

**Mehmet Sadik Bektas**  
**The University of Opole**  
**Intercultural Communication**

**Reading the Kant in the Time of Wars.  
For Constant Peace, Is War Required?**

**Introduction**

The questions about the war make the minds of all people confused today. What is the nature of the war, what are the sources and consequences? Is the conflict inevitable in a society? These and similar questions are among the main topics of discussion in every age. Especially, when it comes to philosophers, the struggle between countries and cultures became an important debate. Besides, Hegel, John Locke and Plato, it was Immanuel Kant, who is remembered for his contribution to the peace. In the pre-modern period, the scope and influence of the wars were limited, and such questions were mostly addressed within narrow circles formed by politicians and thinkers. However, the period of wars that has been felt by only those who have wrestled with conclusions or influences. When the results of the World Wars are remembered and technology has reached enormous dimensions today, it is possible to say that a possible war will threaten the existence of the world as a whole, not just people or cultures. Thus, many politicians, thinkers and activists look for how to make a stable peace among the states. Although governments try to reconcile the matter of war without resorting to the opinions of their own people, it is seen that people around the world are gathering against the war and trying to make their voices heard even though the states do not pay attention to this demand. It seems that civil society becomes an important fact to influence political decisions. Therefore, the aim of this essay is to show how Kant's philosophy on peace and war can be applied in modern conflicts.

**Key Words:** Immanuel Kant, War, Peace, Cosmopolitanism, Politics, Philosophy, Society

**Political Miracle of Kant**

When philosophical studies are taken into consideration, However, this does not mean that Kant's political writings are unimportant. His writings on the politics of philosophy are basically, *Perpetual Peace* and *Answering the question; What is Enlightenment?* These works

complement each other and partly trace the moral philosophy. The both article oppose the despotism and they express the aspirations and principles of a more humane and rational social order. In both of his works, he considers reality (existing) but does not give up of criticism and tries to show the feasibility of a world that is constantly more livable. Kant, in his works, compares law and politics as a consequence or equally to the morality. A Philosophical Experiment on Perpetual Peace, Kant focuses on several concepts: war, peace, and cosmopolitan or unified world society. The main theme is the role of the wars in the establishment of a cosmopolitan world where the permanent peace dominates. Just as in the case of nature, people are in a contradiction, and in the system of states, each state is in conflict with each other. Comparing ‘‘nature’’ to the war between states, influenced his philosophical approach to the politics. Kant is against the wars, but he thinks the results will be better with a teleological interpretation. The philosopher is optimistic and he thinks a reality, or more precisely, as a bad reality. ‘‘Wars will warn people more and that evil will prepare its own end’’ says Kant. Thinker continues, the wars will bring disaster and because of this event, states and communities will come together.

Kant's philosophy of politics and history is a combination of the ancient Greek political thought. Kant interprets contractual theories with a theological understanding. He enlarges the scope of these theories that are determined by the resolution of the relations between the state and the nationality. In this respect, the philosopher overthrows or even negates, the classical Greek thought that has justified contractual theories and the ideal state with the city state only. In the same time, Kant's political view has a similarity just as Stoicism and Epicurus. Stoa's logos (universal reason) and Cosmopolis fiction deeply influence Kant's political writings. In the Perpetual Peace, Kant suggests the reality of the Cosmopolis, but this would happen not as a single person's will but as a universal mind. From this perspective, the perpetual peace would be achieved by the common decision of society as a whole, not only by king or government itself. In other words, the logos, according to Kant, will provide the Cosmopolis. For Kant, Cosmopolis will emerge as soon as the logos become conscious. Although the thinker did not use the concept of dialectics, he saw the cosmopolite as the ultimate point to arrive and all these views show that Kant comprehended Aristotle's theology and dialectics before Hegel. The concept of logos in the Stoa philosophy is called "nature" by Kant. According to Kant, there is a mismatch or conflict between the human mind and the universal mind at the beginning. Therefore; "People like to

adapt, but nature wants incompatibility knowing what is better for the human species. " (Kant, Political Writings, P.45) The mechanism of nature is seen as a dialectical process and in this process, human being transforms to the civilized from nature. The antagonism of the humiliating attitudes of people in the state of nature forces them to accept the law. In this vein, with the application of fixed laws, it creates a peace situation.

Kant just like Hobbes believed that the conflict between states started in the process of civilization but he, however, disagreed with some point of Hobbes. Hobbes conveys people through contracts to the state of civil society but he, however, this time leaves the states in anarchic nature. For this reason, the philosopher thinks that the wars between the states will be uninterrupted. But Kant by applying dialectic approach believes that every struggle has an end. Therefore, he tries to show that the wars between states will over eventually. If the people of nature are able to pass civil society through a social agreement, why is it not valid for the states? Asks Kant and from this perspective, he rejects the Hobbes. How can war lead to peace? The answer of Kant is very different. He says that "the disaster of war will influence nature as well as the war itself." (Kant, Political Writings) In his description of the war, Kant is far from real politics, and his moral dimension becomes increasingly important. The contributor sincerely believes that human being naturally is good and by using his mind, he will be enlightened.

#### **War as an act of Barbarism**

In his description of the war, Kant is far from real politics and the moral aspect becomes increasingly important. And even the temporary positive meaning that he imposes on the war is over. The following statements clearly demonstrate what Kant really thinks about war:

- Self-defense or war does not require any special motivation, because human beings seem to have the war in their nature.
- The war is the barbaric solution of disagreements (as the primitive people do).
- The battle is only a short cut of solving the problems.
- War is the source of all evil and moral corruption.

Kant mentions human nature but his distinction between primitive and civilized man is a sign that he does not have a fixed human nature. From this point of view, the fact that war is considered a part of human nature does not mean that it will remain unchanged. Kant sincerely believes that the human nature is tend to be good and people when they use their mind and knowledge, they all will be enlightened.

There are some discrepancies between Kant's views. He accepts people from civil society as rational and civilized, but does not offer enough viewpoints on the other side to solve the

problems in a peaceful way. In this context, Kant does not stop adequately on the following questions. Are human beings and state's essences the same thing? Are the states independent from the individual, which act by himself like machines? Does the human being in modern society with the human in the primitive society conceive things differently or the same?

Kant does not regard foreign policy as a continuation of domestic policy and wars as an expression of the internal disorders of societies. Hence, he argues that by resolving problems related to external politics, it will move to a complete peace atmosphere. The social imbalances that lead to social problems and war is not taken into account sufficiently by Kant. He only believes that in order for enlightenment to take place within the society, it is enough to argue that managers should not put pressure on the public and that they have to express their opinions. It is important to articulate that Kant clearly emphasizes the important of society rather than state when it comes to decision for the war. For this reason, He says that it must be civil society who must decide the war, not the rulers. In spite of everything, Kant thinks that wars will contribute to the enlightenment of mankind as a destroying experience. The philosopher also point out that the devastating effects of the war and its consequences will lay the ground for the peaceful endeavors.

In spite of everything, Kant concludes that the wars are also an important fact that lead people to be enlightened and the destructive effects and consequences of warfare will set the stage for peaceful efforts. Whatever it is, Kant has defended the enlightenment, the use of reason, the liberation of society, and he believed a better world is possible without war.

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