



# **Kant's Critique of Hobbes: Sovereignty and Cosmopolitanism (Political Philosophy Now series)**

*Howard Williams*

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In "Leviathan" (1651), Thomas Hobbes lays out the theoretical basis of the Westphalian Order - dominant in European politics from the treaty of Westphalia in 1648 until the end of World War II - in which sovereign and absolutist national states compete against each other for power and influence. In opposition to Hobbes, Immanuel Kant develops a theory of cosmopolitan right in which state sovereignty is matched with a gradually developing world federation of peaceful states. Similarly, Kant opposes Hobbes's self-centred moral theory with a moral theory which is based on self and the community. This study looks at the relationship between the two thinkers. It demonstrates the viable alternative to Hobbes' orthodoxy that can be found in Kant's political writings. It also shows how Kant anticipates the development of a world-wide political order and suggests that through Kant's political philosophy, the sovereignty of the individual state and cosmopolitanism (world-citizenship) can be brought into agreement.

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