

Szűcs Anita: Is Kant still alive? – The Kantian world order in the 21st century

The Great War served in one context as a turning point in history. More than any other modern war it lives in the memory as the most destructive war of the 20th century. It claimed the lives over 16 million people. No wonder that the “dream of peace” has intensified and a new impetus for peace in international relations has arisen. After the war, an understandable growing tide of anti-war sentiment surged through Europe. It was not just war’s destructiveness that fuelled anti-war sentiment; it was its apparent futility. War, as an instrument of foreign policy, appeared to many as ineffective and counterproductive. The First World War assisted in giving birth to a new discipline, under the name of “International Relations”. The most important task of the discipline was to define the reasons and roots of war. Why do states fight each other? Is war necessary or can we do anything to prevent it? In this sense the Great War and the desire for peace played a major role in the birth of the discipline of IR.¹

Commemorating the Great War it is quite necessary to talk about Immanuel Kant and the Kantian concept of peace. 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 18th century. Kant is considered the ancestor of the republican liberalist school in International Relations, and the “father” of the “democratic peace concept”. Today we are often told that the promotion of freedom produce peace and democracy export has stabilizer effect in world politics. At the same time global media carry stories of events about democracy export in different places all around the world every day. These stories too frequently are of political violence, lives and livelihoods lost, human rights violated, infrastructure damaged, and hopes for the restoration of peace and prosperity dashed. So at first sight the link between peace, stability and democracy export is not so convincing. On the other hand, ripe democracies empirically proved to be more peaceful, but only towards other ripe democracies. The most developed industrial nations do not solve problems by military means. War, as a tool of conflict resolution is unimaginable among the most developed industrialized democracies. „... *constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with each other.*”² Michael W. Doyle has empirically tested this hypothesis, and he found it right.

This study goes back to the roots, takes a look behind the much debated democratic peace concept and highlights the original thoughts of Kant. This lecture is not about the democratic peace concept, but about the theoretical basis of the possibility of peaceful cooperation between states. Contrary to popular belief Kant did not want to solve the problem of war. His famous pamphlet, “Perpetual Peace” (1795) shows us how the main idea of the Enlightenment, „reason” can organize international relations. Thinkers and scholars put their minds to determining how peace might permanently prevail over war in a system of states. Kant has not gone that far. He narrowly focused on the possibility of peaceful inter-state cooperation. *Perpetual Peace* is systematically grounded in Kant's critical philosophy, but this is a foundation unfamiliar to many students of international relations. Not only had it lead to serious misconceptions on international politics regarding Kant's writings on international politics, but also to the general acceptance of confused or ill-founded interpretations of his position. The recent lecture and this study aim to put us in a better position to articulate what

¹ KISS, J. László: Változó utak a külpolitika elméletében és elemzésében, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2009

² Michael W. DOYLE (1983): Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs. In: Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol.12. No.3. p.213

Kant and his concept of “eternal” peace mean to us in the 21st century. And in the meantime I hope to reveal the richness and beauty of the original Kantian thought.

Perpetual Peace – aim to reach or aim to dream

Idealism vs. realism

In Western philosophy idealism partly originates itself in the Kantian thought. The word came into use in the 18th century and idealism from that time on is far from becoming a coherent worldview, but rather a contradictory cluster of doctrines. In modern Western political philosophy the concept of idealism has two seemingly contradictory roots.³ One branch can be traced by George Berkeley and is called subjective idealism. Kant laid down another type of idealism, objective idealism in his famous work, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787). Transcendental idealism – as he calls it – stresses that the mind shapes the world and ideas play a central role in the interpretation of reality. Reality is a system of judgement, and “facts” can be seen in relation to a total system of perception. We experience the universe not as it exists in its own material reality, but from our own perspectives. Our judgement organizes the world into a more or less coherent reality. According to the classical example, we perceive a gold mine not because of its own existence but because we attribute value to gold. So in this sense our perception has been shaped by “ideas” and values about reality. Gold is not important because of its own existence, but because we attribute value to it.

International Relations traditionally explains the reality of the “outer” world,⁴ the world of international politics. Traditionally, domestic politics is what takes place inside of states whereas international relations are what take place outside, as if they were two mutually exclusive realms. If we take a closer look, we can see that international politics is a much more complex phenomenon. Idealism in International Relations is a way which helps us to explain the reality of international politics throughout our perception. The international is premised on the absence of an overarching authority or government that can lay down and enforce the law because the instruments of violence are dispersed and decentralised. This establishes ripe conditions for insecurity, where injustice and war are permanent potentials and regular actualities for states. It is a world of partners and adversaries where power rather than justice will determine international outcomes, and where states cannot afford to put their trust or security in others. States are trapped in a „security dilemma” where measures taken to enhance their security lead others to take similar counter-measures and in the process generate further mistrust and insecurity.

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 discipline.⁵ Richard Ashley⁶ has called International Relations the “*anarchy problematique*”, that is to say, a field of knowledge revolving

³ Horváth Zoltán (2012): Kant idealizmusa. In: Magyar Filozófiai Szemle, Vol.56. No.2 p.62; Michael Braund (2011): The idealism of Kant and Berkeley. The Symposium in Honour of George J. Nathan, <https://yorku.academia.edu/MikeBraund>

⁴ Kenneth Waltz (1979): Theory of International Politics, p.103

⁵ Schmidt (1998): The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations. Albany: State University of New York.

⁶ Ashley, Richard K. (1989): Living on Borderlines: Man, Poststructuralism and War.

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“.

It is not so easy to define the idealist tenet in the fields of theory of International Relations because there are no agreed definitions or no agreed categorization of idealism in this discipline.⁷ The term is usually employed in two – one broader and one narrow – senses. The broad understanding sees idealism as an optimistic doctrine which seeks to mitigate anarchy by creating some kind of a lasting world order either by institution or by values. The narrow understanding is the liberal tenet of the 1920s, or more broadly the interwar period of 1919-1939. Edward Hallet Carr, the forerunner of the realist concept specifies the liberal tenet of the 1920s as „utopian idealism“. To make the problem more complex, liberalism and idealism are often confounded even in scientific literature. Liberalism is seen as the characteristic political philosophy of the modern West. In this sense idealism could be tantamount to modernity. Of course the central principles of liberalism – freedom, (human) rights, reason, progress, toleration – and the norms of constitutionalism and democracy are deeply embedded in Western political culture. If we follow the logic of political philosophy and define idealism in International Relations as a tenet which sees the world around us as a constructed one, we can easily accept this thesis. The problem in this case will be categorization. Idealism in the fields of theory of International Relation is considered to be a part of „the liberal thought“ as the broader understanding sees it. As a consequence various approaches and bodies of thought – cosmopolitanism, internationalism, liberalism – have frequently been lumped together and labelled idealism, despite considerable differences between and diversity within them. The study does not aim to clarify these definitions but to explain the Kantian realm of international politics as part of the liberal tradition – in the broader sense – of thought.

Nonetheless, liberal theories of international relations were until recently disdained as utopian by international relations scholars no less than by diplomats. Again, the problem stems from the fact that there is no agreed definition of idealism. Indeed the term “idealism” is often employed in a rhetorical way, particularly by realist thinkers, in order to discredit radical or reformist ideas they dislike. Idealism – as most of my student like to think of it – is some utopian thinking about the world which happily explains the surrounding world as a harmonious, some kind of a peaceful and glorious Heaven on Earth. Idealism and utopianism are often confounded even in the scientific literature. According to this study Kant's theory is a theory of state interest. Kant shows us how states living in the anarchical international system can mitigate anarchy by cooperating each other.

The changing realm of international relations also has influence upon the application of the term “idealism“. The two World Wars and the Cold War seemed to bear out the realist thesis that the international milieu was inevitably subject to the harsh imperatives of power politics. Since the end of the Cold War, however, the world looks quite different. There is no hostile power threatening the liberal democracies; indeed, major war has come to seem unthinkable, and the international economy is organised in accordance with the norms of the liberal market. Liberal internationalism has gained a new relevance.

⁷ Peter Wilson (2011): Idealism in International Relations. In: Encyclopedia of power (eds. Dowding, K.). Thousand Oaks, USA: SAGE Publication. pp. 332-333.

The predominant school of liberal international relations theory, most strongly represented in the US, focuses on the forces of change that are regarded as having brought about this transformation: democratisation, economic interdependence and institutionalisation. The logic of the above mentioned three transformation roots in the Kantian explanation of international relations.

Perpetual peace? – „Reason“ as the Kantian organising principle of international realm

In one of his most mature work, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant tells us about the role of ideas in perceiving the world and constructing knowledge in general. In his famous pamphlet, titled *„Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch“* (1795) he shows us how can we perceive the realm of the international politics. The pamphlet has been seen as advocating federalism, world government and outright pacifism. This study argues that Kant is primarily concerned with order at the level of interstate relations. Kant did not want transcend the state system, but to improve it. The study highlights that according to Kant „reason“ is the very idea through which international realm can be constructed. 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“ encourage states to find ways to mitigate the aggressive power competition of the state-system. And this „reason“, the logic of state cooperation is as relevant nowadays as it was in Kant’s age. Prior to explaining this before mentioned reference point of the Kantian international realm let me turn to the title and let me clarify a misconception often responsible for the „utopian“ title of *Perpetual Peace*.

We should not be misled by the title. Kant has no intention to give us the recipe of some kind of an everlasting and harmonious peace.⁸ He himself labelled the title as satirical. The title is a satirical message to his fellow scholars – mainly to Abbé de Saint-Pierre – who think of everlasting peace as a real, achievable aim.⁹ He borrowed the term from a Dutch innkeeper’s signboard. On the signboard there was a picture of a churchyard and the inscription was above the churchyard.¹⁰ So „perpetual peace“ as some kind of „heaven in earth“ can be achieved only afterlife. For him, „perpetual peace“ equates lasting cooperation. Everlasting peace is a utopia, and cannot be reached because of the human nature. As Kant put it: *„War itself, however, is in need of no special stimulating cause, but seems engrafted in human nature, and is even regarded as something noble in itself to which man is inspired by the love of glory apart from motives of self-interest.“*¹¹ So war is a natural phenomenon and stems from human nature. As far as human beings exist, war remains a threatening possibility. At this point Kant thinks the same line as Hobbes. But human nature is more complex and in spite of being bellicose can be reasonable at the same time. The pure fact that men (and states) live together means they have to socially organize themselves to survive. *„And this she does, by means of these very self-seeking propensities, so that it only depends and so much lies within the power of man – on a good organisation of the state for their forces to be so pitted against one another, that the one may check the destructive activity of the other or neutralise its effect. And hence, from the standpoint of reason, the result will be the same as if both forces did not exist, and each individual is compelled to*

⁸ Doyle, Michael (1997): *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism and Socialism*. W.W.Norton and Company: London. pp.252-299

⁹ Kant (1795): *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. p.106

¹⁰ Kant: *ibid.* p.106

¹¹ Kant: *ibid.* p.151

be, if not a morally good man, yet at least a good citizen."¹² Human nature though selfish and power seeking has reason to create environment to survive. „For it deals, not with the moral reformation of mankind, but only with the mechanism of nature; and the problem is to learn how this mechanism of nature can be applied to men, in order so to regulate the antagonism of conflicting interests in a people that they may even compel one another to submit to compulsory laws and thus necessarily bring about the state of peace in which laws have force. We can see, in states actually existing, although very imperfectly organised, that, in 'externals, they already approximate very nearly to what the Idea of right prescribes, although the principle of morality is certainly not the cause."¹³ For Kant not some kind of morally rightful behaviour, but the selfish, power-maximizing interests of man and reason create peace. So the difference between everlasting peace and lasting cooperation is significant. Kant by explaining the steps of „perpetual peace” shows us the basis of lasting cooperation between states. Nevertheless he continues to call cooperation „perpetual peace” as kind of a satire.

In his essay Kant shows us that peace understood as a result of lasting cooperation can be established between the states, not on the basis of moral, but on the basis of reason. Reason is the „idea” constructing the realm of international relations. Kant does not depict international realm as a harmonious and peaceful environment. On the contrary. His international system is as warlike and bellicose as the Hobbesian one. „„A state of peace among men who live side by side is not the natural state (*status naturalis*), which is rather to be described as a state of war.”¹⁴ Kant shows us how peace can be constructed in the anarchical realm of power politics. The „constructor” of peace, the idea which construct reality of peaceful cooperation is „reason”. Perpetual peace cannot be reached, but states can construct reality around „reason”, and „reason” can construct the anarchical world of international politics.¹⁵

The reference point is the description of international realm. As Kant himself put it: „... although there is not perhaps always actual open hostility, yet there is a constant threatening that an outbreak may occur. Thus the state of peace must be established.”¹⁶ According to Kant the international system is anarchic and conflictual. Conflict and war are natural, and peace doesn't occur by itself. Peace is an anomaly and has to be established. Agents of international politics should do something for peace. The very basis of the international system is similar to the descriptions of Locke and Hobbes, an anarchic condition where law cannot be enforced. This is the state of nature. The state of nature, according to them, thus exists wherever individuals or commonwealths find themselves without a superior governmental authority to which they have surrendered their rights in the hope of finding a shelter from the anarchic condition.

Although Kant's notion of the state of nature has been described as anarchic, this does not imply that it is completely lawless and that chaos rules. Quite the opposite. Kant in one sense follows the line of Locke about the possible ways of mitigation of anarchy. Locke asserts that „The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and Reason, which is that Law, teaches all

¹² Kant: *ibid.* p.153

¹³ Kant: *ibid.* p.154

¹⁴ Kant *ibid.* p.118

¹⁵ Williams, Michael C. (1992): Reason and Realpolitik: Kant's "Critique of International Politics". In: Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique, Vol. 25, No. 1., pp. 99-119

¹⁶ Kant *ibid.* p.118

*Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions.*¹⁷ For Kant „reason” means the same organising principle as for Locke, but works through different ways.

The pure fact that states coexist in the international system means that they interact each other. *„For the mere cessation of hostilities is no guarantee of continued peaceful relations, and unless this guarantee is given by every individual to his neighbour – which can only be done in a state of society regulated by law – one man is at liberty to challenge another and treat him as an enemy.”*¹⁸ The state of nature equates the state of war and creates a strong impetus to find ways of cooperation. Without this proactive action the state of war governs anarchy. Kant’s states continue to live in international anarchy in the sense that there is no world government but this anarchy can be tamed and can be made subject to law rather than to fear and threat of war. The basis of such a law should be reason.

In this sense Kant’s theory is a theory of state interest.¹⁹ The problem is how states can establish peace among them in a conflictual and contested state-system. Kant teaches us that we cannot study either the systemic relations of states or the varieties of state behaviour in isolation from one another. Reason shapes relations between states through and because of coexistence.

Kant defines steps and conditions under which reason can construct – not an eternal peace (as the title of his mature work shows us) but – peaceful cooperation in the anarchical international realm. As peace is not a natural condition, but has to be reached, he suggests making three steps. These steps are the definitive articles – as he calls them. But before establishing peace, he sets some preconditions.

„States have to mean it” – confidence building measures as the precondition of peace

Kant begins with a set of six preliminary articles which is usually considered as confidence building measures.²⁰ I would like to highlight that these articles are much more about than pure confidence building. Empirically sensitive reading of Kant shows us how states can subject the international anarchy to law and how they find a solution to the problem of war. The Kantian concept of peace does not sacrifice the essential autonomy and independence of states.²¹ The preliminary articles set the basis of international relations and underlie that for Kant international relations are essentially interstate relations. The preliminary articles in this sense serve as preconditions of peace. If reason dictates cooperation – as we have seen above – states have liberty to decide on what basis relations can be organized. To understand better these six preconditions we have to bear in mind that fulfilling these requirements does not result any cooperation, but cooperation would be unthinkable without them.

I divide these measures into three groups – intentions, principles and tools of foreign policy. All three groups set the framework of any inter-state cooperation. Intentions are necessary but not sufficient

¹⁷ Locke (1988): Two treatises of government. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.271

¹⁸ Kant: *ibid.* p.119

¹⁹ Doyle: *ibid.* p. 255

²⁰ Doyle: *ibid.* p. 256

²¹ Hurrell, Andrew (1990): Kant and the Kantian paradigm in international relations. In: *Review of International Studies*, Vol.16.No.3. pp. 183-205

preconditions of peaceful cooperation. Principles gave framework to foreign policies and lay down the rules of any cooperation. Instruments of foreign policies can influence the possible quality of foreign policies.²²

The first preliminary article is about intentions. As Kant put it: „*No treaty of peace shall be regarded as valid, if made with the secret reservation of material for a future war.*”²³ Because the natural condition of the state system is anarchical and because peace is not an automatic consequence, if states want to cooperate they have to mean it and have to take it seriously. So before states do anything they have to genuinely want to cooperate. But we have to understand that intentions are only the precondition of lasting cooperation. Kant tells us nowhere: if a state wants to cooperate it should be enough to result in an everlasting peace. We should understand it the other way round: cooperation cannot work without genuine intentions.

According to my categorization the second group of preliminary articles is about the principles of interstate relations. The second and the fifth preliminary article highlight the two principles of the current international order: territorial integrity and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of any state. The second preliminary article states that „*No state having an independent existence whether it be great or small shall be acquired by another through inheritance, exchange, purchase or donation.*”²⁴ This means territorial integrity. According to the fifth preliminary article „*No state shall violently interfere with the constitution and administration of another,*”²⁵ which exactly expresses the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Kant here reveals his international relations are based on interstate cooperation.

The third group contains the preliminary articles about the tools of foreign policy. Three measures fall under this group: the third, the fourth and the sixth one about the armies, the national debt and the mutual confidence. The third preliminary article („*Standing armies (miles perpetuus) shall be abolished in course of time*”²⁶) concerns one of the means of violence. In the 20th and 21st centuries disarmament was a constant question of IR. Disarmament is not a guarantee of peace, not even a strict precondition of peaceful relationship, but makes things easier.

The fourth preliminary article („*No national debts shall be contracted in connection with the external affairs of the state*”)²⁷ reveals another tool of foreign policy, and waging war. Today national debt is a constant question of international relations. In the 17th century and onward states were not wage wars on the basis of their national income. The modern state system was created by the invention of credit-system and states borrowed to wage wars to strengthen their central authority. National debt in this sense makes states vulnerable.

The last, the sixth one states that „*No state at war with another shall countenance such modes of hostility as would make mutual confidence impossible in a subsequent state of peace: such are the*

²² Franke, Mark F.N. (2001): *Global Limits – Immanuel Kant, International Relations, and Critique of World Politics*. Suny Press: Northern British Columbia.

²³ Kant: *ibid* p.107

²⁴ Kant *ibid*. p.108

²⁵ Kant *ibid*. p.112

²⁶ Kant *ibid*. p.110

²⁷ Kant *ibid*. p. 111

*employment of assassins (percussores) or of poisoners (venefici), breaches of capitulation, the instigating and making use of treachery (perduellio) in the hostile state.*²⁸ This preliminary article was designed to build the mutual confidence and respect that establishing peaceful cooperation will require. Of course nowadays not the employments of poisoners cause the most compelling problem. However interstate relations even at wartime are regulated: the law of war limits to acceptable wartime conduct.

These principles alone are not likely to be effective in the state of war, when confusion and powerful incentives for aggression are prevalent but without these articles or measures lasting cooperation can be hardly achieved.

„Reason” in action – how can we construct peaceful cooperation

The preliminary articles alone don't have the necessary pacification effect under the anarchical condition of the international relations. Kant here steps further and proposes three steps or conditions under which state can cooperate in the long-run. Cooperation again here means coexistence of states organized by “reason”. The long term quality of the relations depends on three level of the organization of a political community (for Kant states). One is the level of the citizens. Citizens should organize themselves with respect of the individual rights (liberalism) and the rule of law and legal equality (constitutionalism), and representative government (democracy). This is the first source of peaceful interstate relationship. The second level is the interstate level. There is no need for states to organize themselves into a global political community (world state), but they have to lay down the rules of interstate relation. For Kant these rules embody the “foedum”. And here lies one of the main misunderstanding of the Kantian thought. The federation of free states as Kant sees it, does not mean some kind of formal political institutionalizations of relations. “Foedum” does not mean federation as today we know it, but means external relations as the Enlightenment's thinkers liked to refer it. Organization of interstate relation is the second source of peace. The third source is the so called cosmopolitan law, which refers to the global level. All three levels reveal that Kant theory is a theory of state interests.

First definitive article for perpetual peace: „the civil constitution of every state should be republican”²⁹

The first definitive article is the most well-known and the basis of the democratic peace concept. It has been commonplace to identify the democratic peace research with the Kantian tradition. The basis of this identification is this article of Kant.

Democratic peace studies have traditionally identified Kantian “republicanism” with procedural democracy and largely ignored liberalism and constitutionalism, which are even more fundamental for Kant's reasoning behind the liberal peace.³⁰ A closer look into his major political works reveals that peaceful relations are expected from states with the protection of individual freedoms

²⁸ Kant *ibid.* p.114

²⁹ Kant *ibid.* p.120

³⁰ Beate Jahn (2005): Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs. In: *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1., pp. 177-207

(liberalism), the rule of law and legal equality (constitutionalism), and representative government (democracy). Only when all three constitutive elements are jointly considered can we uncover the multifaceted nature of Kant's approach to the domestic sources of international peace.

The first definitive article requires that the civil constitution of the state be republican. By „republican“ Kant means liberal democracy as we know it today. Even if he states democracy means despotism. This condition is about the internal and domestic political governance of a state. I have two questions to answer regarding the internal sources of peace.

My first question is: why Kant highlights the republican government? He himself answered the question.³¹ The original social contract shows us why humankind does need states. This is the only constitution which reflects the original social contract, because “republic” – as Kant put it – is the only political society which consist of citizens and not subjects. This kind of political organization is not the result of pure aggression and power (which would be tyranny), but guarantees rights and obligations ruling the society in accordance with reason and common sense. The rule of law and legal equality (constitutionalism) are the basis of the only political society organized by “reason”.³² Kant’s republic preserves juridical freedom, the legal equality of citizens as subjects on the basis of a representative government with a separation of powers. Juridical freedom is preserved because the morally autonomous individual is a self-legislator by means of representation, making laws that apply equally to all citizens including himself. Tyranny is avoided because the individual is subject to laws he does not also administer. To summarize: this is the only constitution which reflects the original social contract, the only true institutionalization of society.

My second question is: how does the Kantian republics relate to peaceful interstate cooperation? At this point Kant is very straight: the representative government gives opportunities to all citizens to express their view whether or not the state should wage war. Ordinary people normally don’t like waging war, because they are the one who risk their life, their possession and they have to wear not just the burden of war, but the costs of the reconstruction as well. Normally average citizens think twice to give their permission to declare wars. Does that mean that liberal democracies are more peaceful? Do people always decide against war? Not at all. Kant says nowhere that human nature can be tamed by a political regime. Republics cannot buck the logic of international anarchy. People, of course, can decide to declare war against other countries if they are mobilized, and the history of the Great War shows us how easily masses and voters can be mobilized. Kant only highlighted that the republican constitution makes it more difficult to declare war. In this sense liberal democracies are more prudent. The domestic source of peace alone is not likely to be effective under the anarchical condition of state of war. For establishing peace the Kantian republican regime is a necessary but not sufficient state.

The first definitive article is the theoretical basis of the democracy export, and the “democratic peace” concept.³³ As Doyle reveals peace doesn’t occur automatically in case of liberal democracies either.³⁴ Republics are not peace-loving. Liberal states are not at all pacific in their relations with non-

³¹ Kant: *ibid.* p.120

³² Vesna Danilovic and Joe Clare (2007): *The Kantian Liberal Peace (Revisited)*. In: *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51, No. 2., pp. 397-414

³³ Ewan Harrison (2010): *The democratic peace research program and system-level analysis*. In: *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2., pp. 155-165

³⁴ Doyle: *ibid.* pp.257-528

Liberal states, they are quite aggressive towards the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. To explain this phenomenon it must be seen that any totalitarian state means threat to democracies. Totalitarian states are more unpredictable and not so prudent concerning their external relations. War, as a tool of foreign policy could be simpler to use, thus more frequent. A non-liberal state can declare war more easily and quickly and with less responsibility than usually liberal democracies do. The unpredictableness means threat to the Kantian republic and makes them more aggressive towards the authoritarian regimes in the international arena.

The first definitive article has three main consequences. The first condition of interstate cooperation is a domestically political condition, which makes a war more difficult to declare. Does that mean that if a state became liberal democracy peace can be guaranteed? For Kant definitely not. All he wrote was that peace is more likely under this condition. The second consequence concerns the organisation of the political community and the basis of law as the rules of coexistence. The question of law and order makes Kant's international system coherent. In the individual level the only substantive political institution should be organized on the basis of legal equality and the rule of law. The third consequence is that Kant's theory is a theory of state interest and of what does and what does not constitute a threat. Just as the superior capability of another state would be inherently threatening for Hobbes's and the Neo-realists, so autocratic regimes would be inherently threatening for the Kantians. Rather than an alternative to rational national interest theory, Kant offers a specification of what does (and should) constitute the public interest that a liberal state should (and usually does) rationally pursue.

As the domestic source of peace is a necessary but not sufficient condition, Kant took one step further. To overcome the state of war in the international realm to establish the rule of law based on the original social contract won't be enough, so states must establish the rule of law in their relationship as well. This is the second definitive article.

2. Second definitive article for a perpetual peace: „The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states“³⁵

The second article constitutes the basis of the most frequent and most serious misunderstanding of Kant's international theory. The title clearly states that the *“law of nation should be founded on a federation of free states”*. Scholars and textbooks often assumes that Kant could be the early forerunner of the federalist concept. Kant construct the theory of state interest, and the emphasis should be put on the second part of the title. The source of the misunderstanding is the word federalism (*“foedum”* as Kant put it). If we explore the meaning of a word *„foedum”*, we can see that federation here doesn't mean a kind of federal political structure of states. *Foedum* / federation for the thinkers of Enlightenment refers simply a branch of the executive power: the foreign affairs.³⁶ Liberal republics will progressively establish peace among themselves by means of the pacific federation, or union (*foedus pacificum*), described in Kant's second definitive article. The title simply means free states should cooperate with each other. International order should be based on the

³⁵ Kant *ibid.* p.128

³⁶ Williams: *ibid.* p. 110

cooperation of free, sovereign states. We can't explain state behaviour in isolation from one another, cooperation means relationship.

The problem for Kant arises from the questions what kind of relationship does peace require, and how rule of law can be established between states? How states can establish a kind of civil society among them? The first possibility for Kant is the world state, which he vehemently rejects. *"This would give rise to a federation of nations which, however, would not have to be a State of nations. That would involve a contradiction. For the term "state" implies the relation of one who rules to those who obey-that is to say, of lawgiver to the subject people: and many nations in one state would constitute only one nation, which contradicts our hypothesis, since here we have to consider the right of one nation against another, in so far as they are so many separate states and are not to be fused into one."*³⁷ To establish peace among states, states are needed. A world state would have meant the desolation of states, which is nonsense according to Kant.

Kant does not find institutionalization of relationship necessary. States do not need to institutionalize any form of cooperation or alliance because states can establish peace within a peaceful cooperative relationship and can securely maintain the rights of each state. These liberal states or republics establish a mutual trust amongst themselves, based on similar political institutions and values, supported by growing economic interdependence. They engage in nonviolent conflict resolution with each other that, over time, establishes a separate peace between them. This is the so-called pacific union.

The pacific union is neither a single peace treaty ending one war nor a world state or state of nations. The pacific union is peaceful cooperation of liberal democracies which is not easy to achieve. Kant explained us that pacific union could not be formed as a treaty, because the world will not have achieved the „perpetual peace“ that provides the ultimate guarantor of republican freedom until „*a late stage and after many unsuccessful attempts*“. According to Kant it is not too likely that states decide at the same time about the formation of a lasting alliance. The evolution of the pacific union should be started by a powerful and enlightened nation that can form a republic. This will provide a focal point for association among other states. Other states may rally around it and thus secure freedom. States will join up with the first one, thus securing the freedom of each state and it brings in more and more republics (despite republican collapses, backsliding, and disastrous wars), creating an expanding separate peace. By more and more such associations, the federation may be gradually extended.

For Kant that is exactly the way how international “constitutionalism” should be founded. Again, the pure coexistence of states requires overcoming the state of war. The evolution of the “law of nations” gradually extends and won't be flat and smooth. One “powerful and enlightened republic” can start the process under which peace can be established in the interstate system.

The democratic peace concept originates itself partly in the second article as a powerful liberal democracy needed to start peaceful cooperation between states. Today the empirical fact shows us – as Doyle argues in his most influential statement of this thesis: *Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign*

³⁷ Kant *ibid.* p.129

Affairs – Kant was right.³⁸ Ripe liberal democracies do not wage war against each other. The pacific union today exists in the form of the transatlantic area. The United States can be referred to after the Second World War as a “powerful and enlightened republic” which secured the survival of most of its Western allies. The most industrialized Western states, all of which are liberal democracies form peaceful cooperation, a kind of Kantian pacific union.

It is very important to point out, that although war can be eradicated as a tool of foreign policy between these states, conflict and aggression couldn't be eliminated. For instance between USA and Sweden, or between Great-Britain and France or Germany war is unthinkable today, but their coexistence in the interstate system is far from harmonious. Even liberal democracies cannot eradicate some form of aggression. Interstate conflicts, the struggle of subnational entities for power can show us, aggression still matters. For instance, Flanders and Walloons, Basques and Spanish can use aggression against each other. Kant in the second article was explaining the pacification of interstate conflicts, and not aggression itself. Liberal republican states, Kant suggests, would establish a peace among themselves while remaining in a state of war with non-republics.

Kant in his pamphlet draws us a systematically coherent picture of the state system. Under the condition of the state of war reason compels peace-loving states to reshape international relations first of all on the basis of the rule of law between the individuals, secondly on the basis of the “law of nations”. But again, Kant took one more step further by searching some kind of law on a universal level.

3. Third definitive article for a perpetual peace: „The law of world citizenship shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality”³⁹

Among the three definitive articles the third is the most neglected by students of theory of International Relations. Here Kant gave us a system-level analysis. The law of international system – as he put it the law of world-citizenship – should be based on the creation of cosmopolitan law. The third definitive article establishes a cosmopolitan law to operate in conjunction with the pacific union.

States can form a real peaceful community, and this community has to be established on the cosmopolitan rule of law. The community remains the community of the states, the cosmopolitan law will not deprive states of any aspects of their sovereignty. The basis of the law is “hospitality” and not “the right to be treated as a guest”⁴⁰ which means much narrower obligations for states. Here Kant calls for the recognition of the „right of a foreigner not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory.”⁴¹ This „does not extend beyond those conditions which make it possible for them to attempt to enter into relations [commerce] with the native inhabitants.”⁴²

³⁸ Doyle, Michael W. (1983): Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs. In: Philosophy & Public Affairs. Vol. 12, No. 3., pp. 205-235

³⁹ Kant *ibid.* p.137

⁴⁰ Kant *ibid.* p.137

⁴¹ Kant *ibid.* p.137

⁴² Kant *ibid.* p.138

Hospitality does not require extending to foreigners either the right to citizenship or the right to settlement, unless the foreign visitors would perish if they were expelled.

The cosmopolitan law „shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality.” As Doyle argues: *“Foreign conquest and plunder also find no justification under this right. Hospitality does appear to include the right of access and the obligation of maintaining the opportunity for citizens to exchange goods and ideas, without imposing the obligation to trade (a voluntary act in all cases under Liberal constitutions).”*⁴³

The Kantian international system is a state system based on “hospitality” meaning only real connections can form a real community. Hospitality as Kant means it forms the basis of international law today. Connections are encouraged as far as they don’t destroy cooperation or the possibility of cooperation. This article again strengthens the privileges of sovereign nation states.

Conclusion – the relevance of Kant in the 21st century

Within the discipline of International Relations the interpretation of Kant has undergone a significant change since the 1960s on. Kant occupies a symbolic place in contemporary theories of international politics so it is quite hard to change the commonplaces about Kant as the father of a utopian, morally-bounding and cosmopolitan unifier of humankind. The Kantian position is often held to represent a tradition of “idealistic” or “optimistic” approach to international politics.

This study aims to show Kant as a liberal philosopher of state-interests, the theorist of liberal order based on “reason” and interests. According to Kant international politics is in “state of war” and self-interest pursuing states seek ways to escape this aggressive anarchical condition. For Kant the best way is cooperation and the quality of cooperation would have been ameliorated by making it lasting and durable. Lasting and durable cooperation requires establishing the rule of law of the coexistence on three different levels: on the level of individuals, on the level of states and on the level of the system. Rather than claiming the predominance of one factor over the other, I simply acknowledge that all three Kantian requirements for peace are interlocked.

The first level is based on the only political organisation based on the original social contract: the “republic” as Kant put it. Today we mean liberal democracies by them. Some scholars and their critics are to routinely identify the Kantian “republic” with majoritarian rule in electoral democracy. Yet, according to political theorists, civil liberties, legal equality, and the separation of powers are precisely at the heart of Kantian republicanism.⁴⁴ Today liberal democracies are more peaceful in their relationships, but they consider authoritarian regimes threatening. Liberal democracies are peace loving among themselves but war-prone towards non-liberal states.

The second level concerns the rule of law between the nations. The formation of the pacific union can pacify the interstate relations between the members. Today the transatlantic area embodies this Kantian thought. Interdependence and cooperation between the most industrialized Western type democracies eradicated war as a tool of foreign policy inside the pacific union.

⁴³ Doyle: *ibid.* p.258

⁴⁴ Franke *ibid.*

The third level is a system-level analysis of long-term cooperation inside the pacific union. Here the rule of law should be based on “hospitality”, meaning connections are encouraged as far as they don’t destroy cooperation or the possibility of cooperation.

The Kantian thought is more relevant at the age of globalization and interdependences than they were at his age.