



**KANT'S CONCEPT OF "UNIVERSAL HOSPITALITY"  
AND NEO-GLOBAL CONFLICTS AGAINST  
PERPETUAL PEACE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The enlightenment project has not completed its prescribed mission entirely since it prefers keeping its close position to Western cultures and believes. However, the enlightenment's original purpose was to cover all humanity. Although, the rejection of non-Western identities has not been frankly claimed, exclusive approach to "the Other" is the end of real diversity. We can still see its consequences in international organizations, namely EU, NATO and UN.

In this paper I aim to discuss this misunderstanding of hospitality and universal values regarding the possibility of perpetual peace idea in Kant on the socio-political period of "globalization" and "democratization". The central framework is the idea that was noted in Kant's *Third Definitive Article for A Perpetual Peace*: "Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality". Nowadays, still, there are unfortunate wars at the various corners of the Globe. In these days, we always should remember Kant's words which invite us to a kind of ideal peace and toleration hugging variety: "...the idea of national and international rights, necessary to the public rights of men in general. Only such amendment allows us to flatter ourselves with the thought that we are making continual progress towards perpetual peace."

The idea of perpetual peace is necessarily underdetermined by critical concepts such as tolerance and humanity. The maxims of politics must agree with the rights of this world's all citizens in behalf of humanity. In Kantian terms, possibility of cosmopolitanism under the contemporary neo-Global conditions will be the main discussion in this article.

**Keywords:** Hospitality, West & East, Diversity, Cosmopolitanism, Rights versus Duties, Humanity.

**INTRODUCTION**

One of the most crucial achievements of Kant's enlightenment is to provide a general notion of secular world-view. Since people had described themselves through the concepts of the enlightenment instead of religious ones, the relationship between people (inter-subjective relation) and nature (instrumental relation) have started to change. Before the enlightenment, we had

not been able to talk about "individual" who could use his reason to enhance his life through intersubjectivity and secularism. This world-view had given rise to conflicts among particular-plain members of societies who had different notions such as religious and ideological in Western societies. These societies were presenting an artificial unity, because the members of such societies were already and innately determined by their identities. However, what enlightenment dictates is an ideal





humanitarian situation stems from the universal principles of reason that are all shared.

200 years after Kant, it is better not to satisfy with re-summarizing or re-narrating Kant's ideas but to attempt to find out new connections of humankind's current situation by using some of his universal, eternal and applicable ideas or meaningful ideals. Here, what I especially refer by means of "the new situation" is the philosophical and political position being after 9/11. Post 9/11, the gap between two worlds (two main different civilizations) is unfortunately getting much more wider. Being "the Other" attaches a derogatory sense on the Other. Necessarily and philosophically, what should be sufficient is to be only a human-being for holding natural equal rights, and equally distributed possibilities, etc...

To be sure, talking with the terms of Kant, a lawful world originally and naturally gives us the same (original) rights. However, there is a misconstruction of being from somewhere against being from a *citizen* of somewhere. What we need in this new situation is not to emphasize 'being from somewhere' but 'being a man', indeed 'being a human' in respect of sharing the same values. Fortunately, it is an illusion which denies the conflicts and challenges. The necessary toleration for everyone is an attachment requires *mutual recognition*; to recognize them as who they are, to acknowledge as they were and not to deal with re-shaping or modifying under the name of stumbling terms of classical modernity. It is time to replace identity with humanity.

There might be proposed some possibilities for such a replacement by two steps: Firstly, it is proper to define today's conflicts between two main cultures, i.e. West and East. Secondly, I try to analyze Kant's concept of "universal hospitality" considering his essay on *Perpetual Peace*. This evaluation may give us the maxims of universally acceptable and equal politics which must be in accordance with the rights of this world's *all* citizens for the sake of humanity.

### 1. IS THERE A PEACE HUGGING VARIETY: WHAT HAS (NOT) CHANGED?

Two centuries after the death of Kant, John E. Smith noted about three most pressing problems confronting Western civilization:

- (1) How to prevent the reduction of man to the status of a thing or object beside other objects in a mechanized world;
- (2) How to preserve a sense of individual moral and social responsibility at a time when skepticism and relativism control a great deal of ethical thinking;
- (3) And how to bring the steady advances in scientific knowledge within the scope and direction of moral and religious purposes (Hendel, 1957: 6).

We cannot claim Western idea has come off those three for 50 years. On the other hand Eastern civilization has not succeeded to rectify its inaccurate image of thought since Eastern civilization could not achieve to bring the steady advances in scientific knowledge within the scope and direction of moral and religious purposes. In addition to Smith, Arkoun also states that as follows:

"In the nineteenth century, Muslim countries encountered only fragments of the philosophical values of the Enlightenment. A very small number of intellectuals, scholars, journalists, politicians, and travelers had access to the schools, universities, and literatures of the West" (Arkoun, 1995:456).

The scientific rationalist methodology of Western world picture is a part of secularization and it is thought that the basic assumptions should become standards among the educated people in order to ridicule the backwardness and superstition of traditional arguments. Inevitably, such a dictum gave way to the idea of conflict between cultures and worldviews:

"Absolute principles of order and justice were irrelevant to the concrete situation of social existence. Power and cunning, not values and principles, decided the fate of individuals and groups. The same law determined relations among nations. Nations face one another in enmity and





hatred...and fight one another more mercilessly than wolves. The decisive factor in political existence is not the common bond of humanity but the will of the strong and their ability to impose it “ (Sharabi, 1970: 77).<sup>1</sup>

With the ideas of conflict, Sharabi asks “[w]as the West really civilized? Should we expect peace and security at the hands of Europe?” (p.99). I would also ask whether the notion of ‘just distribution’ of material and non-material advantages realized or the balance has shifted. The term “civilization” replaced with the notion of “globalization” and standardization. Moreover, globalization means the increasing dominance of some languages, nations, and business-classes. We globe some technologies, inventions; but do we globe rights? While we globe the interconnectedness, we are not able to globe mutual-recognition of identities as a primary condition of eternal peace (Appiah, 2003:195-197). Under the light of Sharabi’s and Appiah’s arguments, the preventing reduction of men –as Smith declared above- can be made possible by disregarding absolutism of ideas and technology politics that were collected in one hand. In relation to this idea, a fundamental linkage between the use of knowledge and ethics can be directly seen. The senses of moral and social responsibility are no longer valid in West different from Eastern societies where those issues may exist. Pragmatism and individualism are becoming the dominant social principle day by day. It may be an unexpected and unwelcome consequence of Kant’s Enlightenment. At this point we should not disregard the local cultures. It is not wrong to say that, remembering our moral traditions can be a solution for establishing such a balance. If we manage to give a positive response to the values that are served by traditions, thereby humanitarian situations will be realized.

There is also a cross-cultural disagreement highlighting local cultures, even on what rights are to be considered as human rights. However we

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<sup>1</sup> Here, Sharabi exploits some of Antun’s thoughts from *Muqtafatat*.

should not allow traditions to become particular absolutisms (radicals). If all localities take the way of being particular truths, we will not be able to reach variety of humanity. So that, we come close to an ideal situation of agreement between politics and morals that Kant described in *Perpetual Peace*. An ethically and juridically agreement of cultures is the ground of peace. From this perspective, just the ideas cannot be sufficient. Ignoring or doing little about conditions that promote disease, hunger and high mortality rats are being understood as human rights violations of greater consequence than violations of more abstract legal and political rights concerning liberty or property (Viotti & Kauppi, 1997:313).

## II. WHAT IS WRONG WITH “THE THIRD DEFINITIVE ARTICLE FOR A PERPETUAL PEACE”: *Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality*

*Perpetual Peace* was published in Konigsberg, East Prussia, late in 1795. It has usually been taken to be a call for immediate political action and to provide a recipe for the immediate achievement of a lasting European peace. We should remember that *Ideas for a Universal History* published ten years before *Perpetual Peace*. There he had made the claim that the problem of establishing a perfect civil constitution is dependent upon the problem of a law-governed relationship between states (Gallie, 1978:13).

Peace is *now* regarded as the normal condition of society. The problem arises, how men shall live together, each free to work out his own development, without at the same time interfering with a like liberty on the part of his neighbor. The solution of this problem is an *ideal state*. Here the liberty of each member is guaranteed and its limits strictly defined. A perfectly just civil constitution, administered according to the principles of right, would be that under which the greatest possible amount of liberty was left to each citizen within these limits. This is the ideal of Kant and here lies the greatest practical problem which has presented itself to humanity. This is to say that we have to





start with our reformation at home, look first to the culture and education and morals of our citizens, then to foreign relations. This is a question of self-interest as well as of ethics. Kant saw the nations of Europe were so closely bound together by commercial interests. The civil and religious liberty of a state depends on its commercial success. The state which does not look to the enlightenment and liberty of its subjects must fail in the race. He clearly realized that the spirit of commerce was the strongest force in the service of the maintenance of peace, and that in it lay a guarantee of future union (Smith, 1992: 46-60).<sup>2</sup>

Kant notes that in his *The Metaphysics of Morals*;

“This rational idea of a peaceful, even if not friendly, thoroughgoing community of all nations on the earth that can come into relations affecting one another is not an ethical principle but a principle having to do with rights”(1991:352).

The result of Kant’s attempt is the view of reality as a system of reason; a) which is imperfectly and incompletely known by man, b) imposes duties upon him c) demands from him an inner worthiness of will d) ignoring his rational nature giving up all claim to being a member of the human species (Hendel, 1957:8).

The third definitive article for a Perpetual Peace; “Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality”<sup>3</sup> which through will be analyzed existing conflicts. In his essay Kant stressed on the view of the state as a moral person; communal ownership of the earth and its resources by all

persons and the demand to strive for perpetual peace (Donaldson, 1992:145).

In other words, what problematic for today is the term of “cosmopolitan right” by which we naturally should understand that is prerequisite of another term, namely “hospitality”. Is universal hospitality possible? For Kant, whose concern in the essay (Perpetual Peace) is not with philanthropy, but with *right*. And in such a context, hospitality (hospitableness) means the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival in another’s country. As he noted, the state of peace among men living in close proximity is not the natural state (*status naturalis*); instead, the natural state is a one of war, which does not just consist in open hostilities, but also in the constant and enduring threat of them. Here Kant’s conception of the state of nature is –perhaps- influenced by, Hobbes. The state of peace must therefore be established only on the state of *lawfulness*. In such a position since the earth is globe people cannot scatter themselves infinitely, but must, finally tolerate living in close proximity, because originally no one had a greater right to any region of the earth than anyone else. A transgressing of rights in one place in the world is felt everywhere; consequently the idea of cosmopolitan rights is not fantastic and exaggerated, but rather an amendment to the unwritten code of national and irrational rights, necessary to the public rights of men in general. Only such amendment allows us to flatter ourselves with the thought that we are making continual progress towards perpetual peace. Human beings, in Kant’s view are capable of genuine commitment to principles of justice. We can apply to standardizing a justice our own past, present, and future actions, interpret and augment them, and evaluate others success in applying them to concrete circumstances. More importantly, a citizen counts herself responsible for the justice mentioned above (Holtman, 2002: 230-231).

It is clear that the process of self-realization in the name of distributing justice -in the Kantian philosophy- is not so much a psychological phenomenon belonging to the realm of nature as it is a moral phenomenon belonging to the realm of

<sup>2</sup> The introductory notes of M. Campell Smith in Kant Immanuel, *Perpetual Peace*, Trans by: M. Campell Smith, Thoemmes Press, Bristol, 1992, pp. 46-60.

<sup>3</sup> in Kant, Immanuel., *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History and Morals*, trans. by: Ted Humphrey, Hackett, Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1983, pp.118-120. and in Kant, Immanuel., *Ebedi Barış Üzerine Deneme*, trans. Yavuz Abadan, Seha L. Meray, Ankara Üni. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, Ajans Türk Matbaası, Ankara, 1960.





freedom. The concept of the individual citizen emerged in Europe after along historical process that involved economic, social, intellectual, scientific, cultural and technological forces. Yet there must be somewhere a connection between the two realms. For Kant, the resource is the mind which relates values or norms, the realm of freedom, of *noumena*, to the realm of sensory experience, the realm of the observation, of phenomena. His history of philosophy supports the possibility and the probability of universal peace. Such a demonstration is decidedly relevant to the moral problem of peace as duty, as an emanation and manifestation of the categorical imperative. "There shall be no war" is a moral law which would be invalid if the possibility of its realization could be demonstrated. There always have been wars constituting no rational proof of their continuing necessity. Freedom and moral laws depend on the *free man* (also the natural man), whose duty is to realize the potentials of his self. Thus "freedom becomes the one and only inborn and imperishable human right" (Joachim, 1948:90).

Here we have the core of the idea of freedom and self-realization as the essence of a philosophy of peace according to critical rationalism.<sup>4</sup> But even today the world is far from a realization of the full significance of this doctrine of universal freedom under law. The assumption that human rights are essentially a Western concept can lead to different practical consequences. To divide the idea of human rights into "Western" or "Islamic" and other culturally defined conceptions, however, would be the end of universal human rights. The modern awareness of freedom has its ethical core in the profession of human dignity. Understanding human dignity in Kantian terms as moral autonomy and connecting this autonomy to universal rights of freedom and participation certainly is a specifically modern achievement (Bielefeldt, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> According to Kant's critical philosophy, the moral law given us by reason tells us that all rational beings are of the same absolute worth as ends in themselves. This law directs us not to seek to dominate others or resist their ends.

Additionally, the basis for international morality must remain for Kant what it is for domestic morality: the moral demand of reason. Morality justifies cooperation; not the reverse. While international cooperation may, as an empirical matter, make it more possible to create a league of nations, the reasons why we want a league or, for that matter, any form of international cooperation, derive from our a priori concepts of morality:

"Kantian internationalism -Kant's categorical imperative- is a 'cosmopolitan' doctrine that treats all humans, by virtue of their shared rationality, as citizens of a single moral order... Whether or not globalism, moral consensus, or global cooperation actually emerges, Kant would defend the existence of global obligations, and their corollaries, global human rights. Even if the world were, and appeared destined to be, a barbarous Hobbesian free-for-all, with each nation insisting upon its own peculiar morality, Kant would argue that practical reason forbids indiscriminate killing, intentional lying, and other acts violating our hypothetical postulated citizenship. This is because even if there were no possibility of realizing the outcomes prescribed by the categorical imperative, practical reason demands that we must act as if there were" (Donaldson, 1992:142-144).

#### CONSEQUENCE

It is not so difficult to believe that Kant is standing on a static point. His ideas on "cosmopolitan rights" are static since he keeps them in the transcendental form of duty. Until today, we are approaching new forms of human rights problem. Our concept of human rights was definitely changed after 9/11 by the fundamentalist attacks. Much more common in various countries, however, are racial, national, and ethnic prejudices that result in oppression of minority populations. These are not just Third-World issues. Europe, Japan, and North America also offer considerable evidence of discriminatory practices on racial or ethnic lines. Human rights as a Western concept ignores the differences, cosmopolitanism and local cultures of "the Other" and is based on a Eurocentric world-view.





Kant's concept of universal hospitality is a part of his understanding of metaphysics but it is based on historical features of his new metaphysics. It is not sufficient to evaluate Kant as the founder of Enlightenment's epistemology and methodology, additionally he has great ideas about 18th century political and historical atmosphere. The political theories of Kant welcome 19th century humanism. According to Cassirer, at the beginning of 19th century, Rousseau's idea of happiness has been surpassed by the Kantian ethics and the concept of "self-confidence" (*Selbstbewusstsein*). In terms of Kantian political system, the greatness of history does not stem from the enormity of States and/or Society; rather, the importance of the history is based on the immense profundity of the idea of *humanism* and the *self-confidence* which becomes a result of moral awareness and furthermore *ethics* at the same time as the essence of personality that is historically and culturally owned by the citizens of globe. Contrary to Shaftesbury and Rousseau, Kant never implies the originality of society. According to Kant, the antagonism between individuals and groups of human-being resulted in the metaphysics of state and society. The main purpose of states is to limit human primitive way of living and also define responsibilities versus natural passions. By the existence of state and society the notion of humanity is completed; and human gets the crucial role in the good (moral) face of history which is absolutely evil in-itself.

Thus, cosmopolitanism becomes a risk for the Western and consequently for the Eastern civilizations. At that point, instead of a crash of civilization we need a consensus of humanitarian civilization under the umbrella of tolerance. This tolerance, as I have tried to justify through the paper, cannot be constructed with transcendental ideas but practical and understandable principles since cosmopolitan recognition is the main pre-condition of cosmopolitan rights and hospitality. Deeply-rooted cultural values or prejudices are, of course, not easily changed.

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