

# On Kant's Conception of Perpetual Peace—Rereading Kant's "On Perpetual Peace"

Xian Wu

Chengdu, Sichuan Province Southwest Minzu University 610041

**Abstract:** Kant expressed his deep concern for the cause of human peace in the "Permanent Peace Theory". The clauses concerning the realization of permanent peace are based on the perspective of a global citizen who transcends ordinary citizens. Established in a calm and rational questioning. These terms are too abstract in the eyes of many liberal philosophers. Therefore, many liberal philosophers no longer try to use a comprehensive theory of value as the basis for the concept of peace, but we still have reason to hope that there is some kind of abstraction. Although this principle has many differences in specific concepts, after proper reflection, most people will agree with these principles. Rules and the way of thinking behind the principles, and eventually it is possible to establish some logically advanced principles.

**Keywords:** Perpetual Peace Theory; Kant

In the eighteenth century, Europe was flooded with war. Geographical factors made Prussia very close to war. The signing of the Basel Agreement in 1795 made most French and Prussians believe that peace has come, but some visionary scholars still believe that Peace is short-lived, war will come at any time, and even the two countries between the two countries have maintained a state of hostility that can easily cause new conflicts. Kant's "Theory of Eternal Peace" was born under this situation, and he has mentioned "the current war" and its "tragic consequences" many times in his writings. Since the twentieth century, war has also brought us profound sufferings and painful lessons. This has made more scholars try to find a way to resolve war and lead to peace. The "Permanent Peace" is more attractive because of its clear and clear purpose. Attention of scholars. There is always tension between mankind's history of competition and man's moral vision of peace. Then, in the face of the more complicated international situation in the 21st century, will the concept of permanent peace become a utopian concept? Are the articles in "Permanent Peace" meaningless? In the face of such cross-examination, Kant's "Permanent Peace" should start from itself to find a way to answer the question.

## 1. Structures of perpetual peace

Unlike Kant's other writings, the structure of "Permanent Peace" is unique. It consists of prerequisite clauses, formal clauses and secret clauses. We can speculate that this writing mode implies Kant's attitude towards "eternal peace". A goal of temptation and experimentation, Kant also believes that some of his articles are nothing more than a "play with ideas" or just a "happy trip." Kant's "On Eternal Peace" has an ironic beginning, "On a huge cemetery, the words "Eternal Peace" are written. Obviously, Kant's discussion of the concept of perpetual peace is ironic. Faced with this ironic conception, people from different perspectives: national citizens, global citizens, and politicians will all have different ideas. If the person facing it is human, then this statement may point to an expression of pessimism and despair. Some scholars have pointed out that the term *Zum ewigen Frieden* originally means "entering eternal rest", and the term rest is connected with the ambitious concept of eternal peace. It is not difficult for people to think that the eternal peace of human society It's hard to achieve. And if the people facing this idea are the manipulators of war or have the right to easily control the direction of the country, then for these people, "Permanent Peace" is just a flogging or deepening of the current political hypocrisy. The level reveals the logic of the war and issues a series of warnings to keep the country away from the war, at least think about it before starting the war. And if this concept of peace is for people who are committed to perfecting that can bring human society to a peaceful state, "Permanent Peace" undoubtedly puts forward a demand for them, that is, although the future is slim, we still have to construct a theory. Although people of different identities understand Kant's "Permanent Peace Theory" from different perspectives, Kant himself has always firmly believed that permanent peace is possible, as long as it is regarded as a transcendent universal concept and applied to all rational people. Body. As for the rational person, Kant has explained it in other writings, so the rational person here not only refers to the person who can use reason, but also includes the person who can use reason autonomously, and these people also have a common reason.

## 2. The way permanent peace is achieved

Regarding common rationality, we have to admit that this is a relatively difficult concept to define. From the original text, common rationality obviously does not only refer to the ability to use rationality. If common rationality refers to the same result after using

rationality, then it is probably a judgment about directionality, which has to involve everyone's different knowledge backgrounds and the judgment criteria in the deepest part of our thoughts. Kant described people who do not conform to the common rationality in his sense as certain existences who made mavericks into secrets. "The problem of organizing the state, no matter how difficult it looks, can be solved, even for a group of villains, as long as the group is rational. The problem is that "[1]for a certain rationality exists" This group needs the universal law for self-preservation, but at the same time, each of them secretly wants to exclude themselves from the universal law, then how can this group establish such a constitution so that The checks and balances between them make their public behaviors as if they have no private intentions, although their private intentions are opposed to each other"[1]. The point here is not on the number of villains, but on what some people want to do "secretly". No matter what kind of treaty is signed between countries, as long as there are hidden things, it is not feasible. Just as Kant has sufficient knowledge of human nature, he has a sufficient estimate of how the country can get out of a state of war and reach a state of peace. Therefore, he stipulated six "prerequisite clauses" before proposing formal clauses. Regarding the prerequisite clause for peace between nations, Kant put forward six principles. " From Kant's argument, we can see that as a "moral politician" he expressed a kind of moral will. In fact, in modern wars, it is impossible for the belligerents to comply. Such a principle. After all, victory is probably the standard of war. All actions under victory include calculations and the nature of betting. Then the greater the bet, the greater the profit that may be obtained. For this, Kant chose to speak out the additional undesirable results that these actions may cause. "People's actions not only bring about the results they intended and achieved, but also some other results, some results they don't know or do not want. People realize their interests, and their interests Some other things are also realized, and these things are not in the consciousness and intention of the actors. Analogy: One person set fire to another person's house out of revenge. A large-scale fire was triggered by this. This result is neither part of the initial action nor the intention of the perpetrator. This example only shows that a direct action may involve something in addition to what the actor consciously intends. Something else." [2] Judging from the history of war, there are quite a few wars. At least we can say that these incidental injuries are caused by our actions during wars, but in fact they often occur in wars. The beginning of modern warfare itself contains contingency, so we cannot require modern warfare to strictly abide by such rules from the beginning, but we can say that once a war occurs, the actions between belligerents will become preparations for future peace. Key factor. Therefore, the prerequisite clause in Kant's "Permanent Peace" does not require that the war between countries be ended immediately, but hopes to gradually eliminate tensions between countries, establish a certain relationship of trust, and lay a certain foundation for future peace. These clauses have a deterrent effect on all those who take part in the war, because on the one hand "secret" and "trust" create conflicts between countries, and on the other hand everyone believes that war is always temporary, and the two are combined to participate. People in war dare not openly confront the public interest—that is, the people are the enemy, even if the people here are a group of villains, as long as they can still use reason. The foundation of peace lies in trust. The key to gaining trust lies in the removal of "secrets." The possibility of removing the secrets lies in the actions of countries in war. This requires morality and politics to advance on the same track instead of talking separately. When a country enters a state of war, public opinion will inevitably be different from usual, panic or extreme. At this time, either use strong laws to cooperate with other disciplines to control public opinion and then control the behavior of the country, or control yourself in a self-disciplined way to get rid of the distrust of both parties. Situation. The clauses proposed by Kant in the "Permanent Peace Theory" can not only be used as the direction of other peace clauses in the future, but also can ideologically discipline human beings.

## References:

---

- [1] Immanuel Kant. *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch/Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 2006.
- [2] Kant. "On Eternal Peace" [M]/*An Anthology of Critique of Historical Reason*. He Zhaowu, translated. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1996

## About the author:

Xian Wu, 1996, male, Han nationality, Master of Western Philosophy, School of Philosophy, Southwest University for Nationalities, Research Field: Political Philosophy.