

## KANT: ON PERPETUAL PEACE (1795)

### Preliminary Articles for Perpetual Peace Among Nations:

1. No peace treaty that tacitly reserves issues for a future war shall be held valid. Otherwise, it would be a mere truce or suspension of hostilities, and not peace, which means 'the end of all hostilities'. A peace treaty nullifies all existing causes for war. The duplicity involved in reserving issues for future hostilities is below the dignity of the nation's representatives.
2. No independent nation, whether large or small, may be acquired by another nation by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or gift. A nation is not a possession but a society of humans that none other than the nation itself can command or dispose of. To incorporate it into another nation denies its existence as a moral person, turns it into a thing, and thus contradicts the concept of the original contract.
3. Standing armies shall be gradually abolished. For they constantly threaten other nations with war by giving the appearance that they are prepared for it, which then goads nations into competition with one another. Also, paying men to kill or be killed appears to use them as tools and machines in the hands of another (the nation), which is inconsistent with the rights of humanity.
4. No national debt shall be contracted in connection with the foreign affairs of the nation. The credit system of endlessly growing debts that remain safe against immediate demand is a dangerous financial power. This ease in making war is a great obstacle to perpetual peace.
5. No nation shall forcibly interfere with the constitution and government of another. A foreign power's interference would violate the rights of an independent people to decide, on the basis of their own autonomy, their own issues.
6. No nation at war with another shall permit such acts of war as shall make mutual trust impossible during some future time of peace. Assassins, poisoners, breach of surrender, and instigation of treason in the opposing nation are all dishonorable stratagems. Some level of trust must be maintained in the enemy's way of thinking even in the midst of war, for otherwise no peace can ever be concluded. Thus, wars of extermination are not allowed.

### *Definitive Articles of Perpetual Peace*

- I. The civil constitution of every nation shall be republican.
  - A. A republican constitution accords with the principles of freedom of member of civil society (as humans);
  - B. A republican constitution accords with the principles of dependence of everyone on a single, common source of legislation (as subjects); and
  - C. A republican constitution accords with the law of the equality of all (as citizens).
- II. The right of nations shall be based on a federation of free states.
  - A. For the sake of its own security, each nation can and should demand that the others enter into a contract resembling the civil one and guaranteeing the rights of each. This would be a federation of nations, not a nation of nations.
  - B. Each nation sees its majesty to consist in not being subject to any external legal constraint. The homage that every nation pays to the concept of *Right* proves that there is in man a greater, though presently dormant, moral aptitude to master the evil principle in himself and to hope that others will also overcome it.

- C. From the throne of its morally legislative power, reason absolutely condemns war as a means of determining the *Right*, and makes seeking the state of peace a matter of unmitigated duty. But without a contract among nations, peace can be neither inaugurated nor guaranteed. Thus, a league of peace must be established, which seeks to end all wars and desires the maintenance and security of each nation's own freedom.
- D. The concept of the right of nations as a right to go to war is meaningless, for it would find perpetual peace only in the grave that covers all the horrors of violence. Reason can provide nations with no other means for emerging from the state of lawlessness than that they give up their lawless freedom, just as individual persons do, and accommodate themselves to the constraints of common law.

III. **Cosmopolitan right** shall be limited to conditions of universal *hospitality*. "Hospitality" means the right of an alien (foreigner) not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival in another's country. The right to visit, to associate, belongs to all men by virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface. When discovered, America, Africa, the Spice Islands, etc., were regarded as lands belonging to no one because their inhabitants counted for nothing. Because community prevails among the earth's peoples, a transgression of rights in one place is felt everywhere; consequently, the idea of cosmopolitan right is not idealistic and exaggerated, but is an amendment to the unwritten code of national and international rights, necessary to the public rights of humans in general.