

## A SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF IMMANUEL KANT'S PERPETUAL PEACE AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

MAHIR A.AZIZ

College of Arts, University of Salahadin, Kurdistan Region-Iraq

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### ABSTRACT

This theoretical study is devoted to shed light on one of the greatest and the last philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment in Germany during the eighteenth century, namely Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It does not deal with his life or his major contribution to philosophy, but it elaborates and discusses his major contribution in the field of Politics, Sociology and International relations by focusing on his very well-known pamphlet published in 1795, "Toward Perpetual Peace". It should be emphasised that this study has been done according to a historical and an explanatory approach which applied in both fields of Political Sociology and International Relations. Therefore, the study offers a socio-political interpretation of Immanuel Kant's views on peace in descriptive way of analysis. The aim of this study is to problematize the main points in which Kant focused in his philosophical sketch "Toward Perpetual Peace", and then analyse his view on International Society. In doing so, the study is divided into nine sections. Section one is devoted for the introduction. Section two problematizes the anarchical international system. The third section analyses perpetual peace. Section four present and explore the preliminary articles in perpetual peace. While section five present and explore the definitive articles in perpetual peace. The sixth section deals with Kant's conception of the individuals, republican governments and the states. Section seven discusses the abolishing of the standing armies. Section eight explores Kant's view on the pacific federation. The last section is devoted for the conclusion of the study.

**KEY WORDS:** perpetual peace, international relations, states, governments. federation.

### INTRODUCTION

The Scottish social and political theorist Walter Bryce Gallie (1912 – 1998) argues that "Prior to the eighteenth century, no systematic "theorizing" about international relations existed". (Gallie, 1978: 133). The importance of Kant as a theorist of international relations has been well appreciated. He laid down the basis of the theory of peace in the eighteenth century. Kant is considered the ancestor of the republican liberalist school in International Relations, and the "father" of the "democratic peace concept". Basically, Kant teaches us how the main idea of the Enlightenment, "reason" can organize international relations. (Doyle, 1983: 213), (Szucs, 2016: 1). As many scholars stated Kant's "Perpetual Peace" planted the seed for the League of Nations, the United Nations and eventually the European Union), (Heater, 1960: 186), (Boudeguer, 2016: 3). In his famous Pamphlet "Perpetual Peace" published in 1795, Kant determines how to achieve the welfare of the nations and how to ensure the alliance of the federation of the states which

renounce a fraction of their sovereignty in order to live in peace.

#### The Anarchical International System

The anarchical international system can be seen as a kind of "state of nature", where the pure coexistence of states shapes the quality of the international relations. "Reason" encourages states to find ways to mitigate the aggressive power competition of the state-system. Perhaps the term that distinguishes international relations more than any other is anarchy. Anarchy – meaning the absence of rule, not necessarily disorder and chaos – has been the core concept and constitutive principle throughout the evolution of the international relations. The American postmodernist scholar of international relations Richard Ashley has called International Relations the "anarchy *problematique*", that is to say, a field of knowledge revolving around the organising principle of anarchy. In this sense idealism in International Relations is a way to explain the anarchical nature and reality of the international politics. Anarchy is the realm of "international". (Ashly, 1989: 213).

### **Analyses of Perpetual Peace**

Kant's Perpetual Peace was first published in Kongsberg, East Prussia, in 1795. The first edition was sold out within a few weeks, and an enlarged edition was reprinted the following year, 1796. Perpetual Peace takes the form of a peace treaty signed by a number of nations at the conclusion of a war. Kant argues for a stable peace among states. In order to achieve this aim, he suggests that states join together in order to constitute a league of nations.

This proposed treaty is divided into two parts: the first outlining the six preliminary articles which represent the preconditions for peace and the second outlines three definitive articles which represent the sole conditions for peace. This section is followed by two supplements and two appendices which seek to support and strengthen the claims made in the articles of the treaty. Kant thinks peace can only be achieved in a gradual and evolutionary manner; however, he outlines his place in a rigid and legalistic way. (Kant,1991: 343-347)

#### **What are the Preliminary Articles?**

Kant began with a set of six Preliminary Articles designed to build confidence among states.

1. "No treaty of peace shall be held valid in which there is tacitly reserved matter for a future war". "True peace agreements should be distinguished from truces if states are going to learn to trust each other".
2. "No independent state, large or small, shall come under the dominions or another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase or donation".
3. "Standing armies shall in time be totally abolished".
4. "National debts shall not be contracted with a view to the external friction of states".
5. "No state shall by force interfere with another state".
6. "No state shall, during war, permit such acts of hostility which would make mutual confidence in the subsequent peace impossible; such are the employment of assassins, poisoners, breach of capitulation, and incitement to treason in the opposing state".

Articles 1, 5 and 6 are strict and must hold regardless of circumstances and immediately; articles 2, 3 and 4 are permissive and shall come into force gradually.

But these principles alone are not likely to be effective in the state of war when confusion and powerful incentives for aggression are prevalent. As Kant argues, what is needed is an

institutionalization and constitutionalization of peace. (Doyle, 1993: 193-194).

#### **What are the Definitive Articles?**

Three Definitive Articles would provide not merely a cessation of hostilities, but a foundation on which to build a peace.

1. "The Civil constitution of every state should be republican".
2. "The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states".
3. "The law of world citizenship shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality". (Kant, 1991: 357).

As the natural condition of states just like the natural condition of men before entering civil society is one of permanent insecurity, Kant believes that, "the state of peace must be formally instituted" (Williams, 1983: 253). Circumstances, may for a time, place states in a position where they might not consider war but to transform this into a lasting peace requires a consciously regulated plan (suspension of hostilities is not a guarantee of peace). Such a plan is also outlined in his definitive articles. The purpose of the Definitive Article 1 is to make a nation genuinely self-determining. The republican constitution rests on the assumption that each citizen gives his consent to the actions of the sovereign through direct and/or indirect representation through the legislature. The citizen regards all laws as emanating from his will while the actions of the executive are susceptible to his control, because it can only act within the confines of laws framed by the citizen's representatives. This in Kant's view curbs governments' aggressive instincts. Furthermore, under a republican constitution those who have to bear the brunt of the financial and human costs of war have the power to decide whether or not they wish to prosecute the war". (Williams, 1983: 16), (Doyle, 1993: 194), (Ashly, 1989: 223).

Nevertheless, Kant resembles modern democratic peace theory. He speaks of republican, "*Republikanisch*" (not democratic) states, which he defines to have representative governments, in which the legislature is separated from the executive. Perhaps, the strictest Preliminary Article is article 5, which is very important to bring about peace: we must rule out the possibility of one independent state being coerced by another. Harmony in international relations can be achieved on the basis of a mutual recognition of autonomy, one state's refusal to recognise the right of another

right to its own destiny causes continual friction and tension. Any chaos and disorder in a neighbouring state should serve as a warning to others not to follow the same path. Political turmoil and disorder in one state should encourage neighbouring states to alter their own social and political institutions so as to avoid such an occurrence.

In Kant's view, states ought to relate to each other just as independent individuals within a civil society relate to each other. With such free individuals: "a bad example which one free person gives to another is not the same as an injury to the latter" (Kant, 1991: 354), (Williams, 1983: 247).

### **Individuals, Republican Governments and the States**

In Kant's view, every individual will involve themselves as a citizen in the decision-making process of the republic, and, in doing so the republican system, be it at war or at peace, ultimately is in the hands of the citizenry who accept responsibility for the consequences of their decision-making processes. Kant argues that every republican government is built on three fundamental principles: freedom for all members of society as human beings, each individual's belonging to a single public code of law as a subject, and equality under the law as a citizen. Thus, individuals in republican societies possess three separate identities, that of a free human being, that of a subject under a codified legal system, and that of an equal citizen before the law. (A Critique, 2014: 1). Thus, the idea of perpetual peace is simply a consequence of the idea of a republican constitution considered in connection with a world of other republican constitutions. In such a world, there is no motive for war, as each state aims only at the law. Yet, as soon as one state gives over to temptation, this strict compliance is threatened and competition resurges. Such a risk is an unavoidable stain upon the human condition, as Kant remarks that man is essentially prone to evil inclinations. The drive to sin is ineradicable, so we are left with the conclusion that "Human Nature appears nowhere less amiable than in the relation of whole nations to each other," and, for this reason, "No State is for a moment secure against another . . . the will to subdue each other or to reduce their power, is always rampant." Political leaders must be prepared to allow other states to find their own path of development and seek maturity in their own way, (Williams, 1983: 247).

In Article 6, Kant does not hope states immediately to lay down their arms and settle their differences, but argues that when states find themselves at war, in the name of peace, they should conduct their military campaigns as humane and civilised as possible. States must recognise that war amongst them is an abnormal condition. They should always have an eye to the proper peaceful regulation of international relations, so that anything that might hamper the rapid return to such normal relations should at all costs be avoided. This is why Kant rules out the use of spies, assassins and the instigation of treason in enemy states; they are not a part of the civilised, peaceful relations among states." (Kant, 1991: 357),

### **Abolition of the Standing Armies**

Kant, in Article 3 calls for the abolition of the standing armies. Standing armies should be abolished because: "They constantly threaten other states with war...They spur on states to outdo one another in the number of soldiers they arm...and since the resultant costs eventually make peace more oppressive than a short war, the armies are themselves the cause of wars of aggression which set out to end burdensome expenditure". (Williams, 1983: 248).

As armies cannot be abolished immediately, then the need for an interim period in which professional armies should be replaced by citizens' militia. The citizens' militia would be trained and organised by the people themselves; that military training would be for defensive purposes only. Like Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), Kant too, had strong objections to the use of mercenary troops in war. Machiavelli objected to the use of mercenary troops because of their constant disloyalty. Mercenaries, he says in *The Prince* are "disunited, thirsty for power, undisciplined and disloyal" (Williams, 1983: 249). For Kant "the hiring of men to kill or to be killed appears to mean using them as mere machines and instruments in the hands of someone else (the State) which cannot easily be reconciled with the rights of man in one's own person". (Williams, 1983: 249).

### **The Pacific Federation**

It is only through the federation of Free states that World peace can be ensured (Article 2). Kant stresses that the federation he has in mind "would not be the same thing as an international state". (Williams, 1983: 254). Experience tells that such a state is not practical: a world state would be too large for one government competently to rule. "Such a state composed of

nations would extend over vast regions...and consequently the protection of each of its members would, at the end be impossible” (Williams, 1983: 255). Instead of the ineffective power of a world state there would arise the power of self-protective agencies whose own growing power would eventually lead to the dissolution of the world state. An international state Kant admits is “an unrealisable idea”. Kant’s world is a world in which war is least possible; Kant’s world is a world in which the constant threat to peace requires that peace be established by deliberate Policy. (Williams, 1983: 256).

### **Conclusion: A critical Assessment of Kant’s Perpetual Peace**

One of the main weaknesses of Kant’s Perpetual Peace is that it sees war as an evil thing. Kant is blind to the ways in which wars, by providing an excuse for armies, have served to secure many regimes from popular revolt. Walter Bryce Gallie argues that “For Kant wars are always a matter of morally bad governments ordering their troops to attack, and occupy the lands of, their morally indifferent foes – who would probably have engaged in similar aggression if they had had the chance” (Gallie, 1978: 30). Gallie argues that Kant’s international thought suffers from “narrowness, the provincialism in time and place” (Gallie, 1978: 29). In Kant’s view, all wars stand condemned by Reason for their manifest anti-legality. Kant’s Perpetual Peace, peace - that is intended to be perpetual, is a political task that has to be worked at by all governments, beginning from now and for any conceivable future. Kant insisted, again and again, upon the difficulties, the disappointments, the uphill efforts, and above all the time, which his project of peace will inevitably involve. Kant is correct to argue that justice between states must be established by deliberate policy. Nevertheless, it is important not to discard the usefulness of war. War is an evil thing. But wars of limited character can result in lasting peace.

Finally, while Kant remained convinced that the development of the rule of law between states would produce, International Perpetual

Peace, the advent of the twenty first century, and the current war on terror, has seen the notion of perpetual peace as an unachievable utopian idea.

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## تحليل سوسيو- سياسي لكتاب (السلام الدائم) للفيلسوف نيمانويل كانت والمجتمع الدولي

### الخلاصة

تُلقي هذه الدراسة النظرية الضوء على واحد من أعظم وآخر فلاسفة عصر التنوير، ألا وهو نيمانويل كانت (1724-1804). لا تتناول الدراسة حياته أو إسهاماته الرئيسية في حقل الفلسفة، بل تشرح وتناقش ومن ثم تُقيم مساهمته الرئيسية في حقل السياسة والإجتماع والعلاقات الدولية، وذلك بالتركيز على كتابه المشهور (السلام الدائم) والمطبوع في 1795. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على المنهجين التاريخي والتفسيري والتي تطبق بشكل واضح وجلي في علم الإجتماع السياسي والعلاقات الدولية. وعليه فهذه الدراسة هي عبارة عن شرح وتحليل سوسيو-سياسي لوجهة نظر ايمانويل كانت عن السلام وتركز على النقاط الرئيسية التي أكد عليها كانت في كتابه المذكور أعلاه، وتحلل نظريته للمجتمع الدولي والعلاقات بين الدول.

لقد قسّمت الدراسة الى تسعة مباحث: خُصص المبحث الأول للمقدمة. تناول المبحث الثاني مفهوم النظام الدولي الأتاركي (الفوضوي). خُصص المبحث الثالث لعرض آراء كانت عن السلام الدائم . وأما المبحث الرابع فهو عرض وتحليل للمبادئ او البنود الأولية التي يجب أن تُطبق لتحقيق السلام الدائم بين الدول، في حين تناول المبحث الخامس بالعرض والتحليل المواد او البنود النهائية التي ذكرها كانت في هذا الخصوص. أما المبحث السادس فيتناول مفهوم كانت للأفراد والحكومات الجمهورية والدول. ويناقش المبحث السابع مفهوم كانت ورأيه في إبطال أو بالأحرى إلغاء الجيوش الدائمة للدول. وتناول المبحث الثامن أهم آراء كانت عن النظام الإتحادي السلمّي. أما المبحث التاسع والأخير، فيعرض ملخصاً لتقييم ونقد مدى واقعية أفكار نيمانويل كانت، وأهم ما توصلت إليه الدراسة.