

Lecture No (10).

Subject/ International Political Theory :

The last international problem I want to suggest concerns what we can think of as ethics and justice in international life. The problem has two ways in which it arises. The first is unjust and unethical international actions, be it a war or a foreign policy, for instance. Many of the actions of states, and states in particular, are unjust. They have a moral affront. War crimes, and crimes against humanity have codified the most atrocious kinds of unjust state actions, but the great powers, the US, Russia, and China, for instance, are powerful enough to avoid the law on these matters. The limits of formal international law, however, does not exempt them from the moral charges of ethical and just conduct. There are just and unjust wars.[13] Consider the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The US and coalition forces acted on flimsy intelligence, with unfeasible goals, and in contradiction of international law. Was the invasion ethical? Was it morally justifiable? A clearer example is the case of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The international community did not intervene. Was this

inaction justifiable? Was it ethical? Today we see the emerging norm of the “Responsibility to Protect”, where the moral compulsion to intervene is becoming increasingly recognized, if not codified. Lastly, natural disasters also morally compel action and bring the international into perspective. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and droughts morally compel action by the international community to help. The second way in which the problem of international ethics and justice arises, is in the injustices of the international system itself. The most discussed, by academics, is the problem of distributive justice. This is the issue of the injustice of a system that produces severe poverty for billions, and immense wealth for very few. How is this system justifiable? How can and how should the system be re-organized to produce a just distribution?[14] The problem goes further, once we begin to pose these questions of ethics and justice. If the international community is struggling to achieve its basic goals of peace and sustainable development, is the international system itself justifiable at all? If the division of humankind into multiple political

units creates competing loyalties and moral conflicts between citizens and foreigners, is the organization of humankind into a system of multiple nations states justified?[15] Or, is it a matter of necessity? Political Theory, reaching back to Plato, is about the good state or society. But, International Political Theory, as a special IR problem, is about the good system of states. What is the image of a good international system? What would it look like? Would it even be international? Or, would it be a world polity? On what moral principles would a just system be based? These moral problems, and all the kinds of international problems I have detailed above, bring the international system into focus, into our mind's attention. We often do not notice things until they stop working. You notice when your wifi fails, and you begin asking questions about it. In this way, when the international system fails, when the exclusions and oppressions of identity troubles become apparent, when war and revolution breaks out, when foreign policies become fiascos, where insecurity abounds, when international

organization proves inept, and when international injustice grates our sense of right and wrong, we begin to ask Vattel's questions: What goes on amongst nations necessarily, and what does not? What goes on amongst nations voluntarily, and what cannot