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Utopian or True?: The Theories of International Relations vis-a-vis Mahabharata with Special Reference to the Afghan Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The world we see today is shaped by various material as well as normative factors. Our culture, our values, our ethos, our common perspective- all of them shape the way in which we interact with each other in the society. Even in a global setting, the ways in which one nation interacts with another nation is largely determined by the established theories of International Relations. Speaking of history, India has a lustrous line ups of endless epics that act as a moral backbone for the people in their endeavors. One question that arises in this regard is that are these epics just stories with a strong moral background or are they relevant in today's context as well? If so, then can they be used to solve the real life scenarios in a global setting? This paper analyses the same questions raised in light of one of the most celebrated epics in India- the Mahabharata.

Keywords: Mahabharata, International Relations, History, Global Politics, Epic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Utopian to one, voluminous to the other, while a way of life to someone else; Mahabharata, the Epic has withstood the ravages of time and stands still to prove the generations that even the verses of God could be interpreted by the mortal beings, with a little knowledge of space and time and the mysterious ways the world works to become an ever-propelling force to reckon with. Composed by Maharishi Veda Vyas and written by Lord Ganesha, this Epic is undoubtedly the longest epic ever penned. The epic imbibes in it, approximately 100,000 couplets with 1.8 million words and is ten times lengthier than the combined length of Iliad and Odyssey and thrice as long as the Bible.

This abysmal tale of animosity between brothers of a family is more than a quest for the throne and the vengeance of the disrobed dignity of their wife, rather a never exhaustible reservoir of morality in the world today. Even though it was written around 400 BC to 400 CE ago, the epic remains to be the torchlight of the lost wanderer in the forest of naivety. The Mahabharata is

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not the tale of Kurukshetra's bitter war, rather a magnum opus of how the truth prevails over deception and maliciousness.

All of the above deliberations hold for the context of philosophy; bringing out the virtues and vices of human beings in the form of epic tales of the past to set an example for generations to come. However, the contention becomes a bit dicey when we try to make an inward look into the relevance of the same in today's world. While some might feel that this is a beautifully woven verse by the God, spoken to be the Pole Star of the lot wanderer in the Ocean of Self Doubt and lack of morality, some might feel that it is very utopian and may associate it with something that's no better than a tale built on moral high grounds. But, this contention is nothing more than a mere fallacy.

Most of the modern-day international tactics and practices can be related to these ancient epics. In light of the following discussion, the following examples substantiate the stance of the author: The concept of a 'Sovereign State' and Statism could be matched with the description of 'Indrapastha' kingdom, The role of Lord Krishna as a mediator before the great war of Kurukshetra can very evidently be related to the art of Diplomacy in the international scenario, and finally, the alliances of Pandavas and Kauravas can be the paragon of what we call a balance of power today.

The majestic 18 (eighteen) Parvas of the epic efficiently describe the vastitude of International relations; like the Sabha Parva directly relates to the concepts of Sovereignty and Statism and Machiavellian Maxims, the Udyoga Parva to that of Realism, and the Shanti Parva to that of the principles of modern-day administration.

Hence, it is essential to have a deep-sighted look into the various theories of International Relations in the world today. The following section of the paper discusses the same:

(A) Literature Review:

The world is more or less a big society, with various nation-states as the people who dwell in it. As we all know, that human nature is grounded in the values of conflict as well as that of cooperation, the discussion becomes even more interesting when we try to analyze how one sovereign state reacts to the other in the global scenario. Hence, we gauge the need for observing *International Relations* in today's world.

The following sections in the Literature Review discuss the concept of International Relations, its relevance in the global politics, its history and the various theories of International Relations with their critical analysis.

(C) Research Methodology:

The research paper is based on the analysis and review of qualitative data that has been accessed from articles, magazines, books, newspapers, journals, and web sources.

II. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A SINE-QUA-NON IN GLOBAL POLITICS

International relations is the study of the relations of states with each other and with international organizations and certain sub national entities (e.g., bureaucracies, political parties, and interest groups). It is related to a number of other academic disciplines, including politics, geography, history, economics, law, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. (McClelland & Pfaltzgraff, 2019).

It addresses the most pressing problems shaping the lives of everyone on the planet: matters of war and peace, the organization of the global economy, the causes and consequences of global inequality, the pending global environmental catastrophe, to name just a few of the most obvious. (Owens et al., 2018, p. 6).

Just the way criminology determines the reason why crimes occur in society, Physics explains how fundamental forces of nature react with each other, the same way, International Relations explains how different states react with each other; they may come into a pact with each other to achieve their common goals or may wage war against each other in order to claim the sole authority over the resources.

The regime of international relations is fairly a new one; it emerged in the early 20th century as an offspring of the heated relations of the United Nations and the Soviet Union and has transcended through the two World Wars and a Cold War. The study of international relations is the heart of Diplomacy and Foreign Policy.

The study of International Relations imbibes in it, a host of other disciplines such as: Law, Geography, History, Gender Studies, Political Science, Postcolonial Studies, etc. (Owens et al., 2018, p. 7).

Now that we have gained a brief insight into what International Relations are, what they mean and how important they are, we could now divulge into the discussion about the theories of International Relations.

III. THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Why does one country support No-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty while others don't? Why did some country resort to the Western Bloc while some others to the Eastern Bloc, and some formed the Non-Alignment? Why do many countries around the world lash a specific nation

for fostering Terrorism? Why do some countries abstain from signing treaties while some base their laws of the land on it? -in order to ponder the question, we need to efficiently look into the historical background of the happenings to grasp a better understanding of the question. However, this hunch becomes a lot tedious than interesting. That's the point where the Theories come in handy.

According to Owens et al., (2018):

"Theory is a kind of simplifying device that allows you to decide which historical or contemporary facts matter more than others when trying to develop an understanding of the world. A good analogy is using sunglasses with different-coloured lenses: put on the red pair and the world looks red; put on the yellow pair and it looks yellow. The world is not any different; it just looks different." (p. 8).

Hence, it can be concluded that the 'Theories' are a helping hand when it comes to analyzing the global scenario because History is conglomeration of facts and hearsay. Hence, these Theories remove the burden of the same. However, the problem arises when the History merges with that of Ideology and many a times people are of the opinion that their ideology is more apt and just than their counterparts. Take for example, the Realists think that their view of seeing the world through the red lenses of pessimism is more apt in explaining International Relations, which is contradicted by the Idealists who claim that man by nature is cooperative and diplomatic and believes in the survival and betterment of all. (Owens et al., 2018, p. 8).

We now come to the crux of the entire discussion in the literature review. The upcoming sections very critically analyze the existing theories of International Relations and how influential/apt they have been in the recent years:

(A) Realism:

As the name suggests, the Realist theory of IR is something that reckons with the state of being 'Real' or 'apt' which is true as this theory has been very much influential in explaining the IR in the dynamics of Global Politics.

At its very heart, Realism is grounded with the ideals of Pessimism that embraces the darker side of human nature. It is a brainchild of Hans J. Morgenthau. For him, human nature is driven by the forces of Jealousy and Selfishness and that man always has a never-ending hunger for power. Morgenthau (1973) defines power as, *"Man's control over the minds and actions of other man."* This 'lust' for power preoccupies the central position in the Realist theory of IR.

The Realist theory of IR lays more emphasis on the centrality of power and that conflict among

the nations is inevitable. (Dunne and Schmidt 2019: 132). There is an ever present threat of war among the nations. This discourse also gives way to ‘Group Egoism’ where one group deems that they’re better and different from the other groups in various aspects. The realists seek to manage conflicts than really removing them in toto as viewed by the idealists. There are a set of people who would benefit from the status quo and some would benefit from the changing of the status quo. Realism embraces them all.

The main proponents of realism are Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes and Machiavelli. The following figure gives us a clear idea of the taxonomy:

NAME OF THE PROPONENT:	IDEAS PUT FORTH:
Thucydides	International politics is driven by an endless struggle for power, which has its roots in human nature. Justice, law, and society either have no place or are circumscribed.
Machiavelli	Political realism recognizes that principles are subordinated to policies; the ultimate skill of a state leader is to accept and adapt to changing political and power configurations in world politics.
Hobbes	Human beings have an insatiable lust for power. Life in the state of nature, which is similar to the condition of world politics, is full of fear and worry about violent death.

Realism operates on mainly three elements: (i) **Statism**, which means that the state is the sole player in the international relations and that there are no individual participants. The state is the collective representative of the goals and aspirations of its people. (Dunne and Schmidt 2019: 138). (ii) **Survival**, which means that all the states have one fundamental interest- to thrive and develop in the global scenario. It can be considered as the universal national interest of each of the nations. (Dunne and Schmidt 2019: 139) and (iii) **Self-help**, which means that each state actor is responsible for ensuring its own well-being and survival because there is an ever-present threat of war and the formation of alliances isn’t possible due to the vindictive nature of humans. (Dunne and Schmidt 2019:140).

The Realism has taken various forms since its inception and has transcended from eras to eras and decades to decades. The **Classical Realists** stress on the establishment of sovereign state is the only escape route from constant state of war of state of nature to a civilized condition.

(Dunne and Schmidt 2019: 136).

The ***Neo-Classical Realism*** hunches for a ‘dual morality’ system where it states that morality should be different for individual and public sphere. (Dunne and Schmidt 2019: 138). According to them, International politics should be guided by situational ethics and political wisdom- prudence, judgment, resolve, courage and moderation etc.

However, there have been several criticisms of Realist theory. Now, we look into the counterpart of it; the Idealist Theories of International Relations:

(B) Idealism:

Idealism can be considered as an anti-thesis to that of Realism. While Realism sees the shady side of the human nature, Idealism looks into the brighter side of it. It uses the lenses of Optimism to view the world in a newfound way.

Idealism, as the name might suggest, is something that instills a sense of being utopian or impossible to occur or achieve or rather impractical. The examples can include vouching for a global scenario where the states do not possess any nuclear weapon with them, or maybe the countries submitting their security needs to the UN, or maybe think for the global eradication of pauper health and insecurities.

Idealists emphasize the power of reason to overcome prejudice and counteract the machinations of sinister forces. They believe that the spread of education and democracy—including increasing democratic control of foreign policy—will empower world public opinion, and make it a powerful force that no government can resist. They view war as a disease of the international body politic, contrary to the interests of all but a few special interests and unrepresentative governments. (Wilson 2011).

In a nutshell, the Idealists see that social harmony is present at the heart of the International Relations. In the global scenario, people have different ideologies, faith and identities that should be accommodated by all for ensuring peace among the nations. They envision that soon, diplomacy and law institutions would replace power and strife.

However, it has been ridiculed much by various Realists, contending that the Idealist principles are based on the very seeds of Utopianism and do not hold well in the present context of Global Politics.

(C) Constructivism:

In a layman’s language, Constructivism can be thought of as a diverging point of both Realism as well as Idealism. ‘Constructivism is about human consciousness and its role in international

life' (Ruggie 1998: 856). Constructivism differs itself from neo-realism and neo-liberalism by highlighting and illuminating the ontological reality of inter-subjective knowledge.

Material world does not totally determine how people, or states, behave. Material world shapes and is shaped by social world. Constructivists are not anti-realists or anti-liberals. Their emphasis on inter-subjective world makes them stand in different position from neo-realists and neo-liberalists.

Constructivism theory and theory that constructivists build, thus, are also socially constructed. Constructivism does not build subject –object relation between researchers and what they try to understand. Constructivists only used bracketing strategy when analyzing evidences: *first*, bracketing agency and social structure, then bracketing material structure and agency, and at last, bracketing material structure and social structure; or the otherwise.

Constructivism recognizes the importance of discursive power (knowledge, ideas, culture, language, and ideology) as well as material power. Both powers interact to construct the world order. By identifying the role identity of other states, a state will know with which states it should cooperate and impose assertiveness. The key concepts of Constructivism include: *Agent–structure problem, Constructivism, Idealism, Identity, Individualism, and normative structure*.

The abovementioned theory is very much justified as it embraces the harmoniously both the good as well. Hence, this can be a firm ground for laying the brick of trusting among the nation-states in the global scenario.

(D) Functionalism:

1. According to Imber (2020), “**Functionalism** is an approach to the formation of international organizations that advocates international cooperation on scientific, humanitarian, social, and economic issues.
2. The idea of functionalism is foundationed on the grounds of cooperation. It believes that trust and mutual cooperation between the government and the various functionaries of the states is the penultimate way of ensuring their fair share of development in the global scenario.

The basic motive of functionalism, according to Imber (2020) is to form various international bodies or functionaries who have some amount of power vested in them and they cooperate with their other counterparts in order to see the face of development in the future.

The main proponent of the theory was David Mitrany (1888-1975) who advocated that the core

idea of Functionalism lies in the fact that the states should cooperate with each other in a non-political context (like- Global Warming, Green Treaties, etc.) and must strive together collectively for establishing a common goal. (Newton 2020: 35)

Functionalism actively fosters globalization and promotes strategy making. It includes various skills and assets in the purview of it like that of scientific knowledge and strategy and various non-political ideas that shape the policy making of a nation. It very conveniently departs from realism in the lines that it gives the various small groups and inter groups more importance than the state itself. (Newton 2020: 34).

The very concept of Functionalism also imbibes in it Neo-Functionalism. Neo-functionalism reintroduced territorialism in the functional theory and downplayed its global dimension. Neo-functionalism is simultaneously a theory and a strategy of regional integration, building on the work of David Mitrany. Neo-functionalists focused their attention solely on the immediate process of integration among states, i.e. regional integration.

Initially, states integrate in limited functional or economic areas. Thereafter, partially integrated states experience increasing momentum for further rounds of integration in related areas. This "invisible hand" of integration phenomenon was termed "spill-over" by the neo-functional school. Neo-functionalism declared to be non-normative and tried to describe and explain the process of regional integration based on empirical data. (Newton 2020: 34).

The above mentioned theories were some of the most conveniently used theories in the realms of international relations. The findings and discussions would provide a new lens to look through in it vis-à-vis Mahabharata.

IV. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

From the above sections, it can be most conveniently be formed that Mahabharata is the moral code of human life, whereas theories of International Relations are the guiding codes for Global Politics, Policy decisions and Diplomacy. While one ponders on the question how mankind behaves and responds to a situation and the ramifications of it, he can refer to the Mahabharata and while one ponders on the question why different states behave differently, then one could turn up to the theories of International Relations to draw a conclusion.

Having discussed the relevant literatures on the theories of International Relations, we now come to the stage where the same context would be analyzed in light of the Epic, Mahabharata. This section seeks to do a contrasting study of the nature of the Characters and some of the most prominent events in the Epic in light of the theories of International Relations in order to

frame a conclusion whether or not the theories of International Relations could be applied and be relevant to something that happened decades ago

(A) Yudhistira- An Idealist:

Also known as the ‘Dharmaraja’ or the righteous ruler, the Character of Yudhisthira is foundationed on the virtues of truth and honesty. He was the eldest and indeed the wisest son of King Pandu and Queen Kunti. For a major part of her life, Kunti served to Rishi Durvasa, a well known saint in terms of extreme tempers and spiritual powers. Deeply exhilarated by her unpeered discipline and devotion, Rishi Durvasa granted her a boon which entailed her with the ability to summon 5 (five) gods to bless her with their abilities and powers through her conceived baby. Since King Pandu was cursed by a Brahmin that if he ever consummated his marriage, he would meet his death, the birth of the Pandavs were unusual. With a humble wish of having a son who is well versed with the value of Dharma (Righteousness), Kunti summoned Yama and was blessed with Yudhisthira.

Yudhisthira was trained in the fields of religious education, public policy, state administration and military arts. It is believed that Yudhisthira never deviated from resorting to what was at the side of the truth and is also known as ‘Ajatshatru’, the one who has no enemy. No material pleasures of life could ever intimidate him to dissuade from the path of Satya and Dharma. Representing the positive aspects of humanity, Yudhisthira even banned Casteism in his state to prevent dishonor to the human race of a particular sect.

When the conflict between Pandavas and Kauravas deepened, he didn’t resort to violence; rather, he parted amicably with the land of Khandavprastha, which later developed as Indraprastha. Even after spending fourteen years in exile, when Shakuni and Kauravas denied to give them Indraprastha back, he tried to talk it out amicably than using brute force. It was only after Lord Krishna’s advice that he went on a war with his kith and kins.

Contrasting the above character sketch of Yudhisthira with the core ideas of Idealism; Optimism, Non-violence, Amicable settlement of conflicts, Reasoning, Science, Education, Transparency, Reformation of the morally degraded, Eliminating war, Morality in judgments and truth between the nations, we find that Yudhisthira is the paragon of the Idealist theory of International Relations. His ideals and principles can be safely be presumed to be those of Diplomacy, Settling of strained relations by deliberation and pacts and not by violence and arms struggle which are akin to Idealist theory of International Relations. **Hence, King Yudhisthira was an Idealist.**

(B) The Kauravas- The Realists:

The Kauravas, even though the kins of the Pandavas, were no less than their arch nemesis. The epic very meticulously describes the rivalry that was thriving between the brothers that led to an outburst of passion in the form of the Kurukshetra war. The same can be contrasted with that of the Global Scenario as well. When one country grows to power and acceptance, the other countries get jealous of their development and try to block them off.

The Kauravas are the in-life description of Pessimism. They represent jealousy, viciousness and malice. Throughout their lifetime, they sought the throne- the ultimate instrumentality to control the Kingdom and to assume the power, the power to control the lives and actions of their brothers- substantiating Morgenthau's 'Lust of Power'.

From the reading of the epic, it is very evident that the Kauravas always resorted to war. War was their general conduit of claiming power. For examples, before the inception of the Kurukshetra war, Lord Krishna went as a mediator to look for sorting out the heated status quo to the Kauravas. Duryodhan instantly declined his proposal and even shunned him with nasty words. (*The Bhagwad Gita*, Chapter 9, Verse 29). This can be contrasted with the major attribute of Realism; where the Realists contend that war is inevitable among the nations and that there is always a heated condition in the Global Scenario.

Delving deep into the text, we arrive at another conclusion. The Kauravas always thought that they were superior than the Pandavas in many respects. Being the offspring of the King, they were more swayed in the flavors of claiming their Royalty and legitimacy over the throne and that the Pandavas were no better than mere imposters. This is exactly resembling to that of 'Group Egoism' in the Realist Theory of IR, where one group thinks that they are better than others in one or more aspects. (Dunne and Schmidt 2019: 132).

We could also observe the prevalence of dual morality in this context. The concept of dual morality states that the actors in the global political scenario possess two kinds of morality: one, among themselves/individually and the other, with other nation-state actors in the realm of Global Politics. The same can be inferred in the case of Kauravas as well. The Kaurav brothers had an unbreakable bond among them but were very much vindictive about their counterparts; the Pandavas.

On the basis of the above discussions, we can clearly note that many features of Realism can very well be imputed to that of the Kauravas. ***Hence, the Kauravas are realists.***

(C) Shakuni- The Machiavellian Maxims:

If the credit for envisioning the entire concept of the Mahabharata is goes to Krishna, the credit for materializing it must go to Shakuni. Synonymous with wickedness, deception and malice, Shakuni is the man behind the feud between the brothers.

Shakuni's character is often seen as something that's always conspiring, anticipating and forward thinking. He is the perfect depiction of the Machiavellian Maxim. The following contrast could be considered:

Maxim: ***"Be aware of what is happening."***

Relation: Shakuni was always alert about the incidents that took place around him. He very meticulously moulded the situation to achieve his selfish means. The entire war of Mahabharata was the story of Shakuni's revenge of the defeat of Gandhar by Hastinapur. He set out on a mission to avenge all the injustices caused by the course of action. Throughout Mahabharata, only Shakuni could sniff out what Krishna's plans were and could plan a counter accordingly. Hence, if there was someone other than Krishna himself who knew what's happening around, it ought to be Shakuni.

Maxim: ***"Do not wait for things to happen."***

Relation: Shakuni was the master of anticipation. Even before the Kauravas were born, he had a well chalked out plan fixated in his mind to avenge his fallen pride. He instigated the Kauravas (especially Duryodhan) against the Pandavas. All the malicious events like: *the game of dice, poisoning of Bheem's food, building the lakshyagraha out of wax so that it melts, and planning the death of Abhimanyu*- were the brainchild of our beloved 'Mama'.

Maxim: ***"Anticipate the motives and actions of others."***

Relation: Shakuni was very much aware of what was coming towards him. In the game of the dice, he had very cleverly charted out the ways in which he could defeat Yudhishthira. He commanded the dies to present a preferable digit when rolled, ultimately leading to Duryodhan winning the game and the shameful disrobing of Draupadi.

Guided by the instincts of anticipation, preparedness and deception, it is very clearly noted that Shakuni was an unmatched example of the application of various Machiavellian Maxims. His cunning motives and his constant urge of deception is what always kept him on the top of his feet, giving him a better foot over his counterparts. Even though it cost him his life, but since he was the depiction of the Machiavellian Maxims, he was able to ace all the counters made by Krishna and was able to avenge his fallen pride from Hastinapur.

(D) Lord Krishna- A Constructivist:

Constructivism is the most practical of all the theories of International Relations. Constructivism takes into its account the material world as well as the subjective knowledge. Both material world and intersubjective knowledge are not independent. They have relative autonomy. Material world does not totally determine how people, or states, behave. It only limits the possibility of interpretation and intersubjective world that people can construct.

Notwithstanding their ability to discern, people are unable to freely interpret the material world and their own social world. The social environment is always shadowed by a limit of interpretation. The social environment both shapes and is shaped by the material world. (Nugroho 2008: 88)

People abduct certain meanings, connect them to other meanings, build new meanings through dialectic discourses, construct inter-subjective meanings by institutionalizing meanings, and refer to previously built inter-subjective meanings in order to describe reality in the material world. (Nugroho 2008: 89)

Now let us discuss about the central character of the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna. Krishna was a guide, philosopher and the moral backbone of the Pandavas. Even though he didn't use his weapons in the war, it was his wisdom and teachings that helped his 'Parth' to ace the battle of Kurukshetra.

He was a very good strategist as well. He not only prepared the Pandavas for the war of Kurukshetra by backing them up with defense and offense strategy but also taught them to make the most of the situation before them. For instance, during their exile, it was Krishna who suggested Arjuna to set out on a quest for Divyatra, Bhima to pray to lord Hanuman to be blessed with his skills and endurance, which became crucial in the war, and Yudhisthira to acquire teachings from the saints which proved to be helpful in the Shanti Parva and the Anushasana Parva. Hence, the concept of 'Strategy' which forms a part and parcel of Constructivism can be contrasted through the character of Krishna in light of Mahabharata.

Addressing the question of Morality Vs Materialism, Krishna was a Constructivist in this regard as well. When Arjuna and Duryodhana had arrived at his doorstep, longing for resources in which Arjuna sought the Moral aid of him while Duryodhana was left contended with the 18 (Eighteen) Akshyorani Army of Krishna, standing straight, undefeated. Here, we could observe the integration of moral and material decisions in terms of shaping the relations between two sovereigns. Since Krishna was a God, he was aloof from the material pleasures of life and Arjuna, being a Kshyatriya, had reckoned the same, hence, this is an accurate

representation of another side of Constructivism; the Materialism and the Morality. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that ***Krishna was a Constructivist***.

The above analysis of the characters and events of Mahabharata outright substantiate the fact that the Passage of events of Mahabharata are not just mere stories of high moral ground, rather, have a great semblance with the theories of International Relations and hence, inferences could be drawn and teaching could be concerned when there arises a quandary of policy making or fostering international relations between two nation-states.

V. LIMITATIONS

The paper uses relevant Literatures to chart out various findings and discussions and finally puts out the discussion in light of Mahabharata and the Theories of International Relations. However, it is subjected to the following limitations:

- **Subjectivity:** The paper is essentially based on the interpretation of the epics in light of the religious knowledge possessed by the author. The interpretations might be subjected to a change when seen from a different set of religious beliefs or with a different viewpoint.
- **Applicability:** It is pretty evident that each character in the Mahabharata has a set of very different characteristics and hence, not all the theories of International Relations could apply to all the characters in the epic, nor would one theory of International Relations is ought to be applied to the other with same/similar character traits.
- **Exhaustibility:** The contrast is not just limited to the theories of IR only. There are several other theories/doctrines that could be applied to check their validity in light of Mahabharata, like the concept of '*Balance of Power*' between the Kauravas and Pandavas.
- **Availability of Secondary Sources:** The paper's ambit was mostly curbed due to the paucity of Secondary sources available for using as relevant literatures to be reviewed.

VI. FUTURE SCOPE

Since the paradigms of Global Politics are dynamic, new theories could be established, newer interpretations of the epic could be propounded, more literature could be written in this regard, and hence, this exposes the research work to a lot of future scope of development.

Discussions:

The deliberations on the findings lead us to the conviction that indeed, the Mahabharata has a

semblance to that of the modern day theories of International Relations. Yet, the theories are mere contemplation of something that's highly text book in nature or a long forgotten history. There arises a question in big bold letters: *Can any global political event be ever related to Mahabharata in light of theories of International Relations?*

We answer the question by taking into focus, the most burning issue of the Global Scenario today- The Taliban Crisis in Afghanistan. Let us now analyze the same through the lenses of Mahabharata.

The Afghan Crisis- A game of Dice?

The Taliban Crisis has been a dreadful event whose ripples still wrench the guts of people around the world. The abysmal tale of Human Rights crisis, ruckus throughout the country, piteous condition of the people, the return of the Country to the times of a misogynist and female- oppressive regime is something that closely resembles the game of dice in Mahabharata. Now, let us join the dots.

While our quest for relating the Afghan Crisis to that of Mahabharata, it has to be kept in mind that we shouldn't be too much theological that we lose our rationality and consider the crisis to be an offshoot of Gandhari's curse to Shakuni. We ought to use the recent happenings to substantiate our stance by something that's factual.

Coming to the point of discussion, the withdrawal of US from Afghanistan, their disregard to the lives of the people of Afghanistan, saving their men, and then finally staying mum on the crisis is akin to the condition of Bhishma, Dhritarashtra and Guru Dronacharya.

Just the way they both taught the Kauravas to fight and were ultimately betrayed by their tactful deceit and disrobing of Draupadi, the same way, US, who virtually funded and fostered Taliban (then, Mujahideen) during the Cold War period to counter the entry of Soviet Union, ultimately led to the Jihad, or the unholy war. Seeing the plague spread, the US did try to do some damage control but, 20 years of war, trillions of revenue spent and unfathomed number of soldiers killed, all in vain. The plight and the guilt of US is very much congruent to that of the Kuru seniors.

Contrasted to the failure, survivor's guilt, and the anguish of US, China has come to the surface in this issue by being the 'Shakuni' of the Global Politics. Just like Shakuni was fueled by his vengeance to make the Kauravas pay for his condition and to make a profit out of it, China supporting Taliban to satisfy its economic interests is something that fits the shoe.

Very recently in August, China signed a diplomatic contract with Taliban in Kabul in order to

facilitate a channel between the counties via roadways (Belt and Road Initiative) for the easy passage of minerals (like Lithium, Coal, Natural Gas, Oil, Petroleum, etc.) and other resources from Afghanistan to China.

In return, China ensures two things; Political support and Investment. China is also in an alarmed state of the rise of Uyghurs, just the way Shakuni was, from the intervention of Krishna. None the less, China demonstrates a perfect example of Neo-Liberalism with a tint of Realism and group egoism.

We now come down to one of the most prominent names in world terrorism, Pakistan. The relation between Pakistan and Taliban (Afghanistan) is that of Duryodhan and Dushasan. They are, as claimed by Afghan Former President Hamid Karzai (2004-2014) “inseparable brothers”. Pakistan is always apprehensive of the west and has always sought for allies. Given that Taliban has now assumed the control of Afghanistan, we could possibly see an alliance coming up. With China’s economic support, they all pose serious terror for India. Pakistan too, is a Neo-Liberalist as well as a Realist in this case.

It is indisputably true that the story of Mahabharata is the tale of how the five Pandavas waged a ‘Dharmyudh’ to avenge the fallen pride of their wife. The game of dice ended with something that changed the fate of Draupadi entirely. She was disrobed, loathed upon, and was subjected to numerous injustices. The same is the fate of women in today’s Afghanistan.

Taliban’s rule has pushed Afghanistan to the stone-age, blatantly ignoring the Human Rights of Women and making them no more than a chattel. Women are prohibited from attending schools; they had to resign from work place; burqha being a compulsion, they have to be escorted by the men of their families while commuting. Rapes of minors, sodomy, bestiality are something which one would hear on an everyday basis.

Finally, we come to the piteous condition of Yudhisthira. Bound by his Dharma, and deceived by the Kauravas, he could do nothing but just stand and watch. The same is the condition of (Former) President Ghani.

Ghani was no less than a puppet with the hands of the US. When US and Taliban had deliberations in the early phase of 2021, he was kept out of it and that eventually led to him being a puppet (yet again) in the hands of the Taliban. All he could do was to sit and just watch his nation fall.

With the above inferences made, there arises a question as to *how should India respond to it?* The same will be taken up in the following section:

VII. CONCLUSION

With China, Pakistan and Afghanistan coming together and US withdrawing from Afghanistan, all eyes are on India as to how it would react on the matter. Yet again, we can use the teachings and events of Mahabharata.

In the epic, Lord Krishna, though played a pivotal role, he was never a direct stakeholder in any of the events that led up to the great war. Even in the game of dice, he passively helped Draupadi. India should also stay silent on the face of it, but must extend a hand of help passively and form alliances as well. India must take active strides to prevent the rampant violation of Human Rights as it has contributed heavily to Afghanistan's infrastructural development. It should stand against the injustices against women and children and the gross violation of civil rights.

The second contention is that India should help the various instrumentalities in their quest of overthrowing Taliban. India's support to Ahmad Shah Massoud holds a great semblance to that of Krishna helping the Pandavas. India has provided him with weapons, guns, clothes, medical facilities, financial aid and other amenities as well. Even though Krishna didn't show any signs or resentment to that of Kauravas prima facie but, he did help in his own capacity by aiding and advising the Pandavas in their quest for achieving their success in the Dharmayudh. We could see light at the end of the tunnel.

Mahabharata presents an excellent detail of strategy making and diplomacy. The Shanti Parva contained in the epic gives a brilliant explanation of the same. In Shanti Parva, Bhishma says that a King must make allies, even with his enemies to make their goals and political interest meet.

Moreover, Bhishma also said that one should never abandon his old friends. One must never disown his friends like King Drupada did to Drona, which eventually led to war and mass killings. In the times of need, India must stand with Afghanistan and must extend a helping hand to his friend. It must very tactically form the alliances and must defend the interests of it in the global politics. This, in essence is India's Dharma. India should take active strides in fulfilling its national interests, keeping in mind, the condition of Afghanistan and the way it would affect its international relations. As Krishna very rightly said:

“Karmanye-*v* vādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchanamā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmanī” - (The Bhagwad Gita, Chapter-2, Verse- 47)

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