, democracy is about peaceful coexistence among the people of the various societies, Democratization (world over) is in serious dilemma facing major difficulties and various challenges with a great deal of disappointments despite all promises for the earlier anticipation toward bringing about peace and stability as against other systems of governance.

In May 1998, Indonesian mobs swarmed through the streets of Jakarta, looting and torching more than 5,000 ethnic Chinese shops and homes. A hundred and fifty Chinese women were gang-raped and more than 2,000 people died. In the months that followed, anti-Chinese hate-mongering and violence spread throughout Indonesia’s cities. The explosion of rage can be traced to an unlikely source: the unrestrained combination of democracy and free markets - the very prescription wealthy democracies have promoted for healing the ills of underdevelopment. How did things go so wrong?

During the 80s and 90s, Indonesia's aggressive shift to free-market policies allowed the Chinese minority, just 3% of the population, to take control of 70% of the private economy. When Indonesians ousted General Suharto in 1998, the poor majority rose up against the Chinese minority and against markets. The democratic elections that abruptly followed 30 years of autocratic rule were rife with ethnic scapegoating by indigenous politicians and calls for the confiscation of Chinese wealth. Today, the Indonesian government sits on $58bn worth of nationalised assets, almost all formerly owned by Chinese tycoons. These once productive assets lie stagnant, while unemployment and poverty deepen, making Indonesia a breeding ground for extremist movements.

Conditions in the developing world make the combination of markets and democracy much more volatile than when western nations embarked on their paths to market democracy. The poor are vastly more numerous, and poverty more entrenched, in the developing world today. In addition, universal suffrage is often implemented wholesale and abruptly, unlike the gradual enfranchisement seen during western democratization.19

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15 Euro News hourly 7th, 12 2011
17 Francis Fukuyama, “End of History”, 1993
18Ibid.
Since 1989, the US has been pressing developing countries (with the glaring exception of the Middle East) to implement immediate elections with universal suffrage. This is not the path to democratization that any of the western nations took. Further, British and American democracy started locally, not nationally.

Most important, even today democracy in the west means much more than unrestrained majority rule. It includes protection for minorities and property, constitutionalism and human rights. A lot more is needed than just shipping out ballot boxes and imposing form rather than substance.

**Free Markets and Ethics**

Free market advocates have amply documented the fact that free enterprise is efficient and productive. The logic of supply and demand has proven to be uncontested. However, at the same time a recurring theme is that it is unfair and exploitative. Although it is productive, the productivity is sinister and immoral with more focus on consumerism and luxury and little or no attention towards “public good”. In essence the thesis suggests that Free Markets work for profits and needs are neglected in the process. Coming to the major question:

*Is free market ethical and more importantly what does free market in essence means for developing countries?*

Asia's millionaire ranks rose to 3 million, matching Europe for the first time, paced by a 4.5 percent economic expansion. The fact of the matter is that new entreats to the list of the richest of world do not belong to the West. They are from China and India. A very large numbers of people will enter the middle class in the coming years, transforming the economies and political systems of the countries they inhabit. About 85 percent of the world’s people live in developing countries, yet they accounted for only 18 percent of global consumer spending just a decade ago; today they account for nearly 30 percent. Consumer spending in developing countries has been increasing at about three times the rate in advanced countries.

Measuring the global middle class isn’t just an academic exercise; its growth carries real-world implications. Political scientists are interested in the topic because a large middle class is associated with greater political awareness, a desire for more accountable and representative government, political freedom and protection of human rights.

The number of millions in China and India are increasing by the day. But like most people the view at least in India and Pakistan is that markets are efficient but not moral. The swelling middle class in transitory economies is changing the balance of power across the globe. The larger dynamics of power over shadow the ethical phenomenon. The most glaring problems appeared in the Asian countries, where the utilitarian views put in practice have caused the individuals rights and interests to be totally neglected. Asia may have appeared as a huge opportunity for the western companies in the 70’s, especially for the cheap labor force and the economic political environment, but there are various debatable ethical areas for example child labor, poor working conditions, long working hours and no job securities because a lot of labor is utilized from the informal sector. Moreover, it has created commercialization of public goods, especially education and wealth concentrations, resulting in polarization of societies and also probably ethnic market dominant minorities. The incident of Chinese Indonesians is not an isolated one, Sunni’s in Iraq, Afrikaners in South Africa.

The ethical challenge facing the developed and the developing world is coming up with a paradigm now referred to as conscious capitalism, where the global economy while pursuing goals of economic growth and productivity also take upon themselves to institutionalize, sustainable practices and business ethics. The recent rash of corporate scandals in the west has increased the desire for this.

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Ibid


22 Shimel Se Ali and Uri Dadush, “The Global Middle Class is Bigger Than We Thought”, *Foreign Policy*, May 16, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/16/the_global_middle_class_is_bigger_than_we_thought
Today, there is a greater emphasis on ethics and responsibility, challenging the way profiting was done in the past, the broader question today is not just business decision leading to profits at any cost but responsible business decision making and a focus on corporate social responsibility. The integrative focus is on ethics, social responsibility, civic engagement and sustainability. The west has learnt its lessons from past experience and wants to cling on to capitalism but is trying to give it a conscious.

The future of capitalist growth is hinged on that. The challenge for the developing world is that their exposure to capitalist growth is comparatively new. The problems that they face are largely indigenous which may include challenges of inclusivity, equal opportunity, infrastructure, digital divide, educational diversity and may be even gender related issues.

Democracy and market-generated growth, in some form, offer the best long-term hope for developing countries. But there are many different versions of free-market democracy and the US has been exporting the wrong version - a caricature. There is no western nation today with anything close to a laissez-faire system. Yet for the past two decades, the US, along with international institutions like the World Bank and IMF, has been pressing poor countries to adopt a bare-knuckle brand of capitalism – with virtually no safety nets or mechanisms for redistribution -that the US and Europe abandoned long ago. The opportunism of the elite and the powerful of the developing world, poverty, lack of opportunity and level playing grounds further complicate this.

There are various consequences that the developing countries faced especially since the 1990s when external pressures for Western style liberalization increased considerably and these countries faced the dilemma of integration into world economy, with no competing ideology. It had both economic and political repercussions. On the economic front it meant, adopting of various market based systems, privatization of public enterprise and external opening. In essence reforms that were not suited to local conditions and it became a case of too much too quickly without the requisite preparations.

The political side of it included, achieving human rights free elections and parliamentary governments, environmental protection and intellectual property rights are also included in the list under the rubric of international economic facilitation and sustainable development. The challenge perhaps is that the delay in political and economic liberalization, which was quite acceptable in the past, is not an option anymore. Countries are not always forced to adopt this path. However, conditionalities imposed by the international financial institutions and donor countries play their role. Other because of various factors willingly adopts the strategy for example ASEAN and China.

The IMF and the American government which seem to be firmly entrenched in dogmatic market ideals should regain common sense and intellectual flexibility as soon as possible.

Development will surely fail if the country refuses to deal with the global market economy. Yet, it is equally improper to force an unprepared country to integrate with the world economy. The problem lies not with globalization itself but with how it is carried out. Compulsory and uniform international integration imposed on all countries irrespective of different positions in the world economy or stages of development must be stopped, especially since the global economy lacks stability.

In the 1990s, the virtues of the market economy and international integration were clearly overplayed. It is time to regain balance, to correct the pendulum that has swung too far. We must formulate concrete policies that promote the merits of the market economy and dampen its demerits. Pressure on developing countries to integrate must be accompanied by the reform of the world economy so that countries can integrate without being seriously damaged.

23 Op cit, Amy Chua
25 Ibid
26 Ibid
For this purpose, principles are suggested by Kenichi Ohno in his article.27

First, instead of being uniform, international rules for liberalization and integration must be multiple, reflecting different status, stages of development and institutional capacity of individual countries. In particular, developing countries should be given the freedom to integrate with the world economy gradually and in steps, rather than in a big bang. There should be different criteria for good economic conduct between developed and developing countries, and similarly diverse rules among different types of developing countries. Outsiders should be patient enough to let each country tread its own path of translative adaptation over a long period of time, rather than demanding rapid institutional reforms with unilaterally imposed policy conditionality.28

When both of these conditions—multiple rules for integration and stability of the world economy—are fulfilled, only then, developing countries are given the opportunity to accelerate external integration without inviting crisis. The proposal for promoting globalization amounts to creating a better environment for integration rather than beating developing countries into submission. Long-term healthy development of the world economy can be better achieved if it is allowed to happen at a pace which is in lieu with the indigenous conditions.29

The Politics Human Rights

There is a connection between trade, development and political reform. Political philosophers across the spectrum of time from Aristotle to Samuel P. Huntington have noted that economic development and an expanding middle class can provide more fertile ground for Democracy. For the last three decades globalization, human rights and democracy have complimented each other but they have also raised the issue of the Asian Value debate especially with reference to human rights.

The Asian value debate came to the fore at the end of the cold war and the unprecedented economic growth of the Asian Economies. The issue was raised by the thinking elite of Malaysia, Singapore, China, Myanmar, Indonesia and Japan. The major highlight of the debate was that “Asian societies have different cultural backgrounds from those of the West, they therefore should not be subjected to the same standards of Human Rights It came into prominence to challenge what was claimed to be the attempts of the West to establish its global intellectual and cultural hegemony by imposing Western notions of rights under the guise of universalism.”30

The development of the Asian values debate is seen in the context of the ideological confrontation, between former communist States stressing social and economic rights and the Western focus on civil and political rights. The West’s portrays the collapse of many communist governments as a victory of democracy and human rights and uses the same to further Western advantage in various spheres, specifically to define and secure political relationships, even justifying international intervention. Many States were not overly enthusiastic about this approach and its potential consequences for authoritarian political systems, but also for competitiveness in international trade, owing to their particular economic policies. Their response was a direct cultural attack on the assertion that human rights are universal, countering “Western rights” with “Asian values” and a claim that Asia’s economic and social success is based on Asian values, just as the economic crisis and moral decadence of the West are the result of its preoccupation with rights.

China is outside this argument, the Chinese response to issues of human rights has been national sovereignty and maintaining that human rights is an issue which depends on each country’s unique situation and does not come within the purview of the international community. Although Professor Ghai, when commenting on China, rejects what he calls the “doctrine of Asian values”, he goes on to

27 Ibid
28 Ibid
29 Ibid
examine the argument that rights-based regimes promote confrontation and conflict, and that duty-based regimes promote harmony and consensus.\textsuperscript{31}

The Asian financial crisis of 1990’s saw in some ways the end of the Asian Values debate. However, it’s not the end of the issue. The issue is alive and kicking and continues to haunt the Global Human Rights regime and supporters. Asia is a vast region with many a diverse value systems, culture and religion, which do not always see eye to eye with the international Human Rights System or the European expertise and understanding of human rights. The key challenge with the changing power dynamics of the world is the handling of this global pluralism of Human Rights and finding ethical answers and synergies.

Asian values have been defined as putting emphasis on a consensual approach, communitarianism rather than individualism, social order and harmony, respect for elders, discipline, a paternalistic State and the primary role of government in economic development, linked to the premise that “there are values and patterns of behavior that are common to Asian countries and peoples”.\textsuperscript{32} In contrast, “Western values” have been associated with transparency, accountability, global competitiveness, a universalistic outlook and universal practices, and an emphasis on private initiatives and the independence of the private sector.\textsuperscript{33}

Challenge is to create mechanism where both are respected and one is not imposed on the other, especially when it is more than obvious now that the West has had double standards on all of these issues.

\textsuperscript{32} Han Sung Joo, “Asian Values and Governance” http://csis.org/files/media/csis/events/080716_ambassador_han_sung_joo_keynote.pdf
\textsuperscript{33} Stephen J. Spielman, “The System of Governance Does Asia (and others) need Authoritarianism”, 2006, stephen.hostzi.com/articles/articles_human.../sjs_asian_value_06.doc