

Working for Peace in Situations of Conflict: On Schmitt's Reception of Kant

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Abstract: The concept of the political enemy represents a cornerstone of Carl Schmitt's political philosophy. When developing this concept, Schmitt draws inspiration from Immanuel Kant's theory of perpetual peace. While appreciating a number of elements of the theory, Schmitt resolutely rejects the notion of the unjust enemy introduced by Kant. Schmitt's ambivalent reception of Kant sets the stage for his own deliberations on the relationship between enemies and ways of dealing with conflicts. A basic distinction underlying Schmitt's political theory is that between political and private enemy. In continuation of Kant, Schmitt elaborates political ways of limiting political enmity. The present paper proposes a path complementary to Schmitt and Kant identifying existential elements that can be used to limit political enmity. The paper's overall aim is to show how peace can be promoted in situations of conflict – in both political and existential ways.

Key words: Schmitt, Kant, political philosophy, enmity, conflict, peace

Abstrakt: Pojem politického nepriateľa predstavuje základný kameň politickej filozofie Carla Schmitta. Pri rozvoji tohto pojmu sa Schmitt inšpiruje teóriou večného mieru Immanuela Kanta. Hoci viaceré prvky tejto teórie oceňuje, rozhodne odmieta pojem nespravodlivého nepriateľa, ktorý zaviedol Kant. Schmittova ambivalentná recepcia Kanta je východiskom pre jeho vlastné úvahy o vzťahu nepriateľov a spôsobe riešenia konfliktov. Ústredným rozlíšením Schmittovej politickej filozofie je rozlíšenie politického a súkromného nepriateľa. V nadväznosti na Kanta Schmitt rozpracoval politické spôsoby obmedzenia politického nepriateľstva. Môj návrh, ktorý je komplementárny k Schmittovmu a Kantovmu návrhu, sa zameriava na existenciálne prvky využiteľné na obmedzenie politického nepriateľstva. Mojm cel-

kovým cieľom je poukázať na to, ako môžeme podporovať mier v konfliktnej situácii – politickými i existenciálnymi spôsobmi.

Kľúčové slová: Schmitt, Kant, politická filozofia, nepriateľstvo, konflikt, mier

The concept of the political enemy represents a cornerstone of Carl Schmitt's political philosophy. When developing this concept, Schmitt draws inspiration from Immanuel Kant's theory of perpetual peace in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. While appreciating a number of elements of the theory, Schmitt resolutely rejects the notion of the unjust enemy introduced by Kant. Schmitt's ambivalent reception of Kant sets the stage for his own deliberations on the relationship between enemies and ways of dealing with conflicts. A basic distinction underlying Schmitt's political theory is that between political and private enemy. In continuation of Kant, Schmitt proposes political ways of limiting political enmity. At the same time, he suggests that existential ways of limiting private enmity cannot be used productively in the political sphere. The present paper pursues a path complementary to Schmitt and Kant identifying existential elements that can be used to limit political enmity. The overall analysis aims to show how peace can be promoted in situations of conflict – in both political and existential ways.

1. Schmitt's Basic Distinctions: Friend-Enemy and Political-Private Enemy

In *The Concept of the Political* (1932), Schmitt introduced a series of distinctions that represent key points of orientation in his political theory. The most basic distinctions are those between friend and enemy on the one hand, and between political and private enemy on the other.

Schmitt presents the distinction between friend and enemy as the foundational criterion of the entire political sphere. It is comparable to the distinctions between good and evil in the sphere of morality and between beautiful and ugly in the sphere of aesthetics. All these distinctions are ultimate and constitutive for their respective sphere – they cannot be reduced to any other distinctions.¹ The friend-enemy

¹ Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by G. Schwab. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 25–27. In this article, I am developing ideas that I originally presented in Šajda, P., 2021. Nepriateľ ako radikálne „iný“: politické a existenciálne spôsoby

distinction applies to human collectives and the relationships between them. Friend is a collective with which our collective enters into a positive relationship, enemy is a collective with which our collective enters into a negative relationship and against which it defends itself: "The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation".² Initially, Schmitt presents the concepts of friend and enemy as equally important, but when he delves into the intricacies of political relationships the latter concept becomes dominant.³

Schmitt depicts the enemy as the epitome of radical difference. The enemy's political mode of being differs from our own to such an extent that it potentially represents a threat. The fact that our way of life is threatened by another way of life can lead to a political conflict in which the enemy's fundamental otherness comes into full view. Schmitt rejects attempts to replace the concept of the enemy with a 'softer' concept. He points to paradigms that have "attempted to transform the enemy from the viewpoint of economics into a *competitor* and from the intellectual point into a *debating adversary*".⁴ These concepts insufficiently reflect the radical difference of the enemy as well as the seriousness of the threat he poses. They do not take into account the possibility of a drastic negation of our own way of life, and therefore inadequately express the intensity of the political conflict.

Schmitt also highlights the difference between *the political enemy*

obmedzenia nepriateľstva. In: Gáliková Tolnaiová, S., Marchevský, O., Kyslan, P., eds. *Myslieť inak – iné v myslení*. Bratislava: Slovenské filozofické združenie pri SAV, pp. 189–196. See also two other thematically related texts of mine: Šajda, P., 2019. A Political Challenge to Christian Practical Rationality. In: Schreiber, G., ed. *Interesse am Anderen. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Religion und Rationalität*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 745–762; Šajda, P., 2019. Obmedzenie nepriateľstva ako výchova k ľudskosti. Carl Schmitt a Ernst Jünger. *Filozofia*, 74(10), pp. 852–865. My aim is to make use of those elements of Schmitt's political theory that have stood the test of time and can be considered *constructive*. For an in-depth analysis of the problematic elements of Schmitt's political thought, see Slováček, P., 2016. *Odvrátená strana evropského politického myšlení*. Carl Schmitt. Opava: Slezská univerzita v Opavě; Slomp, G., 2009. *Carl Schmitt and the Politics of Hostility, Violence and Terror*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

² Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26.

³ A substantially different view of the concepts of friend and enemy is offered by Jacques Derrida. Cf. Derrida, J., 1994. *Politiques de l'amitié*. Paris: Editions Galilée. The dominance of the concept of enemy in Schmitt was also highlighted by Heinrich Meier. Cf. Meier, H., 2011. *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt. Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, trans. by Marcus Brainard. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 52.

⁴ Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, p. 28 (emphasis added). See also Vad, E., 1996. *Strategie und Sicherheitspolitik. Perspektiven im Werk von Carl Schmitt*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, p. 57.

and *the private enemy*.⁵ Political antagonism between two collectives is characterized by a different dynamic than existential antagonism between two individuals. One's relation to the private enemy is marked by negative feelings, whose concentrated manifestation is hate. Christian ethics corrects this negative attitude with the commandment of *love thy neighbour* which can take the radical form of the love of one's enemy. Schmitt claims that the dynamics of love and hate are irrelevant for political decision-making. He warns especially against the transfer of the existential principle "love your enemies!"⁶ to the political sphere. The application of the principle to the political enemy would be self-destructive and even contrary to the principle's original meaning. The Greek text of the Bible uses the term *ἐχθρός* which refers to a private adversary, not the term *πολέμιος* which refers to a political enemy. Although in German such a lexical distinction is not common and in both cases the term *Feind* is used, the meaning of the commandment must be preserved: "The Bible quotation [...] certainly does not mean that one should love and support the enemies of one's own people".⁷ Thus, Schmitt insists on a strict separation of the existential and the political sphere, since the confusion of their respective principles would have tragic consequences.

2. Kant on the Equality of Political Enemies and the Notion of the Unjust Enemy

Kant developed his deliberations on political enmity in the context of his vision of perpetual peace. He launched this vision in *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795) and elaborated it further in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). In the conclusion of the latter work, he declares his unequivocal opposition to war as a means of solving disputes between political collectives: "Now, morally practical reason pronounces in us an irresistible *veto*: *There is to be no war*, neither war between you and me in the state of nature nor war between us as states [...] for war is not the way in which everyone should seek his rights".⁸

⁵ Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 28–30. The development of Schmitt's view of this difference was described by Ellen Kennedy. Cf. Kennedy, E. 2004. *Constitutional Failure. Carl Schmitt in Weimar*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 105.

⁶ In the New Testament the commandment can be found in Mt 5:44 and Lk 6:27.

⁷ Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, p. 29.

⁸ Kant, I., 1991. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by M. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 160.

While acknowledging that contemporary states view the waging of war as a natural part of their political existence and an inevitable component of international relations, Kant nonetheless proposes an ambitious project of overcoming this view and working together toward universal lasting peace. He insists that such peace is not merely one of the components of the Right of Nations, but its final end. Responding to critics, he admits that perpetual peace is an unachievable idea but argues that “the political principles directed toward perpetual peace [...] are not unachievable”.⁹ Thus, the leaders of nations are called to work on a continual approximation to perpetual peace as a *terminus ad quem* and to take concrete steps in this direction. According to Kant, a key step in this joint endeavour is the establishment of a voluntary association of states – a congress of states – which would facilitate the solving of international problems in a peaceful way. The *state of nature* among nations – in which disputes are solved by force, as there is no legitimate judicial authority – would be replaced by a *lawful condition*, in which disputes would be dealt with “in a civil way, as if by a lawsuit”.¹⁰ Just like the state represents a framework in which its citizens have overcome the state of nature and entered a rightful condition, the congress of states would represent a framework in which the states would abandon their original savagery and settle their conflicts in a civilized way. It was Kant's hope that this approach would prove appealing and the proposed congress of states would be joined by an ever increasing number of states.¹¹

For the purposes of the present investigation, it is important to examine what Kant has to say about relationships between states in a situation of conflict when peaceful means of dealing with disputes have been discarded. Kant presents insightful analyses of these relationships both *during* and *after* war, when states face each other as enemies. He claims that the conduct of states in the critical times of conflict determines whether the ideal of perpetual peace remains relevant

⁹ Ibid., p. 156. At the end of *Toward Perpetual Peace* Kant states the following: “If it is a duty to realize a condition of public right, and if there is well-founded hope that this can be attained, even if only in the form of an endlessly progressing approximation of it, then the perpetual peace [...] is not an empty idea, but rather a task which, carried out gradually, steadily moves toward its goal”. Cf. Kant, I., 2006. *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. by D. L. Colclasure. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 109.

¹⁰ Kant, I., 1991. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 157.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 156–157. See also Kant's earlier reflections on the federalism of free states in Kant, I., 2006. *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, pp. 78–81.

or becomes ever more distant. While it may seem self-contradictory to speak of law in a situation where law has been largely abrogated,¹² it is precisely in such times that the preservation of the vision of perpetual peace proves crucial. Kant insists that the warring parties should act “in accordance with principles that always leave open the possibility of leaving the state of nature among states [...] and entering a rightful condition”.¹³ The parties in conflict should exercise self-restraint and the war should be conducted with a view to future peace. Actions that make the approach of peace impossible should be avoided.

A fundamental measure ensuring that war is waged in a disciplined way and the possibility of future peace remains open is the decision to view the enemy as one's equal. The principle of the equality of enemies is an antidote to such kinds of war whose very character is contrary to the ideal of perpetual peace. These are especially punitive wars, wars of subjugation, and wars of extermination, all of which presuppose inequality and hierarchization of enemies. Kant clarifies that “[n]o war of independent states against each other can be a *punitive war* (*bellum punitivum*). For punishment occurs only in the relation of a superior (*imperantis*) to those subject to him (*subditum*), and states do not stand in that relation to each other”.¹⁴ This is a reiteration of the claim Kant already put forward in the Preliminary articles for perpetual peace among states in *Toward Perpetual Peace*: “A punitive war (*bellum punitivum*) between states is inconceivable (since there exists between them no relation of superior to subordinate). From this it follows that a war of extermination, in which both parties and, moreover, all right can be eradicated simultaneously, could bring about perpetual peace only over the great graveyard of humanity”.¹⁵ Thus, even in the midst of conflict it is essential to bear in mind that the enemy is a state with which we should be able to live peacefully in the future.

Kant argues that the principle of the equality of enemies should also be observed after the war, when one side is victorious and the other vanquished. While the outcome of the war brings about obvious political inequality, the basic coordinates of one's approach to the

¹² Kant quotes the saying *inter arma silent leges*. Cf. Kant, I., 1991. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 153. For more detail on Kant's differentiation between civil, international, and cosmopolitan law, see Zelizňáková, E., 2020. Súčasná kríza medzinárodného práva vo svetle Kantovej právnej filozofie. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 9(1), pp. 43–52.

¹³ Kant, I., 1991. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁵ Kant, I., 2006. *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, p. 71.

enemy should not be altered. The victor sets the initial conditions for concluding peace but simultaneously must refrain from all actions that would imply that the enemy was waging an unjust war. This would in turn imply that the victor was waging a punitive war. Kant suggests, for example, that the victorious side should not request compensation for the costs of war or for the freeing of prisoners of war. However, above all, it must not impose measures that would degrade the status of the defeated collective as such. Transforming the vanquished state into a colony and imposing bondage on its people would be contrary to the notion of a peace treaty that necessarily involves amnesty.¹⁶ The principle of the equality of enemies would be negated and the punitive measures would be in conflict with the ideal of perpetual peace.

While the principle of the equality of enemies – none of which is seen as waging an unjust war – represents a general rule, there is a single instance in which Kant speaks of an *unjust enemy*. This enemy is considered particularly dangerous, because he opposes the very core of the project of perpetual peace. The far-reaching consequences of the unjust enemy's stances need to be recognized and appropriate measures must be taken. Kant explains that this is “an enemy whose publicly expressed will (whether by word or deed) reveals a maxim by which, if it were made a universal rule, any condition of peace among nations would be impossible and, instead, a state of nature would be perpetuated”.¹⁷ Thus, the enemy is not only dangerous in his own right but also sets a ‘bad example’ for other states. He contaminates international politics with impetuses that support continuous waging of war and are at odds with the objective of lasting peace. Kant warns that this is “a matter of concern to all nations whose freedom is threatened by it, they are called upon to unite against such misconduct in order to deprive the state of its power”.¹⁸ The opposition to the unjust enemy must be resolute but the states united against such an enemy are bound to follow the principles directed toward perpetual peace. Kant permits the use of acceptable means to the highest degree, but prohibits the use of means that would cause injustice. While he approves of an enforced change to the inimical state's constitution – which would make it less prone to wage war – he disapproves of the division of the state's ter-

¹⁶ Kant, I., 1991. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 154–155.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

ritory that would violate the rights of its citizens.¹⁹ The ultimate goal should not be the punishment of the unjust enemy and its citizens but the neutralization of the state's policies that provoke international military conflicts.

3. Schmitt's Ambivalent Reception of Kant

In *The Nomos of the Earth* (1950), Schmitt discusses Kant's theory of political enmity and presents it as deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, Kant continues the line of classical European international law, which Schmitt appreciates, on the other hand, Kant introduces the notion of the unjust enemy which, according to Schmitt, can be easily misused by modern totalitarianisms.

1. Schmitt regards the principle of the equality of political enemies as the most valuable element of Kant's theory. He shows how this principle came to the fore in classical European international law and uncovers its roots in the works of Alberico Gentili (1552 – 1608) and Richard Zouch (c. 1590 – 1661). These thinkers laid the foundations of international law while emphasizing the equality of the different parties involved in international conflicts (*aequalitas hostium*).²⁰ The principle of the equality of enemies gained acceptance in legal and military practice especially after the Congress of Vienna (1814 – 1815).²¹ It stipulates that the enemy is to be considered just throughout the conflict unless he violates the rules of conducting war. Schmitt considers this principle an efficient political way of limiting enmity, since it enables a clear distinction between *the enemy* and *the criminal*. It prevents political actors from viewing the enemy as an object of punishment, revenge, or degradation. A war in which both sides treat the enemy as just is *non-discriminatory*.²² Seeing the enemy as our equal represents a barrier against his criminalization.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 155–156.

²⁰ Schmitt, C., 2006. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. by G. L. Ulmen. New York: Telos Press, p. 309.

²¹ Cf. Schmitt, C., 2006. *Theory of the Partisan. Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. by G. L. Ulmen. New York: Telos Press, p. 9.

²² Schmitt also speaks of a *just war on both sides* (*bellum utrumque justum*). Cf. Schmitt, C., 2006. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, p. 153. For Schmitt's reflections on the non-discriminatory concept of war, see *ibid.*, pp. 122, 147, 153–154, 159, 165, 200, 246.

The opposite notion is that of the *perfidious enemy* (*perfidus hostis*)²³ which presupposes that only one side of the conflict is just and has the right to judge the other. The enemy is seen as condemnable and is criminalized even without violating the law of war. A war against such an enemy is *discriminatory* and has a punitive character.²⁴ In an extreme case, the negativization of the enemy is intensified to such a degree that he is not only denied the status of being just but also the status of being human. In such conditions absolute enmity is embraced and the enemy's life is radically devalued.

Kant subscribes to the tradition of regarding one's enemy as equal and just, and prohibits discriminatory kinds of war. Schmitt quotes Kant's condemnation of punitive war, war of subjugation and war of extermination as a clear example of his adherence to the vision proposed by classical European international law.²⁵

2. Schmitt interprets Kant's introduction of the concept of the unjust enemy as a break with the philosophical and legal tradition initiated by Gentili and Zouch. He notes that Kant introduces the concept "in a highly surprising way".²⁶ He also points out that Kant defines the concept so vaguely that it can be easily appropriated by those who are searching for an instrument of discrimination.

When analyzing the concept, Schmitt first clarifies what it does *not* mean. Kant's deviation from the tradition of classical European international law is manifest in the fact that the concept of the unjust enemy does not refer to a state that violates the law of war: "Who is this unjust enemy? Certainly not the opponent who has broken the rules of war and has violated the right to war by perpetrating crimes and atrocities".²⁷ Kant's concept cannot also be understood as a revival of the theory of just war. Such war is, according to Schmitt, normally a cover for political effort to gain territory and Kant prohibits occupation of the territory of the vanquished unjust enemy.²⁸

Determining the positive content of the concept is, however, difficult, as Kant provides only a few abstract characteristics. The unjust

²³ Schmitt, C., 2015. *Glossarium. Aufzeichnungen aus den Jahren 1947 bis 1958*, ed. by G. Giesler and M. Tielke. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, p. 79.

²⁴ Schmitt comments on the discriminatory concept of war in *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, pp. 21, 124, 171, 321.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

enemy is a state which does not subscribe to the vision of an international congress of states that would help overcome the state of nature among nations. Schmitt believes that Kant does not provide reliable guidance for applying this characteristic in practice. For example, it is impossible to determine to which state or states the concept applies in Kant's own historical setting. Its vague definition means that *in concreto* the choice is a matter of guessing.²⁹ Furthermore, Kant declares that the unjust enemy's "*verbally expressed will*" – when perceived as a threat by other states – can constitute a sufficient cause for preventive war.³⁰ This could, however, open the door to political overreaction and punitive military action. Schmitt's conclusion is that Kant provides a highly contentious concept, whose negative consequences he fails to anticipate: "If it is difficult for people to distinguish between a just enemy and a felon, how can they view an unjust enemy as anything other than the most grievous criminal?"³¹

Since Schmitt sees the concept of the just enemy as a crucial achievement of classical international law, he takes a clear stand against Kant's concept of the unjust enemy. He considers Kant's overall doctrine of political enmity self-contradictory, as it, on the one hand, rejects discriminatory types of war and, on the other hand, introduces the concept of the unjust enemy which contains an immense potential for discriminating against the opponent. In his political theory, Schmitt draws inspiration from the former component of Kant's doctrine while distancing himself from the latter.

4. Inspiration by Kant: Schmitt's Political Means of Preventing Absolute Enmity

Schmitt saw, as a key problem of his own time, the emergence of a new kind of enemy that had been created by totalitarian ideologies. As classical international law and its doctrine of respect for the ene-

²⁹ Ibid., p. 171. Schmitt states that Kant is "content with his cautiously formulated generalities and general provisos. If freedom is threatened, then by whom, and who concretely will decide? All this remains open". Cf. *ibid.*, p. 170. In this context, Kant's philosophy of history becomes a relevant topic, which has been insightfully explored by Sandra Zákutná. She discusses, among other things, the dynamics of social and political *association* and *isolation*. Cf. Zákutná, S., 2019. Kant in the Context of 18th Century Philosophy of History. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 8(2), pp. 35–44.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

³¹ Ibid., p. 171.

my lost their appeal during World War I, radical revolutionary movements began to shape the international political scene. Both on the left and the right extreme of the political spectrum ideologies came to prominence which promoted the notion of the *absolute enemy*.³² The Communist and the National-Socialist movements claimed to identify an enemy that had to be annihilated under any circumstances. The *class enemy* or the *racial enemy* was presented as so radically different and 'toxic' that protective measures valid in political conflicts did not apply to him.³³

Absolute enmity, as envisaged by totalitarian ideologies, represents the most intensive form of enmity, in which the enemy's otherness is maximized. Since we have nothing in common with him, he constitutes an extreme threat to our way of life. Not only does it make no sense to protect him, his elimination is even seen as a merit, because absolute conflict is the only path to victory. Absolute enmity is a radical negation of political self-restraint and has an exterminatory character.³⁴ To prepare political grounds for the elimination of the absolute enemy, dehumanizing rhetoric is employed: the enemy is described, for example, as *an inhuman monster* or *life unworthy of life*.³⁵ The exclusion of the enemy from the human sphere justifies total war against him.

Schmitt explains that the appeal of the concept of the absolute enemy has ultimately reached far beyond the boundaries of the Communist and the National-Socialist political camps. Although the concept originated in totalitarian ideologies, it has silently found its way into the camp of their non-totalitarian opponents. In the 20th century, the tendency to criminalize the political enemy increased and was supported by the technological progress in arms production. Weapons of mass destruction became ever more efficient and their destructive power did not allow for a differentiated approach to the enemy. The use of these absolutely destructive means would

³² Cf. Schmitt, C., 2006. *Theory of the Partisan. Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, pp. 52–53, 89.

³³ Schmitt, C., 2015. Vorwort. In: *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, p. 11.

³⁴ See William Hooker's statement: "Whatever the precise circumstances in which it is expressed, 'absolute' enmity is a symptom of the breakdown of political restraint". Cf. Hooker, W., 2009. *Carl Schmitt's International Thought. Order and Orientation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 170.

³⁵ Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, p. 36; Schmitt, C., 2015. Hinweise. In: *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, p. 114.

be inexcusable without an absolute enemy.³⁶ The power of the new weapons contributed to the concept of the absolute enemy being accepted even by those who had originally rejected it, but later found it necessary for the scenario of a large-scale conflict.

When searching for a political means to counter the notion of absolute enmity, Schmitt avails himself of the principle of the equality of enemies promoted by Kant. With reference to this principle, Schmitt highlights the fundamental distinction between the enemy and the criminal in contrast to the doctrine of absolute enmity which knows no distinctions. He rejects universal discrimination and degradation of the enemy and endorses the non-discriminatory approach which aims to safeguard the dignity and rights of the enemy. Schmitt's argumentation focuses on the fact that even in situations of conflict, when the enemies are deeply divided by political differences, they remain united by their human nature: "the enemy does not cease to be a human being".³⁷ Schmitt uses this motif to criticize the obscuring of the enemy's humanity in the doctrine of absolute enmity: we are supposed to see only an enemy, not a human being. Being conscious of our shared humanity remains a crucial preventive measure against the rise of absolute enmity.

Although Schmitt discusses the principle of the equality of enemies primarily in connection with the state of war, its application is meaningful at all stages of a political conflict. From the very beginning, the principle can rectify relations and contribute to the formation of the least oppressive approach to the enemy. Once the conflict has escalated, it can continuously serve as a political instrument of deescalation.

The political developments of the 20th century prompted Schmitt to look for a principle that would facilitate the systematic limitation of enmity. Due to the rise of absolute enmity, Schmitt sought to identify political means that would help defuse conflicts and prepare ground for peace initiatives. Similarly to Kant, Schmitt directed his attention to the interaction between political collectives. While rejecting the transfer of the existential principle "love your enemies!" to politics, he searched for a similar principle that would be appropriate to the political sphere. As will be shown below, despite Schmitt's insistence

³⁶ Schmitt, C., 2006. *Theory of the Partisan. Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, pp. 93–94.

³⁷ Schmitt, C., 1996. *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54. See also *ibid.*, p. 36.

on the separation of the existential and the political sphere, he drew inspiration from the former when identifying the means for limiting political enmity.

5. The Unexplored Avenue: Existential Correction of Political Enmity

The present paper's contribution to the debate on political enmity developed by Kant and Schmitt consists in emphasizing the importance of existential means for deescalating conflicts and working for peace. First, those points in Schmitt's analyses will be highlighted where he crosses into the existential sphere, subsequently two existential ways of limiting political enmity will be proposed. The presented line of thought is complementary to those of Kant and Schmitt with the objective being the combination of political and existential approaches to limiting political enmity.

A closer examination of Schmitt's reflections on the premise *the enemy does not cease to be a human being* reveals that he takes into account both the collective political level and the individual existential level. Schmitt deals with existential dynamics due to their impact on the individual's stance vis-à-vis the political enemy. As it turns out, Schmitt is unable to uphold a clear separation of the political and the existential sphere in this context. This is particularly obvious when he explores the individual's psychological negativization of the political enemy: "Emotionally the enemy is easily treated as being evil and ugly, because every distinction, most of all the political, as the strongest and most intense of the distinctions and categorizations, draws upon other distinctions for support".³⁸ Thus, Schmitt devotes attention to existential processes which he originally linked solely to private enmity. It is, however, impossible to ignore them from the political perspective either, because the *cumulative* negativization of the enemy – which facilitates the development of absolute enmity – takes place at the existential level.

Schmitt acknowledges that the distinctions, which are clearly separated in his political theory, are utterly mixed in the individual's psychological reality. The political distinction of friend and enemy, as the most intense distinction, absorbs moral, aesthetic, and other distinctions. A broad spectrum of non-political negative attributes is ascribed to the enemy. The process of a cumulative negativization of the enemy occurs naturally, and if it is not corrected, it results in the enemy being vilified

³⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

and criminalized. Political propaganda promptly appeals to this natural tendency present in the human soul.

Schmitt reacts to the cumulative negativization of the enemy only at the collective political level. He emphasizes the principle of the just enemy which should guide the interaction of the collectives that stand against each other. In a situation of conflict it represents the main guarantee of limiting the tendency to negativize the enemy: it protects him against blind discrimination and criminalization. Schmitt does not develop existential ways of countering the negativization, since this is beyond the scope of his collective-oriented explorations. He admits, however, that when reflecting on political enmity, a complete separation of the existential and the political sphere is not feasible. A crucial part of the cumulative negativization of the enemy occurs at the psychological level and the individual's existential choices are a key factor in this context. Thus, if the negativization is to be efficiently countered, existential instruments must be used, too.

At this point, it would be wise to present two existential ways of limiting political enmity which can create synergy with the political principle of the just enemy. The first one consists in the application of the existential principle "love your enemies!" to certain members of the inimical collective. It should be recalled that Schmitt rejected a universal application of the principle in politics, but was inspired by it when looking for its political analogue. I agree with Schmitt that a general application of the principle to the political enemy would be self-destructive. If we make use, however, of the distinctions provided by classical European international law, to which Schmitt appealed, we can identify individuals within the inimical collective to whom the principle of neighbor-love can be applied in a meaningful way. These include, for example, non-combatants, wounded combatants, and prisoners of war.

The second existential way of limiting political enmity does not solely concern the escalated stage of conflict which represents the main focus of Schmitt's considerations. It can be applied much earlier and thus prevent the conflict from escalating. Schmitt highlighted the fact that discrimination becomes the primary attitude once the enemy has been subject to cumulative negativization. This cumulative effect must be checked precisely at the existential level. A critical examination of our own prejudice and the elimination of non-political negative attributes ascribed to the enemy can contribute substantially to the deescalation of a conflict. If one refuses to accept narratives that turn the enemy into

a criminal, his relationship to the enemy will not become a hostage to the calls for the enemy's degradation or even extermination. On the contrary, a culture of self-restraint will prevail, thus enabling one to overcome his own prejudice and create a relation with the enemy that is as respectful as possible.

6. Conclusion

Schmitt's political theory emphasizes, on the one hand, the necessity of the category of the enemy and, on the other hand, it searches for means of limiting political enmity. Its point of departure is the distinction between friend and enemy, as well as between political and private enemy. In continuation with Kant and classical European international law, Schmitt proposes political means of limiting political enmity, most importantly the principle of the equality of enemies which safeguards the enemy's fundamental rights. He rejects theories – and kinds of war – which hierarchize enemies and ultimately lead to the discrimination and oppression of the opponent. At this point, Schmitt sees a contradiction in Kant's political theory: Kant prohibits discriminatory war but introduces the concept of the unjust enemy, which can easily be misused precisely for that purpose. It can even be incorporated into the agenda of totalitarian movements that promote the idea of absolute enmity. Thus, Schmitt's reception of Kant has both a positive and a negative side. I have focused on the former proposing a productive combination of existential and political ways of limiting political enmity. This line of thought is complementary to that of Schmitt who insisted on a separation between the existential and the political sphere fearing nonsensical transfer of principles from the former to the latter. In his search for political means of limiting enmity, however, he also drew inspiration from the existential sphere. He dealt with it when analyzing the cumulative negativization of the enemy which creates conditions for the rise of absolute enmity. I have used the existential elements of Schmitt's political theory to formulate concrete existential ways of limiting political enmity. These can create synergy with the political ways developed by Kant and Schmitt. The synergy can become a vital part of initiatives that seek to promote peace in situations of conflict.

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