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Concepts of Peace

4 May 2025

Final Essay Questions 1,2,3

1.

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, negative peace is known as "the absence of violence or fear of violence". Negative peace aims to stop direct conflict, such as war, violent crime and rioting without particularly identifying the deep-rooted causes. It is more often considered a surface level, short term or an unstable form of peace ("Defining the Concept"). According to Vision of Humanity, it is easy to identify due to clear indicators such as homicide rates, political stability, and militarization ("Defining the Concept"). On the contrary, positive peace is defined as the "presence of the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies ("Defining the Concept"). Positive peace is rooted in deeper societal conditions such as strong governance, low levels of corruption, resource distribution, access to justice. Unlike negative peace, positive peace directly addresses the root cause of conflict and creates factors for long term stability for peace and balance ("Defining the Concept").

In 1994, the African country of Rwanda was devastated by one of the most horrific genocides in modern history (BBC News). In about a hundred days, an estimated one million

people were ethnically cleansed (BBC News). The Rwandan genocide ended when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by Paul Kagame, took control of the country and established a new government. Since this time, Rwanda has not experienced a return to violence or large-scale conflict between ethnic groups (UNHCR). While the country is no longer experiencing direct conflict, there are plenty of indicators that modern Rwanda is experiencing a form of negative peace. The government has established laws such as discussing one's ethnicity, along with more policies on national security, and internal policing. These measurements have maintained peace only in the strict sense of avoiding renewed violence (UNHCR). The Kantian Ideology of negative peace also supports this interpretation. Immanuel Kant argued that a federalist world order and the disappearance of standing armies could lead to "the end of all hostilities" (Hsieh). In Rwanda's situation, though the country is not disarmed, the new government's strict observance over military and political expression has helped prevent violent uprisings, which thereby fulfils a key element of negative peace (Hsieh). Although Rwanda is at peace, the nature of that peace is subject to criticism. Despite the stoppage of violence, political freedoms are limited, and the opposition is often silenced (UNHCR). These components suggest that while Rwanda has achieved negative peace, it remains vulnerable, undermined by restricted civil liberties and limited democratic openness.

Since 1994, however, Rwanda has taken significant strides toward achieving positive peace. The Rwandan government has prioritized national unity, reconciliation, and economic growth (UNHCR). These initiatives reflect an attempt to create long term peace by building institutions that support equality and justice. One major undertaking was the Gacaca court system, which allowed local communities to participate in transitional justice (Powers). This approach promoted healing within the communities by allowing people to confess their crimes, seek forgiveness and reintegrate back into society. Although the system faced criticism for

inconsistencies and political influence, it played a key role in promoting reconciliation and rebuilding trust within communities (Powers). Since 1994, Rwanda has also made strides towards positive peace through heavy investment into its economy. This included additional funding for and improvements in public education, healthcare, and infrastructure which have led to reductions in poverty and access to essential services. These structural changes address root causes of instability, such as inequality and lack of opportunity which aligns with the framework of positive peace (Powers).

Nonetheless, Rwanda still faces challenges in achieving positive peace in its entirety. While development is visible and governance is more efficient than in the past, political openness is lacking (Powers). Critics argue that the Rwandan government restricts the media, limits political opposition, and uses state institutions to maintain control. These concerns mean that the country has not fully met the standards of inclusive, open governance required to achieve genuine positive peace (Powers). In its transitional period since the 1990s, Rwanda has clearly demonstrated the difference between negative and positive peace. The country has achieved negative peace by stopping the violence and maintaining solid national stability since 1994. It has also made strides towards positive peace through reconciliation, economic development and social reform. However, the lack of political freedoms and democratic space prevents it from achieving complete positive peace. through its encouragement of reconciliation, economic development and social reform. However, the lack of political freedoms and democratic space stops the country from achieving complete positive peace. Rwanda's situation shows that while the absence of violence is a crucial foundation, lasting peace requires justice, equity and collaboration (Powers).

Immanuel Kant's envisioned perpetual peace as a structured approach to lasting global harmony, emphasizing legal, moral and political structures among states. In his work *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), Kant argues that true peace is not just the absence of war, but a political objective attainable through structured cooperation, democratic governance and the protection of universal rights (Hsieh). Immanuel Kant believed that governments governed by republican foundations such as balance of powers, equal representation are less likely to have conflict. He believed that citizens in such systems are less likely to support wars because they would be affected directly. Accordingly, the creation of republican governance is vital for achieving and maintaining peace.

Despite Kant believing in cooperation between governments, he did not advocate for a global government. Instead, he proposed a voluntary federation of free states, where each remains sovereign but agrees to follow shared principles of international law and peaceful conflict resolution. This vision of a "federalism of free states" provides a legal and political structure to support peace between sovereign nations (Hsieh). Kant also emphasized the importance of cosmopolitan right, which guarantees the respectful treatment of foreigners and promotes global cooperation. He argued that increased interaction among people across borders creates trust and mutual respect more critical. Kant writes that "a violation of rights in one place of the earth is felt in all," as societies grow increasingly interconnected. Disregarding cosmopolitan rights compromises the foundation of global trust upon which peace depends on. In Kant's eyes, perpetual peace is the "highest political good" (Hsieh).

In addition to these principles, Kant also listed several pre-requisites, such as the banning of secret treaties, abolishing standing armies, respecting sovereignty and fostering transparency between states (Smith). These pre-requisites were meant to mitigate the factors of conflict while

paving the way for meaningful, lasting peace. One manifestation of Kant's idea of a legal framework between states is the United Nations (UN), which actively promotes peaceful dispute resolution, collective security and international cooperation. UN bodies continuously work to keep peace worldwide through basic legal frameworks and collaboration between nations for greater purposes. While the UN is not a global federation, it functions in a structure where sovereign nations commit to rules-based conduct (Smith).

Other NGOs, such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, also function as legal frameworks for addressing transnational crimes and conflicts. Kant also believed that countries who are more peaceful and democratic are less likely to fight each other. Since the Second World War, many countries have developed Kant's democratic peace theory and have leaned toward a more democratic approach, reducing the probability of war and a more peaceful globe (Smith).

Kant also held the idea that all human beings are bound by universal moral responsibility by virtue of being rational individuals. Kant called this cosmopolitanism, which was that individuals hold inherent rights that extend beyond national borders. In 1948, this was passed into law as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which affirmed that everyone regardless of nationality, race, sex or religion (United Nations). Even today, modern human rights law, humanitarian intervention and global civil society reflect Kant's cosmopolitan vision in practice. International NGOs and human rights courts are built on the idea that global cooperation and shared responsibility are vital for peace and justice (United Nations). Despite the push for Kant's global vision, the international system falls short of realizing Kant's vision in many areas. Standing armies exist, dominant countries or the great powers continue to intervene in global affairs, and global inequality remains high. Violations of sovereignty and human rights persist in various

regions in the world. Kant's idea of a voluntary legal federation among equals is challenged by power imbalances and geopolitical interests in international relations (Smith).

Overall, Kant's vision of perpetual peace which is rooted in republican governance, cosmopolitan rights, and a federation of free states has shaped today's international system. Institutions like the UN and other helpful human rights systems reflect his legacy of influence and offer a lasting foundation for pursuing peace despite ongoing global challenges (Smith).

3.

Conflict progresses in three stages which are escalation, crisis, and resolution. Each stage requires specific strategies to prevent violence and foster sustainable peace. Effective conflict resolution heavily relies on non-violent strategies that address both emotional and structural causes. Preventative measures such as early intervention, structural reform, and public engagement are crucial in de-escalating and diminishing future conflicts. In the escalation stage, tensions grow and certain groups become polarized. Emotional misunderstanding is a key factor as "escalation results from failure to recognize and respond to underlying emotional needs and fears" (Kreisberg and Miller 34). De-escalation at this stage begins with empathy and viewing the opponent as a person with legitimate concerns. It is also important to "refuse to demonize" the other side and to "understand their motives," which helps reduce antagonism before it intensifies and gets out of control (Schweitzer 29). Dialogue is a crucial tool for preventing conflict from escalating (Kreisberg and Miller 68). Another important strategy is a third-party mediator, who helps to clarify misunderstandings and reduce hostility between the two hostile parties. Collective problem, which shift the focus from dominating or winning to addressing the issue as hand is essential for de-escalating confrontations (Kreisberg and Miller 102).

As conflict approaches the crisis stage, the risk of violence increases. Nonviolent action is a keyway to maintain moral legitimacy and build alternative power structures in the face of crisis (Schweitzer 47). Nonviolent resistance such as strikes, civil disobedience, protests are tools that "undermine authority without inciting violence" (Kreisberg and Miller 139). Another, more formal tool for avoiding crises is ceasefires, which allow time to pause violence and prepare for diplomatic talks. For example, "a ceasefire can create the space necessary for deeper discussions" (Kreisberg and Miller 145). Good faith negotiations and truth-telling are necessary as well, as recognizing suffering on all sides is a "precondition for reconciliation" (Schweitzer 59). Such negotiations and conversations help in healing the emotional wounds that could have escalated the situation to crisis (Kreisberg and Miller 181). In the resolution stage, attention turns to lasting peace efforts and tackling underlying causes. Effective resolution must confront both systemic inequalities and relational mistrust: "Conflict resolution must involve addressing both the structural injustices and emotional components (Kreisberg and Miller 200). Negotiation and inclusive mediation are essential to ensure all affected groups have a voice. Grassroots participation is vital, and it is important to avoid exclusive negotiations that neglect grassroots involvement (Schweitzer 65).

Institutional reform is necessary to prevent renewed conflict. Transparent, fair systems and "institutional reforms and trust-building measures are essential for preventing the reemergence of conflict" (Kreisberg and Miller 225). Ongoing dialogue, monitoring of agreements, and civic education are necessary to ensure that peace is long-lasting. "Continuous engagement is key to ensuring that peace is sustained" (Kreisberg and Miller 240). Together, these strategies underline a practical, phased approach to transforming conflict. In escalation, de-escalation depends on empathy, dialogue and mediation. In the stage of crisis, non-violent resistance, ceasefires, and honest dialogue deters violence. In the stage of resolution, inclusive

negotiations, institutional reform, and civic engagement and dialogue ensure lasting peace. Such approaches reduce conflict and strengthen long-lasting peace.

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