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# Theory and Prospects of Perpetual Peace: Analytical Essay

## Introduction

First of all, let's determine the very meaning of peace. One could say that peace is the absence of war, but, though one would not be entirely wrong, peace is rather the absence of any sort of conflict or premeditated intent thereof. World peace is a state that humanity has been trying to achieve since the very beginning of its formation. This aspiration can be seen by assessing the fact that all religions and religious scriptures of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism are all committed to peace and the prosperous co-existence of humanity. On the one hand peace would be the key to a utopian world, but on the other it is against human nature. We exist in a world of balance and a constant contestation of opposites. That is the way the world functions. But is perpetual peace possible? Entire civilisations - wiped out, cities burned, nations scorched by terrorism, genocide, war. How can we even propose ideologies of an "perpetual peace" while engaging in proxy wars and constant conflict? How can we preach world peace, and at the same time hate our boss at work, or envy a friend. How, will the establishment of international organisations help us to solve all these global problems? No. The answer lies much deeper within every one of us. If we truly want peace, then we will have to work hard at controlling ourselves and burying our primitive instinct to divide the whole world into "us" and "them", we have to stop discriminating on the bases of race, religion, culture, gender. And unfortunately, it is up to each and every human being on our planet to decide every day, every minute, to promote peace through our own words and actions.

## The theory of Perpetual Peace

So, what is perpetual peace? What exactly does it involve? An 18th Prussian-German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, wrote an essay on "Perpetual Peace" proposing two outcomes for humanity: 1) to end all wars and conflict, and 2) to reach "perpetual peace" in a world-wide cemetery for all humans, after an exterminatory war. He presented his work as a form of an international treaty. The first few points are conditions of his "treaty". The first condition is that no peace treaty should be agreed upon, if there is an intent of starting a war in the future. The second: no self-dependent state can be gifted to, bought or inherited by another state. The reason being that a state is not just an area of land, but rather a society of people, that no one other, but itself, can govern and rule itself.

Another important point he makes is that regular armies should no longer be necessary, but at the same time he supports the idea of an urgent military service, in which volunteers are trained to defend their homeland if the need arises. He believed that the very presence of armed forces forced nations into war. In the absence of regular armies, that prime source of tension and threat falls away. Constant military competition no longer exists. Without this factor, he believed, the nation can focus on other aspects of development, such as economy.

He considered especially relevant his following maxima, "No state should forcefully seek to be involved in the political structure and governing of another state."

This is especially relevant in modern politics, where we hear so much accusations of political

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leaders that rigged elections or interfered in some political revolutions. Even though no proof has ever been given, none can answer the question: who gives someone the right to change the course of a nation's development by interfering in the internal structures? Nobody. Nobody can give that right.

One of his "final conditions" of his "global peace treaty" is that the form of government of each state should be a republican one. He further explains, that this is structure-based, primarily, on the principle of freedom of the society's members ( a.i. people). Secondly, based on the foundation of a collective dependence from a single common legislation. Thirdly, based on the law of general equality. A combination of these principles forms precisely that of a republican state, the bases of which all the constitutions should be based on.

As can be seen, Kant wanted a global, interdependent structure that gave no way for conflict between states, once they were ruled over by law, and law alone. Unfortunately, these principles were impossible to apply to the political and government structures of the time, nonetheless they haven't lost their value in the modern political view. Infact, Kant's essay has been used as a basis for the regulations of the United Nations set of "tenets", even though many of them are ignored.

## **Prospects for "perpetual peace"**

For a moment, lets imagine a world in which Kant's idea has been implemented and perpetual peace embraced. Lets picture a world in which there is basically a utopian society and utopian conditions have been met.

### **Politics and government**

The ideal, utopian government can simply be described as a communist one. No private ownership would be allowed, as everything will belong to everyone. All enterprises will be controlled by the state to ensure an equal distribution of goods and products to the population. Infact, in a utopian, peaceful state, there will be no need for such a thing as a government, as the people will already adhere to the rules they set up for themselves. An important factor of foreign politics, is that a utopian state will not have to worry about problems of potential war, or any type of conflict, as a utopian government( or the absence thereof) wont provoke any other states to tension. Terrorism will no longer exist, as there will be no oppression of ideologies, religion or culture, which are the sources of terrorism.

### **Society**

A utopian society will firstly be tolerant towards all races, religions, cultures, genders. No discrimination will take place because the society will experience no hardships or tensions between different people. The people of a utopian society will only try to learn from the different cultures they all live in. The people will seek to find unity in their differences, for that is what makes different people of a single state stronger and mightier. Equality will be the first and foremost principle of the society in a utopian state. Equality between genders, cultures, races and religions will allow the citizens to focus on other major potential developments in science, technology and culture. Culture will further inspire people to unite and improve the state. Finally, a utopian society will know no crime, for it will have no poverty or unemployment, thus no need

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for crime.

## **Economy**

The economy in a utopian state will be a socialist one. No one owns anything, and everyone owns everything. There will be no competition between companies and enterprises, thus no setbacks and failures in business. Once a utopian society is formed the government will abolish any form of currency, as there will no longer be a need for it. Money, therefore, will no longer be of use to anybody. The economy should be able to provide for everyone, equally. All the needs of the civilians should be provided for. Social services will have reached its peak, in order to provision for all the necessities of the civilians.

## **Why perpetual peace is not possible**

Unfortunately, no matter how much we would want such a utopian system of perpetual peace, it is impossible for a number of reasons.

## **Politics and government**

First of all, perpetual peace means that all borders fail to exist, as a single state will be formed, in which all cultures, religions, races are equal, abolishing the need for the separation of people. This is impossible, due to the fact that it is simply human nature to raise themselves above others. The second problem is power. It is human nature to bring everything under their control, thus people will seek power in all aspects of life, especially those in positions and offices with potential for control.

Furthermore, a nation cannot survive without law, and there will have to be someone to, firstly, create the law, and, secondly, enforce the law, to assure it is implemented in order for all of the population to benefit. This “someone” will have to be a circle of well-educated intellectuals, being able to provide for the needs of the many, rather than the few. They will have to be able to retain themselves from the temptation of gaining total control and allowing certain privileges and benefits to some and discriminating against others.

Finally, a political structure will always face conflict from other governments and states, as it is natural for a government to attempt to gain as much land and power as possible in order to improve the lives of its subjects. Most often, this gaining is done through diplomatic ties, which quite often results in tension and eventually conflict. Also, conflict is customary for all human beings as we can see throughout human history with the rise and downfall of many civilisations.

## **Society**

The human body has adapted for survival. We can all agree that humans aren't the strongest or fastest creatures of the animal kingdom, nonetheless, today, we are the top of the food chain. A large factor that played a major role in this development was competition. Competition for space, food and survival. Without competition, development cannot exist. And without development, no species will develop and improve. Therefore, in perpetual peace, there will, inevitably, be a state of stagnation, and as the saying goes, “An idle mind is the devil's workshop.” Competition, most likely being the largest cause for any species to survive, is a

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factor that cannot exist in a state of perpetual peace and utopia, and since competition is inevitable, this state of perpetual peace is impossible to achieve.

Lastly, it is in human nature to be different. A utopian society of perpetual peace, implies the absence of any sort of differences between people - a complete and ultimate equality. Humans cannot exist without differentiating themselves and trying to separate themselves, and seek out compatible people similar enough to them; to draw up enough common traits to eventually assign themselves to a certain group or faction. Nobody can change the very nature of humans, therefore we will always seek a way to differentiate ourselves from others in order to seem unique and show our individual traits.

## **Economy**

The best economy is a combination between state-owned and private-owned. As aforementioned, in a utopian state, the economy is rather socialist than capitalist. A healthy economy always has some source of incentive, most often being, once again, competition. Competitive states very often compete with each other primarily in economy. And without competition, a state of stagnation will be reached. In a state of stagnation, an economy cannot thrive and therefore cannot provide for the citizens of the state.

Socialism has been implemented previously in history, but as we can see it has failed, but in one state - China. Everywhere else, socialism in the form of communism has failed to help the state grow. Capitalism has proven itself to be able to be the most successful out of the two. A healthy economy cannot be without trade. Trade relations form one of the most important factors of globalisation and international relations.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, we can agree that the prime factor for the impossibility of perpetual peace is human nature itself. Politics and government simply cannot exist in a socialist state, therefore in perpetual peace. Society cannot thrive in perpetual peace, as it will not experience any difficulties in order to improve, therefore ending up in a state of stagnation. Finally, an economy cannot thrive as solely socialist and without trade partners. Therefore, we can agree that ultimately, a perpetual peace cannot exist.

Although, peace, not necessarily perpetual, can only be reached by the thoughts and deeds of every person. Every human on our planet must accept the fact that the very future of our civilisation depends on every single one of us. It depends on every civilian to influence our future. It depends on our deeds, thoughts, and out-view.