

Chapter 20

Cosmopolitan Rationale for Planetary Defense



Nikola Schmidt

The greatest problem for the human species, the solution of which nature compels human to seek, is that of attaining a civil society which can administer justice universally.
– Immanuel Kant

20.1 Introduction

The aim of the following chapter is to introduce a reader to the origins and the most recent theoretical contributions to cosmopolitan theoretical thought (Immanuel Kant, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Burke). It shows how the thousand-years-long tradition of cosmopolitan thinking evolved through Immanuel Kant's enlightened, practical realization that cosmopolitan security thinking is a *strategic necessity* (Burke). Not thinking in this manner means we are caught in the *prison error of identity* driven by *national outlook* (Beck). Planetary defense is not about how high the probability is, as one missed asteroid or sudden comet can cause havoc beyond imagining. Rather, planetary defense is about a mindset that has the potential to solve many other global-scale challenges. Cosmopolitan thinking is once again coming back to the political fore because the (neo)realist conviction about the natural character of nation-states divided by borders looks bizarre under the light of such worldwide issues. Planetary defense, given its binary threat character (the object is, or is not, on a collision trajectory) is a good exercise for politically organizing humanity according to cosmopolitan norms and principles.

As discussed in the previous chapter, astronauts see our planet without borders and are coming back to Earth with a broader view of our destiny. In scientific terms,

N. Schmidt (✉)

Department of Political Science, Institute of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: nikola.schmidt@fsv.cuni.cz