

Q.Criticality discuss the theory of Realism by Morgenthau.

Ans. The realist approach adopted by Morgenthau has some validity in the study of international politics. The study of international politics, after all, is the study of the process in which the interests of some state or states are pursued as against the interests of some other state or states. A scientific study of this process will have to take into account the national interests as they exist in concrete terms and also of the means that are actually employed by various states to achieve those interests. In other words, one has to take care of the study of conflict of interests. But conflict of interests is only one of the aspects of international politics and not the sole aspect.

are also relevant to international politics.

Morgenthau's theory provides a guide to the study of one aspect of international politics, that is, conflict of interests, but not to that of other aspects. Thus it is a partial approach to international politics. If it is a partial approach to, or say, a partial theory of international

politics, it is an even more partial theory of international relations because international relations is much too wider a phenomenon than international politics. Even if Morgenthau's realist approach is accepted as an approach to the study of international politics with its partial relevance, it cannot be accepted as an approach to the study of international relations unless international politics is identified with international relations.

As Morgenthau himself has made it clear, his theory is based on his concept of human nature. But his concept of human nature is beset by a number of difficulties. In a general sense, human nature is responsible for all human actions. Therefore, to say that international behaviour emanates from human nature does not really explain anything. Morgenthau's concept of human nature is unscientific because science consists of theories or hypotheses whose truth or validity has to be established by critical experiment or testing. But Morgenthau's theory is based not on such hypotheses but on what

Benno Wasseriaan calls absolute and unverifiable essentialist laws. Thus Morgenthau is the prisoner of his own assumptions. The result is that his assumptions force both his analysis and conclusion to be in line with his advance judgement. If one starts with the conviction that all men and all states seek power, international relations will appear as battlefields of unending clashes of power and periods of peace will be treated as deviations from the rule. Yet Morgenthau talks of peace as a desirable and even preferable state of international relations. The point is that it often becomes difficult to know whether Morgenthau is trying to describe reality or is looking into reality for an illustration for his preconceived ideas.

These difficulties raise a point about the “reality” of Morgenthau’s theory. On the one hand, Morgenthau gives laws which supposedly determine the actual behaviour of states and, on the other, he complains that American foreign policy ought to follow these laws.” At places, his

writings are purely descriptive of what happens in the actual field of international politics. But at other times, he gives an impression of advising leaders of states to follow certain ways.

Morgenthau claims that his theory is based upon what actually happens. Yet he also complains that what actually happens does not always conform to his theory. He clearly states that actual foreign policy can hardly live up to the theory of power presented by him. According to him, a perfect theory of balance of power will scarcely be found in reality and hence "reality, being deficient in this respect, must be understood and evaluated as an approximation to an ideal system of balance of power.

This inconsistency is traceable to two main sources of Morgenthau's thought. One is an uneasy combination of empirical and normative elements in the theory and the other is the conflict between Morgenthau's pessimistic, deterministic views of human nature and his faith that man can influence his own fate. He is presenting not only an observable fact but also

an ideal to be achieved Morgenthau holds that experience shows that not all statesmen have thought in these terms. Thus his assumption about the power drive is not only indicative of the reality of the behaviour of those statesmen who understand it but also a norm for those who do not understand it. Morgenthau's assumptions presume not only to describe reality but also to alter it. They are given to us not only as rules to which realities conform but also as norms to which realities must conform. The most significant examples of norms in Morgenthau's theory are his concept of a completely rational foreign policy and his scheme of balance of power. On a close examination, therefore, it would appear that Morgenthau's theory is not merely "realist" but is also normative and value-oriented.

The other source of inconsistency in Morgenthau is to be found in his inability to hold on to his pessimistic, deterministic views about human nature. In his scheme man is destined to live with "unresolvable discord, contradictions,

and conflicts which are inherent in the nature of things and which human reason is powerless to solve." If this is so, international politics can be viewed only as an endless struggle for power and a rational foreign policy which Morgenthau suggests as a norm to be attained will vary from state to state. A clash of interests will then be a clash of rational foreign policies. The difficulty arises in Morgenthau's theory from the fact that the pessimistic, deterministic views about human nature are held only partially and not taken to their logical conclusion.

The failure of the realist theory to see national interest in terms of its interpretation is also responsible for its inadequacy to explain the behaviour of states, which is one of the chief functions of any theory of international relations. The realist theory fails to perform this function because it does not make the distinction between national interest and interpretations of national interest. It does not make a distinction between the nature of reality and the

interpretation of reality. The failure to do so emanates from the fact that the realist theory ignores that we can know only apart and not the whole of reality. Nor can we know how much remains hidden because we cannot know how much has to be discovered. As such, whatever the statesman knows about the world of reality with which he has to deal is only a partial awareness of reality. It also follows that this partial awareness is not the total reality or total fact because there is much more which has to be known but which remains undiscovered. What the realist theory regards as facts or reality is partial awareness of or interpretation of facts, not the facts themselves.