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## IDEALISM AND REALISM IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCENARIO



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### ABSTRACT

International relationships among countries play vital role to develop not only politically but also socio economically. Every country has its own idealism and realism.

The study of international relations and politics is a study of “the international system a collection of independent political entities (such as tribes, city-states, nations, or empires) interacting with considerable frequency according to some more or less regularized processes”.<sup>1</sup>

**KEYWORDS :** Idealism, Realism, International relationship etc.

### INTRODUCTION :

“Those who imagine the world to suit their policy and those who arrange their policy to suit the realities of the world contribute to a matter of perennial dispute between two basically different ways of thinking. It may be nomenclatured as the anti-thesis between Utopia and actuality, normativism and empiricism, idealism and realism, traditionalism and modernism. This anti-thesis is



like a balance, always swinging towards and away from the equilibrium but never attaining it in a complete form and revealing itself also in many forms of thought”.<sup>2</sup> It may also coincide with the anti-thesis of theory and practice. The line of fundamental difference between the two may be seen in the affirmation that while the Utopians and the classicists make political theory like a norm to which political practice ought to conform, the realists and the modernists regard political theory as a sort of codification of political

practice.

As a matter of fact, both distort the fact of relationship between the two in their own ways and, while the former arrest the growth of the discipline from being raised to the level of a science, the latter strive hard to convert their study into a science without loading it with the norms of, what Aristotle called, 'good life'.

“This dichotomy has its own controversial manifestation in the study of international politics. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to discuss this problem with a view to arrive at the

conclusion that politics "are made up of two elements—Utopia and reality—belonging to two different planes which can never meet. There is no greater bather to clear political thinking than a failure to distinguish between ideals which are Utopian, and institutions which are a reality".<sup>3</sup>

As already pointed out, approaches to the study of international politics are many and as a result of them several theories, some of them being fundamentally divergent in character, have also come into being. We may broadly put them into two categories—idealistic and realistic. While the idealists adopt a normative point of view by laying emphasis on the role of 'morality', the realists stick to the fact of 'power'. Thus, "while the former desire perpetual international peace and harmony, the latter lay emphasis on the protection and promotion of national interest in a state of conflict and war. A happy blending of the two is visible in the approach of eclecticism which rejects the basic contention of both and seeks to offer a synthesis of pessimism and realism and of optimism and utopianism".<sup>4</sup>

Idealistic approach is quite old. Finding its faint echo in the declarations of the American War of Independence of 1776 and in the French Revolution of 1789 and also in the writings of great optimists like Condorcet, Rousseau and Kant, and in the utterances of leaders like Woodrow Wilson, A. Briand, F.B. Kellogg, Noel-Baker and Nehru, it desires, in positive terms, a state of perpetual peace through the existence of 'world federation'. In negative terms, it desires the absence of war, elimination of inequality of mankind, end of tyranny and the like. Obviously, it "presents the picture of a future international society based on the notion of reformed international system free from power politics, immorality and violence. It has always held out the promise of bringing about a better world with the help of education and international organisations. Its best illustration is contained in the Wilsonian idealism of 1918 that desired the way of making open treaties, removing restrictions on the freedom of navigation, developing economic intercourse among nations, reducing armaments, effecting impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, having evacuation of the Russian, French and Belgian territories, implementing the principle of national self-determination, devising mandate system for territories detached from Turkish and German hold and, above all, creating a general association of mankind under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike".<sup>5</sup>

Different from this, the realistic approach discards all canons of ethics in international behaviour and instead sticks to the element of power. Finding its sanction in the works of Machiavelli and Hobbes, its exponents like Hans J. Morgenthau, M.A. Kaplan and George F. Kennan base their assumptions on the principle of 'struggle for power'. National interest is paramount. Therefore, all steps should be taken for its protection and promotion even at the cost of international peace and harmony. Accepting the idea of 'double morality', as preached by Machiavelli, the exponents of this approach hold that what may be good or bad to the individual cannot be so to the state. Moral relativism should be substituted by transcendental realism.<sup>6</sup>

"Thus, realism holds that our moral principles are valid only for ourselves, not for others".<sup>7</sup> Thompson goes to the extent of saying that much of literature on the theory of international politics in recent years has been like a dialogue between Morgenthau and his critics".<sup>8</sup> It is generally accepted that though the realist paradigm "turns out to be too narrow in its emphasis on states as actors and univalence, with power viewed as the bottleneck through which all other considerations pass, to help us in broad areas of international analysis," and yet the systematic perspective "has contributed significantly to the development of several interesting lines of research".<sup>9</sup>

Idealist versus Integral Nationalism: Realist Liberalism as Their Reconciliation. While political idealism draws inspiration from the inherent goodness of man and finds its culmination in the establishment of an era of universal peace and harmony, political realism frankly recognises the

phenomena which are connected with the urge for security and the competition for power and its consequences. It may, however, be added that the distinction between the two is not simply one between the actual and the ideal, 'what is and what ought to be.' It is true that realism frequently is more concerned with description and analysis of what is than with political ideals, while idealism often neglects factual phenomena for political ideals. It is also to be noted that realism may well, and often does, glorify realist trends as the desirable ones, while idealism may take notice of power phenomena.

Such a distinction is rather one of emphasis in view of the fact that realist thought is determined by an insight into the overflowing impact of the security factor and the ensuing power, political, oligarchic, authoritarian and similar trends and tendencies in society and politics, whatever its ultimate conclusion and advocacy. Idealist thought, on the other hand, tends to concentrate on conditions and solutions which are supposed to overcome the egotistic instincts and attitudes of individuals and groups in favour of considerations beyond mere security and self-interest. It, therefore, usually appears in one or other form of individualism, humanism, liberalism, pacifism, anarchism, internationalism, in short, as one of the ideologies in favour of limiting (or more radically eliminating) the power and authority which organised groups' claim over men. Both have their own points of strength and weakness.

"If the 'children of darkness' are realists, pessimists and cynics, the 'children of light' sin through a facile optimism that renders them blind and sentimental".<sup>10</sup> When these two terms (idealism and realism) are applied to the case of nationalism, we find that idealist nationalism seeks harmony and synthesis with internationalism, while realist or integral nationalism stands for exclusive, aggressive, expansionist and imperialist national politics. As a system of thought, idealist nationalism amalgamates pacifist humanitarianism with liberal-democratic elements. The doctrine of national self-determination (as espoused by President Wilson of the US) draws inspiration from the same ideology. It creates the idea of individual liberty. Thus, it assumes the form of a Utopia in its expectations of an ideal international society that runs counter to actual tendencies of international politics. On the other side, realist nationalism is by analysing political tendencies in order to evaluate them and which, through their glorification become the ideological foundation of the resulting movements. The astounding development in this direction is the conversion of the line of idealist nationalism into the direction of aggressive rationalism at the hands of some German philosophers like Hegel and Treitschke, from whom great fascism like Mussolini of Italy and Hitler of Germany took their inspiration. Thus, the idealist Utopianism in the realm of political theory witnessed in transformation into stark reality of power politics"<sup>11</sup>.

The real substance of idealism (universal peace and harmony) was thrown out. It was through the elimination of the concept of humanity that the universalist ideology was taken out of nationalism. What remained was either pseudo-idealism, such as that found in the theories of racialism (of white, or Nordic, or Aryan superior, etc.) or genuine political realism with a recognition of the inevitabilities of power in an age of sovereign states".<sup>12</sup>

Political realism superseded political idealism in the twentieth century those who hoped for a golden age of international brotherhood, once nationalities were so free to determine their fate in an environment of liberty, had their paradise lost in the twentieth century. The line of realist nationalism finding its germination in the French revolution of 1789, prevailed all over the world. National interest, rather than national self-interest, was the governing motive of the foreign policy and diplomacy of every nation state. Lenin recognised this fact and he mistook the principle of Marxist ideology (world communism). adhering to the policy of peaceful coexistence.

As Herz further says: "From the point of view of genuine internationalism, this attitude with its cynical

and unabashed misuse of internationalist idealism, constitutes Political Realism in the extreme".<sup>13</sup> Much harm has been caused to the humanity by the sacrifice of idealism in the field of interactional politics. The misdeeds of Mussolini and Hitler stand as an eloquent testimony to this fact. Hence, it is now widely accepted that idealism should not be discarded, rather it should be reconciled with political realism in the best possible way. Liberalism should be the inspiring ideology as such, the new theory should be called 'realist liberalism. In this direction, Herz makes a fine explanation in these words: "The term 'realist' indicates that the system or policy in question must start from and accept the factual insights of political realism as its firm base and foundation, lest it turn into unrealisable utopianism. The term 'liberalism, and other hand, points to the type of aims or ideals which are to be the guiding star of such an attitude.... Realist liberalism must, above all, be conscious of the limits which the gladiatorial 'facts' put to its endeavours. Realist liberalism is the theory and practice of the realisable ideal. Such policy is the most difficult of arts, and the formulation of its principles, the most difficult of sciences.

"But if useful, realist liberalism will prove to be more lastingly rewarding than Utopian idealism or crude power realism. While less glamorous than political idealism, it is also less Utopian, while less emotional, it is more sober, while less likely ever to become the battle ground of great political movements which stir imagination of the muses, it has more of a chance to contribute to lasting achievements for human freedom. Even though it will be attacked from both sides—for it can say, with Ibsen 'I have within me both the Right and the Left'—it may be able to lend to both Realism and Idealism. Some measure of attention, thus rendering the former more humane and the latter less chimerical. A kind of "second liberation", it emerges as synthesis from the 'thesis' of Utopian idealism and 'antithesis' of cynical realism".<sup>14</sup>

In International political scenario, idealism and realism has their own importance and value to interact each other. To sustain the tough competition, one has to adopt these values in their political strategies. Then only possible to emerge as an important and powerful country among the countries of the third world. Political thinkers and research scholars have to look deep and think a lot to put steps to prevent third world war.

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12. Ibid. p. 77.)
13. Ibid. p88 Moshe Piyade a communist leader of former Yugoslavia, frankly admitted it in July 1949. We have learned that great principles of socialism and international socialist solidarity can become business phrases in the mouth of socialist statesmen . We have learned that behind the phrases of Socialist Internationalism, there can be hidden the most selfish interests of the great powers towards the small "New York Times 9th July, 1949
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