

## The EU as a Kantian Peace Project

### Introduction

- The EU is a successful project of economic integration
- The EU is also a political project: its main goal is the establishing of peace in Europe:
  - No wars between Member States of the EU, especially France and Germany
  - It prevented conflicts between Eastern European countries by offering membership
  - Economic integration
  - Stressing democratic character of the Member States
  - Developing a legal framework in which Member States can peacefully interact to settle differences

### Introduction

- EU is based on the belief that economic integration and a strong legal framework can bring peace in a region that was torn apart by war
- In this respect the EU is an example of Kantian thought on how to realize eternal peace

### Introduction

- Who was Immanuel Kant
  - Lived from 1724 to 1804, in Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russian Federation)
  - Professor of Philosophy and Anthropology during the Age of Enlightenment: "Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784): *Sapere aude!* (Man has to become autonomous)
  - Major works on epistemology: attempting to reconcile empiricism and rationalism: *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781 and 1787)
  - Wrote on morality and ethics: *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788); categorical imperative introduced in *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797)

### Introduction

- Also published political works in a later stage:
  - Liberalism: how can man be free, how can freedom and the State coexist; how can peace be established at the international level
  - *Perpetual Peace or Eternal Peace* (1795) and *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797)
- Problems with authorities: defied the Royal censor
- Some very controversial views
  - A State had a moral duty to implement the death penalty
  - A husband had the right to bring back his wife to the marital home, if necessary by force; women were considered not autonomous
  - Racial hierarchy; contempt for "lawless" peoples, i.e. peoples that were only concerned with happiness, instead of moral progress of mankind



## Introduction

- Why is Kant still relevant?
  - Influenced western philosophical thought:
    - Caused a paradigm shift
    - Birth of German Idealism (although Kant opposed it)
    - Influence on the philosophy of inter alia Hegel, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Marx, Habermas, Rawls
    - Neo-Kantianism

## Introduction

- Outside of philosophy his ideas on how to achieve long-lasting peace have been recently re-discovered and applied (Doyle, Rummel, Fukuyama, Tesón, Slaughter)
  - Democracies rarely if never wage war between themselves → the more democracies the less likely there will be war → spread democracy even by force if necessary
  - There can be no long-lasting peace between democracies and non-democracies
  - Intrinsic link between the internal political constitution of a State and how it will behave externally
  - Theory has been supported by US Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Tony Blair and EU Commissioner for External Relations Patten
- The idea that international relations should be governed by law is a typical European idea (but not exclusively)

## Introduction

- The purpose is not to discuss the veracity of the democratic peace theory
  - The theory is not a faithful account of Kant's thinking, although it is based on Kantian themes
  - What are Kant's ideas for eternal peace, how can it be realized and is the EU a good example of the theory

## The Kantian peace project

- *Eternal Peace/Perpetual Peace*
  - One of Kant's later works, essay written more or less in the form of a peace treaty
  - Core of Kant's ideas on peace as the end of all conflicts, the state of peace as opposed to the state of war
  - Kant asserts that eternal peace can be reached if one follows his recommendations because they are rational: even a "nation of devils" as long as they possess understanding can arrive at eternal peace

## The Kantian peace project

- Setting the stage: the whole theory starts with the individual, what is a free individual
  - Freedom is not doing what you like, wish or desire
  - A free individual is autonomous: an individual that makes his own laws based on reason (freedom implies laws): the categorical imperative
    - Three formulations of the categorical imperative
      - "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law"
      - "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means to an end"
      - "Every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal Kingdom of ends"

## The Kantian peace project

- The Kingdom of ends is a fiction
- It is very hard, if not impossible to know whether one formulates a law that is purely based on reason
- Kant was aware of this and had a rather pessimistic view of mankind: "Nothing straight can be constructed from such warped wood as that which man is made of" and "Man needs a master"
  - The correct formulation of moral norms that should govern individuals cannot be known
  - There will be a debate on whose formulation is "right", but who can settle the issue?
  - Kant in the end relied on the teleological progress of history to discover the true moral imperatives: but what should we do in the meantime?

## The Kantian peace project

- The state of nature:
  - State in which individuals fight against all others
  - Introduced by Hobbes whose ideas influenced Kant
    - A state of nature is a state of war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*)
    - To escape this state and enter a state of peace people have to conclude a social contract creating Leviathan (a biblical giant) or the State
    - People are compelled into the social contract out of fear



## The Kantian peace project

- Kant builds upon this, but also rejects some of Hobbes postulates
  - Hobbes had a mechanistic view of mankind and thought that the passions steered human behaviour
  - Kant cannot accept this: man is also rational and autonomous, but even then the state of nature is undesirable and unjust. It is based on the unilateral assessment of what is right and the outcome of the use of force to enforce this unilateral assessment
  - The state of nature is a state of injustice and any rational, autonomous individual will obey a moral duty to leave the state of nature and form a State, in which everyone's freedom is guaranteed by law as long as it does not harm the freedom of others

## The Kantian peace project

- The State protects mankind against a reversal into the state of nature
  - Duty to obey the law
  - No unilateral use of force can be tolerated; only force of the State to compel people to obey the law
  - There is no legal right to revolution
- New problem arises: Kant has "solved" the state of nature in which individuals are, but created a new state of nature between States. The ultimate goal of mankind is to leave this state of nature.

## The Kantian peace project

- *Eternal Peace* is Kant's proposal to establish a state of peace / a state of law at the international level
- The essay is subdivided in two parts: Preliminary Articles and the Definitive Articles
  - Preliminary Articles are meant to create the ideal conditions for eternal peace to be established
    - Peace treaties should not be merely truces
    - No State may be acquired through inheritance, gifts, exchanges
    - Standing armies should be abolished
    - No national debt for external affairs
    - Non-intervention in another State
    - Minimum humanitarian behaviour in wars
    - + Others in *Metaphysics of Morals*

## The Kantian peace project

- Definitive Articles will institute eternal peace: all three are equally important and mutually influence each other
  - The constitution of every State should be republican
    - A republic is a State that has the following characteristics
      - » The principle of freedom of all persons
      - » The dependences of everyone on a single common legislation to which everyone could have consented
        - Which States are republics
          - » A republic is an ideal that cannot be achieved
          - » Liberal democratic States
          - + States that act in the spirit of republicanism, e.g. Prussia under Frederick the Great
          - » States have to become republican themselves, not by outside interference

## The Kantian peace project

- Kant considers a republic more peaceful than any other type of State
  - » Pragmatic: in a republic all citizens need to consent to war and that means they have to agree to take all the misery of war on themselves >> despotic regime where a leader decides but does not suffer from war
  - » *Context of the Faculties* (1798): transcendental: in an ideal republic (nominal: republic) all individuals are bearers of rights and hence their relations are governed through law and not unilateral claims and force → reject the possibility of war, a real republic is not completely peaceful, but less likely to go to war

## The Kantian peace project

- Free States should form a federation
  - It could be argued that the international state of nature can be solved by the creation of a world state
- Kant however rejects this
  - His argumentation is not convincing, even confusing
  - Kant has an absolute notion of sovereignty
  - States cannot be forced out of the state of nature, because they already have internally overcome the state of nature
  - States do not intend to create such a world government
  - Kant is afraid of a "universal monarchy" by a hegemon State, which would crush the freedom of peoples and individuals: such a monarchy would fall and again lead to a State of nature

## The Kantian peace project

- Kant instead opts for a federation of free States
  - » Voluntary participation
  - » States can leave at any time
  - » The relation between the members of the federation is based on law, but it does not have coercive power
  - » The federation will grow and crumble till in the end all States recognize that it will create eternal peace
  - » The federation is open to all States, republic or not: "free" means independent and not "republican"
  - » The federation can only use force in self-defence
- On other occasions Kant has defended a world State, but either his views have changed or he is realistic enough that it cannot be achieved (but one should strive for it)

## The Kantian peace project

- Cosmopolitan right limited to universal hospitality
  - Universal community of people
  - Everyone has the right to travel and visit other people peacefully: the Earth is a globe, thus people will encounter each other
  - Idea is that world peace can only be established if people can visit and learn from each other
  - As such no right to trade, but also not prohibited: it depends on the host
    - Kant rejects colonialism: it violates cosmopolitan right and brings out the worse in people
    - Kant hopes that trade is established because trade and war are opposite

## EU as a Kantian peace project

- The EU is the final stage of the search on how peace and prosperity can be brought to Europe, a historical battlefield
- The European project from the ECSC on was not only an economic project, but also a peace project
- Interaction between the members should not only be governed by politics, but also through law: from the beginning there was a Court of Justice

## EU as a Kantian peace project

- Contemporary EU: a reflection of Kant's ideas for eternal peace (in Europe)?
  - Republican element:
    - By offering the prospect of membership to Eastern European States, the EU helped to consolidate the emerging democracies in those countries
    - European Union itself is based on the values of democracy and human rights (Article 2, Article 6, Article 10 EU Treaty)
    - EU members can see their rights suspended if they commit serious violations of the values of the EU (Article 7 EU Treaty)
    - A future member State has to respect the EU values (Article 49 EU Treaty)

## EU as a Kantian peace project

- The EU has to observe the principle of equality of its citizens (Article 9 EU Treaty)
- Federation element:
  - European States are free to join (the EU has not compelled States to join) and Member States can leave the EU (Article 50 EU Treaty)
  - The EU has also a common defense against aggression, if a Member State is attacked, the other Member States have to assist (Article 42 (7) EU Treaty)
  - Towards others the EU promotes its values peacefully and in accordance with international law

## EU as a Kantian peace project

- The relations between the Members and the EU are governed by law and not by force; in the end the European Court of Justice can settle the disputes
- Cosmopolitan element
  - Four freedoms: freedom of movement of persons, goods, services and capital; persons can freely travel within the EU and trade is facilitated
  - The EU also fosters trade with other countries and regional organizations

## EU as a Kantian peace project

- Some notable differences between Kant's ideas and the EU
  - Kant's federation of free States is a global federation, the EU is only a regional body
    - Kant however did envisage that neighbouring States would first conclude a federation amongst themselves, that would gradually expand
    - Although the EU is a limited regional "federation", it can serve as an example for others and be one of the building blocs of a world federation

## EU as a Kantian peace project

- Kant's federation was minimal; purely voluntary agreement to be governed by law and no coercive power
  - Kant followed Hobbes that sovereignty is absolute
  - Kant believed that States had no intention to conclude a more far-reaching federation, but the EU is precisely created by the will of States
  - Kant believed one should strive for a world State, even if it would never be realized, the federation is a sufficient for eternal peace and one need not to go further
  - This does not exclude that one could go further without creating a State beyond the States; the EU is not a State, but it is not the minimal Kantian federation either
  - At the regional level one could go further without the danger of a "universal monarchy"

## Concluding remarks

- Since the EU is more than a federation in the Kantian sense, it must continue to become more republican in order to be just
  - The Kantian view explains why there are EU citizens, why EU citizens have rights under EU law, why they can vote for the EU parliament, without replacing the national States
  - The EU has the duty to guarantee and improve the freedoms and equality of its citizens and ensure that citizens can participate at the different levels of decision-making

## Concluding remarks

- For European peace, a European State is not necessary; this should ease concerns over a European super-State
- Kant reminds us that eternal peace cannot be achieved (except in death); peace should not be taken for granted and must be secured; the peace of today, is not necessarily there tomorrow.
  - The challenge of the rise of parties that are hostile against the EU should be addressed
  - Kant's theory can provide answers to these challenges: by defending the peace project of the EU and at the same time urging for more republicanism at the EU level