

## **KANT'S IDEAL OF THE WORLD REPUBLIC AND PERPETUAL PEACE**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the philosophical and political concepts of Kant's world republic, which he saw as the only way to achieve perpetual peace.

In his essay "Toward Perpetual Peace: a philosophical sketch" he advocates the idea that political peace between states takes the form of an alliance for peace, which also differs from the peace treaty and the world republic because it seeks to end all wars, he further anticipates that the first intends to end a started war.

Kant believes that every nation has the right of war, while on the flip side he also states that it is the greatest evil of humanity, because even its end cannot ever guarantee lasting peace, and instead it often happens to initiate and trigger another war.

Kant also claimed that: "*Nothing prevents the world to turn into an endless grave and continuous peace is in a cemetery.*" According to him, this is the main reason why he strongly insists on practical reasons for achieving the so-called perpetual peace. When it comes to this ideal Kant has won all the fronts even though sometimes his interpretations may be in conflicting positions.

**Keywords:** *World republic, perpetual peace, cosmopolitanism, alliances*

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### **Introduction**

Kant has never been considered as important thinker on political thought, it may be said that he is rarely involved in narratives of political thought, and never counted as the original pioneer and contributor who managed to surpass his predecessors, but indeed a thinker dominated by a confusing mix of both Enlightenment and conservative elements, respectively radical ones. But Kant has left profound traces in particular philosophical aspects; in this respect he is often regarded as a German theorist of French Revolution, continuing the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau and Locke.

The reason behind this claim is the fact that he never wrote any major work in this field, sometimes dealing with such issues but he has never created a systematic approach in this regard, something which we can easily find in the critical period.

The essay "*Towards Perpetual Peace*", which takes the form of an international treaty, serves as a starting point for the eternal and Perpetual Peace Project, by the mere fact that it encourages a new world order.

In this essay he further elaborates his revolutionary idea that world peace is possible without a supranational authority, but that it can be possible as a result of a voluntary alliance between the states. The idea of perpetual peace represents the culmination of his political thought,

and on the other side it is also presented as a law of reason, respectively the ideal which remarkably establishes the order, to this regard the maxim of reason will be on the top of his political thought.

### **Republicanism as an ideal form of government**

Initially, Kant precisely divides the forms of state and the forms of government. States were seen not only as associations of free and equal citizens according to individualistic conceptions of law, but also as ethical-political views as nation-states i.e., as political unions of peoples who are distinguished from each other by language, religion and their lifestyle.

Whereas, the form of the state according to him implied the different ways, by which the control or sovereignty is established over its subjects, as well as its construction is indeed determined.

In this respect, he distinguishes three forms of state: autocracy, which is distinguished by the demand for the command of all by one; aristocracy, where a group of people command and democracy, where everyone command — the power of the prince, the power of the nobility, and the power of the people. (Kant 2004, 86)

When it comes to the forms of government, he distinguishes two types: despotism and republicanism. By the first he means the action by the state, through its leader, the laws which they have adapted themselves, but for the benefit of himself, as if it were his own will.

So, he considers despotism as a suppression of republicanism, forbidden and turned against itself as a dogmatic form, these facts, according to Kant, go in favour of republicanism, because according to him democracy does not have those favours.

*“Of three forms of sovereignty, democracy, in the truest sense of the word, is necessarily a despotism, because it establishes an executive power through which all the citizens may make decision about (and indeed against) the single individual without his consent, therefore let us call it a form of State, where all, who, however, are not all, decide-something, which puts the universal will in contradiction with itself and the freedom.”* (Kant 2004, 87)

On the other hand, by republicanism he means a representative system, but which is quite different from democracy since the representation is done indirectly, thus, it is a political principle of separation of executive power from the legislative one hereupon it accepts the difference between the private and the public. (Kant 2004, 87).

It seems that without hesitation Kant manifests a kind of admiration for republicanism, because according to him it has many advantages in comparison to democracy, as it manages to govern in such a way that the public will is satisfied and the public issues come to light and become apparent; governed by public affairs and for public affairs.

In this fashion, republicanism does not mean governance of the will, but it is a public form of practice, in such a way it is an insertion toward the bosom of the public, human experiences and their actions.

*“Republican constitution (the republican way of building the State) is the only one, which stands perfectly as appropriate in the face of human rights, but it is difficult to create it, and even more difficult to maintain it on long-term because as we already know the famous point that many*

*say a republic would have to be a nation of angels, because men with their selfish inclinations are not capable of a constitution of such sublime form". (Kant 2004, 114)*

It is of particular importance Kant's distinction between political and ethical community; while with the first one he means the republic and with the second one he underlines the church, which as its main and guiding principle has virtue.

According to Kant, the acceptance of the republican principle as a form of government is the main precondition for the creation of peace alliances, over time states will accept republicanism until an alliance of peace-loving states is established.

In such a way force and coercion is strongly prohibited in creating such alliances, because such a thing must be done by following the model of the most educated and (enlightened) people.

### **World Republic and Perpetual Peace**

Political peace between states takes the form of an alliance for peace, which is at the same time different from the peace treaty and the world republic, as the latter seeks to put an end to all wars, while the former aims only at ending the war that has already started. (Kant 2004, 94).

The advantage of the alliance in relation to the peace treaty lies in the mere fact that it connects the existence of one state with the existence of another state, thus guaranteeing the independence of each other, which means that they are both inter connected but also free entities. Viewed from this angle, numerous alliances are formed which play a crucial role in threatening possible wars as well as avoiding the danger of states, based on the sovereign will of the peoples who build it.

Within a state of nations, contradictions can arise from the relationship between law and the people, where the former one is in a superior role while the second stands in an inferior role, while in the World Republic we would have a situation where many peoples would form only one, which is in contrary to the freedoms of peoples to form different states without being extended one by one.

When it comes to the world republic, we would have a situation where many peoples would form only one entity, which is in contrast to the freedom of peoples to form different states based on their will.

The conceptual connection of the purpose of peace with the legal principle also explains the "cosmopolite purpose of historical philosophy", this heuristic perspective helps Kant decode the history: "*As far as law is concerned in this sense the republican constitution, therefore, is, with respect to law, the one which is the original basis of every form of civil constitution. The only question now is: Is it also the one which can lead to perpetual peace*" (Kant 2004, 84)

According to Habermas, with 'civil constitution' we've found a pivotal and purposeful word, whereas the international law regulates the relations between states, should be abrogated by the constitution of a union of states and only in such cases the states and their citizens can enter into legal relations with each other. (Habermas 2005, 131-132)

According to Kant the law in the very essence means a relation, in which the freedom (right) of everyone consists with the (right) freedom of everyone according to a general law, thus following Rousseau's material concept of law.

*“According to Kant, the true freedom exists as long as individual has completely abandoned the natural freedom- that animalistic freedom, in order to regain his freedom completely untouched, in a state of dependence on laws, and this is true freedom, because this’ dependence on law is the result of my will as a legislator”*. (Berlin 2003, 255)

In line with this logic, Habermas gradually described the global civil society, and the idea of a universal civil constitution which guarantees a union of peoples under the common umbrella of laws that apply to all, as a true perpetual state of peace and not just provisional as it used to be. (Habermas 2005, 131)

Primarily, the peace alliance purpose is to guarantee your independence and to preserve it as well as to respect the borders, in such manner to prevent war, and if this is not achieved and war breaks out then, the treaties signed by the states also contain regulations about the law of war, rules that apply only in times of war that seek to protect.

*“This [league] alliance does not aim to acquire any power like that of a state, but merely to preserve and secure the freedom of each state in itself, along with that of the other confederate states, although this does not mean that they need to submit to public laws and to a coercive power which enforces them, as do men in a state of nature”*. (Kant 2004, 94)

The first part of the “Perpetual Peace” sets out the obligations of the legal proceedings, which should limit the destructive power of war, which means the obligations of the head of the state to consult with people before joining the war, then he is obliged to declare the state of war, in order to respect and obey the conventions during the state of war as well he is obliged to sign a peaceful alliance at the end of the war.

Probably, from this passage we can highlight that a hypothesis about a potential war is always possible, but in essence Kant is always for the annihilation of the permanent army because the existence of an army is an indicator that we are threatened by war, constantly. *“Standing armies (miles perpetuus) shall in time be totally abolished”*. (Kant 2004, 71).

A peace alliance, according to Kant, constitutes a link which should enjoy the possibility of being feasible and renewable anytime. According to him this could be the Assembly of General States in LA Hey, where each acceding state had the right of appeal and arbitrariness if it assessed any act as violent. In these circumstances, stability is not mandatory and may not exist if the majority of the membership withdraws. Kant thinks that if the federation were built around a republican nation-state, a state of absolute freedom would be ensured. But on the other hand, this does not mean that the nation-state organised as a republic is the head of the alliance because according to him, they can have neither head nor limbs.

Alliances do not claim universal friendship or peace as Rousseau claimed, offering a convenient opportunity but not fusion, and are able to spread the cradle of peace, which necessarily determines their cosmopolitan character.

Etymologically, *kosmopolites* in ancient Greek, in addition to its political meaning, also have a moral aspect, while cosmopolitanism in Ancient Greek is presented as a kind of contrast to the particular laws of government and the definition of ‘world citizenship’. Stoics with ‘citizens of the world’ rejected the idea of belonging to a particular polis in the name of universal natural rights. However, by cosmopolitanism Kant does not mean that he is not a citizen of any state, neither he does not consider the exchange nor an economy of ideas of material goods, whereas the multiplication and increase of economic, political and cultural exchanges can have a positive effect on the expansion of motivating forces and the revival of a liberal way of thinking.

*“A foreigner only to ‘claim a right of resort’ but not to ‘claim the right of residence’, but he implies the right of visit which is valid for all people and constitutes of what is proposed by the society that they have it by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally place next to each other” ... (Kant 2004, 98)*

According to him, the idea of cosmopolitanism is to make the individual become sensitive to everything that happens in the world; it is a political principle which is above personal interests, merely it is a process of magical observation of entering into the beautiful game of freedom of peoples and states, a principle that has nothing in common with the obligation of states to build relations and entry into the confederation of republican states.

*“The community formed by the peoples since it has globally encompassed the entire globe, has led things to the point that the violation of right at any one place on the earth is felt in all” ... (Kant 2004, 103)*

So, we are dealing with a principle which connects the citizens of each state around the idea of freedom. The citizen of the world is not a stateless or cosmic man, nor is he not even a citizen of any (republican) state, but rather he is a public being, attentive to the popular experiences of freedom around the world; respectively makes decisions on the based on the idea of unity of ‘republicanism’.

*“The idea of a cosmopolitan state is more pretentious, because it transfers the positivism of citizens’ and human rights from the national to the international level” (Habermas 2005, 131)* Habermas in his work *‘The Divided West’* will call the project on the cosmopolitan state as a decisive step in international law, which would stand above the states themselves.

*“In a situation when states are losing their autonomy in part as they become increasingly enmeshed in the horizontal networks of a global society, the Kantian project of a cosmopolitan order not only has to confront the traditional objection of “realists” who affirm the quasi-ontological primacy of brute power over law”.* (Habermas 2005, 124-125)

To a certain extent, war is considered as a legitimate means of resolving the conflicts, but it is impossible because within an inclusive world community there can be no war, so in this respect the world republic avoids war.

Kant thinks that each nation has the right to war, while on the other hand he also declares that it is the greatest evil of humanity, because war guarantees the achievement of permanent peace, because war incites another war.

*“Nothing can stop the world from turning into an endless grave and perpetual peace is only found in a graveyard,”* - he states. According to him, this is the main reason why on practical reasons he insists on achieving perpetual peace.

*“Kant despises the invading war and the right of the Sovereign states to go to war the so-called- **the jus ad bellum**- is always under consideration. Under this right, “nothing is allowed to presume” creates the structural nucleus of the classical international law”* (Habermas 2005, 127) On the other side, Kant is quite contradictory when he claims that war is the greatest good that nature has ever offered to humans, because war pushes people to the deepest uninhabited areas, it also drives them to communicate and meet with each other, only through war nations understand the limits and of power for conquest and domination because *“all wars are attempts to provoke new relations between states.”*

According to Kant, the war is aesthetically sublime but only for the spectator, who is not willing to enter the game but to meditate and judge but it can never be sublime for the actor who primarily participates directly.

*“The abolition of war is a command of reason. Practical reason first brings the moral veto to bear against systematic killing.”* (Habermas 2005, 130)

There should be no war, neither one that exists between me and you in the natural state, nor the one that exists between us as states, which from the inside they are in a state of law, from the outside (in relations with each other) are in illegal condition.

## **Conclusion**

The debate initiated by Kant will continue to evolve between the Kantian idealists and the realists of Carl-Schmitt school, over the limits of the jurisdiction of the international relations mainly on the basis of the limits of the legitimacy of international relations, respectively on the question of whether law continues to be an appropriate medium for realising the declared goals of achieving peace and international security and promoting democracy and human rights throughout the world.

Habermas goes further and claims that controversy concerns the path by which we can achieve these objectives, whether via the legally established procedures of an inclusive, but quite often weak and selective, world organisation (UN), or via the unilaterally imposed decisions of a well-meaning hegemon. (Habermas 2005, 125)

It is quite obvious, the conceptual relation between the law and the provision of peace, which we also encounter in Hobbes, but different from Hobbes, Kant no longer explains the legal pacifism of society by changing the paradigm of obedience of the subjects before the law to the protective guarantee of the state. (Habermas 2005, 131).

Both Kant and Hobbes believe that man in a natural state is at a state of war, while peace is something created by man through a social contract that is binding on practical reasons.

On the other hand, he says that states must now seek an analogous way out of a similarly untenable state of nature. Just as individuals previously renounced their natural freedoms, he considers the analogy with the state of nature wrong - just as individuals once united by sacrificing

their natural freedom in an organized state union, so states by sacrificing their sovereignty must unite in a cosmopolitan community under a joint leadership, (Habermas 2005, 139-140), because unlike individuals in their natural state, citizens of progressive, competing states already enjoy a status that guarantees them rights and freedoms, which is quite different from individuals of the natural state who had nothing to lose but the fear and horror of the clashes of their natural freedoms. At one point, Kant opposes Plato regarding his idea that philosopher-kings can govern the states, because according to Kant it is impossible, the day when kings will philosophies will never come. Such a thing should not even be desired, because holding power means the inevitable corruption of the free judgement of reason.

He recommends that kings or in particular the royal nations will never allow the disappearance of the class of philosophers; respectively he requires an absolute freedom of expression for them because they never pose a risk for the state but indeed, they enlighten it. He even goes further and claims that the philosophers are in some situations, surpassing the lawyers, who cannot go beyond the framework of the law.

*"The opinions of philosophers on the conditions of the possibility of public peace shall be consulted by those states armed for war."* (Kant 2004, 120).

Thus, according to Kant international peace is achieved through alliances which have confederate nature, in this manner it will be protected from external attacks and it will be open to those who want to join, an outstanding idea based on international consensus and equality, which is also the main purpose of League of Nations and UN, created immediately after two world wars, respectively between 1919 and 1945 in order to prevent future disputes from escalating into wars.

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