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Realism and Foreign Policy
Case Study of the Reality of Morality in Foreign Policy

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CHAPTER ONE
Research Methodology

1. **Significance of the study:**
   The researcher believes this research is important to see how the realism theory is actually put into practice and how the nation states formulate their Foreign Policy on the basis of realism and face the reality. We belonging to the group studying Diplomacy it is important to know the importance of adoption of the realistic approach rather than being a idealistic or conservative in the real world. And the research is mostly on the approach of following the realism theory when tackling issues of foreign policy.

2. **Objectives of the study:**
   2.1 To highlight the importance of national interest in foreign policy formulation.
   2.2 To understand how realistic theory is the most accurate perspective in International Relations.

3. **Hypothesis:**
   3.1 Realist theory argues that the scope and limitation of foreign policy is the assurance of national interest.
   **Null Hypothesis:**
   3.2 Morality in formulation of foreign policy is of prime importance.

4. **Statement of the problem:**
   Realist theory is often critical for over stepping the human morals and the emphasis on the goals, methods and the problems of applying it in International Relations. Morality does not resonate in International Affairs as politics is all about power and being the head of decision making it is the prime responsibility of the leadership to act in accordance with the national interest of the state.

5. **The study scope and limitation:**
   The study is based on case studies on the publications from the various journals, the books, the most recognized newspapers in the world (The Independent, Washington Post, Financial Times etc) and websites. The research was conducted in May 2012 and accomplished in June 2012, and it is limited to the practice of
realism in International Relations and how ethics and morality is a secondary issue in foreign policy.

6. **Literature Review:**

This section is based upon the book titled *International Ethics (Concepts, Theories and Cases In Global Politics)*. Third Edition. This was written by Mark R. Amstutz about the practice of morality and ethics in Foreign Affairs and how it is a complete contradiction of the ethical perspective. The book has analyzed the fact that global politics is a necessity and reality which has no place for right and wrong when the survival of state is at stake. “The author stresses that political sovereignty, right of self-defense, intervention are the prominent stakeholders in the formation of foreign policy of a state. The book also includes some highlight on humanitarian aid based on morals and ethics as part of the foreign policy. The author states the examples of US government’s intervention in Somalia in 1992 to alleviate starvation and help the humanity from dying. Another example he cites is of NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999 purely based on humanitarian principles.”

The relationship between realism and foreign policy is discussed with several aspects and the highlights are:-

a. The school of realism is the most coherent and powerful political view which has the deepest influence on decision making in International Affairs.

b. Politics is all about struggle for power which is the main determinant and key instrument of national security and foreign policy.

c. Realism believes in no decentralized global principle rather it believes in state-centric approach. The nation state is much more important and powerful than international organizations, nongovernmental organization multinational corporations, religious movements and even individuals.

d. Realists do not deny morality and ethics in fact claim that politics is rooted in ethics and very much aware of the moral significance of the political actions.

Leadership plays a key role in determining the role of morals and ethics in foreign policy.

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The most prominent example in this regard is that of the US president Jimmy Carter whose personal moral values had impacted on the foreign policy of the state. He was a strong believer in human rights and thereby his administration pursued a pro human rights policy as a result of which the US officials publicly condemned the abuse of human rights and the repression of the minorities. He even went to the extent of halting the foreign aid to the most authoritarian military dictatorships.

7. **Methodology**
   In an attempt to find the relationship between realism and foreign policy, case study was done on the vast materials and information from officials at high positions representing the foreign policy of their state, and the publication was taken from the various authors, writers and websites which have the mandate of international community and they are above party politics. As researcher has been looking for the information which relates to the conceptual complexity between morality and realism in foreign policy and the results of using this method and to confirm its reliability I have been searching for external reports/findings about the state craft and the national interest. The comparison between idealism and realism concludes the research to get the better understanding. Its important to look at the role of media in today’s day and age in perspective of the realism theory.

8. **Instrumentation**
   a. **Case study on realism and foreign policy**
      For the purpose of this research a case study on realism and foreign policy (which is available on interest) was conducted and how foreign policy is based on the safeguarding of national interest of the state. As the case study required, the researcher has to see the various dimensions both domestic and international in order to evaluate the true picture in the real world of politics. To make it a reasonable conclusion, the study most focuses on the practicality of realism theory and its adoption by the states worldwide.
   
   b. **Data collection**
      The researcher had data collection on the case from different areas, starting with international newspapers, journals, researches and books. And the data was summarized to more basic information to make it easier in comparisons.

9. **Analysis of Data**
   The researcher chose certain publications from official websites of the government and other organizations which are instrumental in the formation of the state policy and its perspective outcomes. To analyze the data and case study of the situation we get to introspect at the wrong doings and learn from them to get a better and clearer outcome in the future.
CHAPTER TWO

Background:-
“If we closely examine the human nature he is selfish and highly competitive. Human beings are imperfect, flawed and evil in behavior this underlies the entire paradigm.”² If we go by this theory then the different concepts created by man are also bound to criticism and lack the absolute perfection. Thus, the various theories lack certain prospects and thereby making the implementation process much more difficult. The various institutions cannot transcend the processed qualities which have consulted them.
The concept of sovereign state is not natural and ancient. It arose in the sixteenth century and giving a political governance system to the modern world. The two basic theories of International Relations which all schools of thought recognize and the International Relations students are most familiar with are Realism and Liberalism. The terms which dominate the International Relations and world politics are state, national interest, power and balance of power, diplomacy, international institutions, globalization. These ideas hold a key position in the foreign policy decision making process.

Introduction:--
These various schools and ideologies of International Relations are produced, interpreted and practiced by the west and were known as English schools. The following of anyone of these schools depends on the national leadership, the advisers, the committees and the decision makers of the foreign policy makers. They give these ideologies a meaning and conceptualize these policy prescriptions and implement them.
These ideologies provide shape and direction to the foreign policy. Realism is the most practiced ideology in today’s political world. The state and the state sovereignty are of absolute importance according to realism and the security of the state is non-negotiable and is the primary objective of the leadership.
Realism believes that states are rational and the self-interest actor supercedes all other motives. The theory of realism prevails in the west and the state sovereignty prevails in almost all issues such as trade, multilateralism and environment.

² Walter Scott Hudson, Foreign Policy: Realism Vs Liberalism, Fightin words usa. word press.com, Feb 2010, P1.
The realism theory completely contrasts with idealism as realism in political world is motivated by competitive self-interest.

i) **Definition and Meaning:-**
Realism theory believes on facts which have a proper reasoning and meaning. The foreseeable consequences of the policies set the attainable objectives. As Richard M. Nixon said, “Power moves the world for good or ill, and no sovereign nation will give up its power ..... not now and not ever.”

### CHAPTER THREE

ii) **Foreign policy and Realism**
In today’s day and age the Foreign Policy is mostly driven by economics which is facing the current reality adequately accurately to ensure the better future of the state.

“Theories always best work in retrospection thereby if we retrospect the cold war era we find out that the realism theory stands vindicated over liberalism theory in regard of cold war.” If liberalism would have been pursued then the right of protection of the state would have been pursued by the US especially after the Cuban missile crisis.

iii) **Morality in Foreign Policy:-**
Realism is all about pragmatism. When we humans as individuals can never portray 100% morality then the question of morality in Foreign Policy is seemed as strange.

Morality does exist on personal level but when we indulge in a fight the animalistic response and the amoral behavior sums it all up. The foreign policy of a nation is based on the security and flourishment of the state.

During the Ossama Bin Laden operation the US Appache helicopters violated the sovereignty of Pakistani soil and conducted the operation but the Pakistani government lied to its people thereby evading morality and being practical and realist that they cannot fight the American Military might.

The world powers control the minor powers that are of strategic importance to them in the region by having their controlled puppets to pursue their agenda and hidden motives.

“If morality was above realism in foreign policy then the US might never had gone into war in Vietnam and Iraq.” The terminology “National Interest” sums

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up the foreign policy of a state. The basic thing is the government is an agent and not a principle. Its prime duty is to safeguard the interests of the national society which it represents and not the moral principles which the individual elements of the society may practice. Some powerful states become so aggressive in the pursuit of the interest of their nation that they become as crusaders and cruelly destruct the other nation states in this regard.

The famous International Relations theorist Joseph Nye describes the basic forms of international politics into as “World imperial system” and a “Feudal system”. In the imperial system one government controls most of the world region like the Roman Empire and the British Empire.6

The superpower states must realize that freedom cannot flourish in those states where the people might be politically free but face poverty and hunger as the prominent realities.

The western region integrated the humanitarian policy with the international security policy. The humanitarian aid became less and the donor government’s saw the Afghan region as a hub of terror and ignored the deprivated people. This clearly shows how foreign policy has nothing to do with ethics most of the times.

iv) National Interest:

Any state which is formulating its relations with other states first and last looks at its security, its losses, gains and benefits this is what in diplomatic language is known as national interest. The interests of other states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations all become secondary and tertiary.

The crux of realist theory in foreign policy is rooted in nation’s interest which ensures its survival. The safeguard, defense and protection of national interest lead to the viability of a state.

Hans Morgenthau a famous European philosopher who is also known as the father of political realism of the 20th century whose book “Politics Among Nations” is considered as the text book for political realism presents the comprehensive view of international politics. He uses the terminologies such as interest and power to sum up the science of national interest.

6 Nye, Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History, 2007, p.3.)
The state institutions are regarded as the champions of safeguarding national interest. The intelligence agencies work in this regard and protect the state interest, promote it whenever possible, and never cross the logical boundaries of the state. The intelligence agencies and the military institutions know them the best and the most.

“From a realist’s point of view the utilization of actors keeps changing. Since realists are practical and pragmatic they only use the non state actors to safeguard their national interest.”

The US in the 80’s used the Afghan “Mujahedeen” to defeat the soviet occupation which served their national interest and now the very same Mujahedeen are labelled as “Terrorists” as it now serves their national interest. This is a very realistic approach by US who uses actors according to their profitability.

“There are no permanent friends and enemies in politics and International Relation it is just the national interest which remains constant.”

The persuasion of national interest in International Relation is just like a company in a market which focuses on the main and basic principle of maximizing its profits otherwise it will not be able to survive similarity the nation states which focus on their national interest pursue their goals.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Cold War in the Perspective of the Political Ideologies:

The most important and definitely changing moment of the 20th century has been the cold war. The peaceful and passive end took everyone by surprise especially the West who had feared a WWIII between the Communist bloc and the West. The academics were debating that how they could not foresee or predict the end of the cold war.

The realism theory provides the analysis of this unpredictable end. The defensive realism strategy was practised by the US and the offensive realism by the former Soviet Union at the end of the cold war.

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8 (Ole R. Holsti, “Theories of International Relations.” In Hogan and Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2004, p.54.)
Defensive realism is when the state or the leader feels threatened and insecure as a result they increase their security by strengthening their military and diplomatic strategies. The US power was declining and perceived aggressive diplomatic strategies. The defensive realism also predicts that due to an external threat the US government started the mobilization of economic, military and human resources and increased the military budget. “By pursuing the defensive realism the US gained a position of strength and as predicted by this theory the US secured itself and became at a relaxing position.”

In offensive realism the states want to maximize their influence on the global political arena mostly when they feel that they are more capable and powerful than other states. As per this theory the states which are in a relative decline pursue the policy of withdrawal. A clear indication of this is that the Soviet Union was at equal par both economically and technologically with the US. The soviets did not have the capability and the resources to build the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The end of the era of “Mutual Assured Destruction” symbolized the beginning of the end of the cold war. “It became clear to both US and the Soviet Union that the Soviet’s relative power was on decline. As true to the offensive realism the soviets began to pull back in order to save themselves and as a result the Red Army pulled out of Eastern Europe.”

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**Differences Between Realism and Idealism:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Idealism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Realism focuses on the reality.</td>
<td>• Idealism is about being optimistic.</td>
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<td>2) Realists are seen as cynical.</td>
<td>• They tend to idealize.</td>
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<td>3) Realists try to implement a minimum common agenda for merely the sake of co – existence.</td>
<td>• They tend to want a global peace and equality among all nation states.</td>
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<td>4) Realists believe in equal rights,</td>
<td>• Idealists in persuasion of an ideal</td>
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9 Jervis, “Realism,” in *Exploration*, p.346.)
11 This figure was prepared by the author.
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<td>rule of law, constitution and well being of the humans but within the parameters of their sovereignty and the border.</td>
<td>society go beyond the domestic government the national border in order to resolve the worldly affairs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5) The state is much more important than any other institution and state has the prime importance.</td>
<td>• Idealists tend to have more international institutions which would govern and protect the world.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6) Despite globalization realism tends to have its own identical culture and protect it from fading out.</td>
<td>• The idealists tend to have a universal culture, norms and have all the same rather than having one’s own identity.</td>
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<td>7) Realists believe in the complete dependence of the state and that national interest of states collides with each other.</td>
<td>• Idealists tend to believe in having more interdependence among states.</td>
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<td>8) The primary component of realism is the interest of the nation.</td>
<td>• Idealism focuses on the welfare of individual in particular and the humanity in general.</td>
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<td>9) The realists face the reality and the state and state institutions are of prime importance. The state machinery supercedes all other players. The strong state is their reality.</td>
<td>• They believe in promoting dialogue, restrain aggression, strengthen international institutions, mediate conflicts, and support humanitarian interventions and the spread of democratic values.</td>
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**CHAPTER SIX**

**Leadership:-**

The role of leadership is of utmost importance in the persuasion of the political ideology of the nation. The ideology of the leadership affects the decision making process.
The realist leaders seek no harm in pursuing relations with the ideological adversaries when it comes to the national interest of their state. The US President Woodrow Wilson was an idealist leader who fought for a long time against his own cabinet to keep the US out of the WWI. He was working to make peace between the Allies and the central powers during the early period of the war. It was Wilson who stressed that US should be neutral without taking sides and he succeeded in it to a large extent. He being an idealist created the international organization League of Nations to put an end to balance of power and maintain peace and security in the world under the international law. Unlike the other US President Theodore Roosevelt who was a realist and persuaded the entrance of US into the war as he said that Germany was a threat to the US national interest. He argued that Germany’s win would threaten the balance of power in Europe which had actually benefited USA. “Woodrow Wilson’s vision gained public support at the end of the war. The idealists thought that better sense must prevail in dealing the international relations, declining war and the money spent on the expenditure of the arms race. The growing middle class made up for the idealistic theory and elected the idealist leader Woodrow Wilson and defeated the realist leader Theodore Roosevelt.”

Jimmy Carter was an idealist and believed in more practice of human rights and even was reluctant to strike first in the Cuban missile crisis. And his leadership did not result in a nuclear war and engaged the ideological different Muslim fighters against the Soviet Union when it was in the national interest of USA.

Role of media:-

Since 21st century is the age of communication the role of media needs to be discussed and evaluated to understand the realism theory in this perspective as well. American media is generally perceived as a free and independent media but during a war or war like situation the media follows the line of the government and works in accordance with the national interest. The reporting during the Afghanistan war is a classic example of this. The media almost became subservient in accordance with the government and most of the time never presented any dissenting view. The media became biased instead of being neutral and reporting objectively showing both sides of the story. The government had put stringent censorship rules and laws to prevent the media from criticizing the government officials. The media hardly paid attention to the civilian casualties in the war torn areas and if it did report the government and pentagon labelled them as propaganda. The press was kept away from reporting the well known information and thus never portrayed the true picture.

12 Dennis Roosevelt, Statecraft: And How to Restore America’s Standing in the World, 2007), p. xi.)
The journalists who tried reporting facts were either fired or faced harassment. The public discourse was never presented a rational view.

The government tried controlling the foreign media by not only treating them harshly but also pressurizing them by their government.

Qatar was asked by US government to censor Al Jazeera and then later bombed its office in Kabul. The Afghanistan radio was also bombed and many civilians died.

**Conclusion:-**

In today’s day and age the political advisors and analysts have become unsure of identifying themselves with realism or idealism or any other ideology. The major political actors and players must emphasis on positive peacemaking and the use of multilateral institutions and strengthen them further. With today’s challenging world situation the foreign policy objectives have many new dimensions with greater responsibility to protect and safeguard the global environment. The cooperation among states needs to be increased with the proper use of the located and unallocated resources and benefit the humanity. The political ideology apart the basic foundation is the human being and the converging point of any theory is the humanity and peace.

Any theory is as good as put into practice and if it is practiced in its true latent and spirit the benefits will trickle down to the common man and work for the progress development and betterment of the humanity as a whole.

The realist theory has reformed itself from the previous centuries. Robert Jervis points out that as compared to the earlier realists who liked war said “many realists study the causes of war in the hope of reducing the chances of future conflict.”

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Walter Scott Hudson, Foreign Policy: Realism Vs Liberalism, Fightin words usa. word press.com, Feb 2010, P1


Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 2007, p.3.)


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