

## **Intra-state Conflicts as Security Threats in a Globalized World with Case Study of Cyprus**

Şuay Nilhan Açıkalin

Department of International Relations,  
Bilkent University, Turkey

---

**Abstract:** Globalization can be felt in every parts of social sciences especially in international relations. Globalization have affected field in terms of redefinition of security threats. Especially after the end of Cold War, the perception of security threats definitely changed. Interstate conflict has been replaced by intra state conflicts. The nature of intra state conflicts causes more violence. This paper will examine defined security threats, changing perspective of security threats after the end of Cold War especially intra state conflict with level of analysis. Also, it includes an example of Cyprus sui generis issue as a intra state conflict.

**Key words:** Globalization • Security threats • Intra state conflict

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Security has been always important subject in international system in terms of defining the conception “security” and also goal of nation states as they called. “Security is an important concept, which has been used to justify suspending civil liberties, making war and massively reallocating resources during the last fifty years”[1]. However, problem related with security started with the definition of “security”. Scholars and nation states sometimes define this term differently. When a nation state defined “security”, it can include different elements such as drug trafficking, national security or terrorism which related with their perception. So, definition of security can be changed by states to states. Also, scholar’s definition can be various on the term of security because of their theoretical background such as realist or neorealist, can define “security” differently. So, people generally avoid to define security because of this Buzan called security as a neglected concept [1]. Also Buzan suggests other problems of definition of security with some questions security for whom?, which values?, how much security?, from what threats? All of these possible question and their answers make more difficult to define “security”. Furthermore, remarkable events in world politics pushed to scholars and states to rethink on security issues. Especially, WW2, invention of nuclear weapons and the post Cold War period changed the perceptions on security especially during the Cold War, everyday people experienced and felt fear of any possible nuclear attack so, the Cold War showed that security is not only limited with war zone, it is a part of people’s life. In other words, security is “beyond armed territorial security” to include “security of people in their homes, jobs and communities” [1].

On the other hand, this change of perception of security leads changing in security studies. New perceptions enriched the area of security studies. In this part, mostly theoretical part of security studies is both influenced and to have an influential role in this changing process. According to the Neorealist’s Walt, security studies can be defined generally as the study of threat, use and control military force [2]. As expected from neorealist they mostly focused on the uses of military force and possible threats from any other military force. Also Neorealists took a state as a main subject of security

---

**Corresponding Author:** Şuay Nilhan Açıkalin, Department of International Relations,  
Bilkent University, Turkey. E-mail: acikalın@ug.bilkent.edu.tr.

studies so, before WW2 security studies was mostly interested with strategy and military affairs were limited by military and diplomatic history [2]. However, when civilians were the most important part of WW2, this situation changed the face of security studies remarkably. Afterwards, nuclear revolution as a technological development and possibility to use nuclear power as a weapon on civilians shaped most of subjects of security studies. It continued until post Cold War. Second time security studies faced dramatic change. In the post Cold war era clearly showed that security studies should emphasize to non-military action that threats individuals and state which is totally claims of revisionist opposition of neorealists. In more details, revisionist claims that security studies ought to focus on how economical, sociological or environmental factors caused conflicts. In comparison to neorealists approach they suggests threats base approach rather than state base to security studies. In the lights of these developments in security studies, NATO gave birth to new security perspectives to world. In the beginning the existence and nature of NATO influenced theoretical dimension of security studies. As having emphasized before in addition to neorealists(traditional) and revisionist, constructivism and culturalism emerged as new perspectives for theoretical dimension of security studies. First of all, constructivism generally claims that every nation state has their own identity, their identity and structural norms of IS shapes their behavior in international system. In other words, norms shape actors and meaningful action by situating both in their own roles and international system [3].

In the case of security studies, constructivism is dealing with normative bases of interstate conflict and state use of violence, also examines how norms shape the security behavior of states [3]. In other words, for constructivist scholars enlargement of international organization can be considered as a “international socialization” [4]. After establishing of NATO especially the Cold War ended, NATO’s membership requires a set of criteria so countries which are willing to be member of NATO or already member of NATO, have to apply these criteria in their national system. Constructivist theory interpret this situation as a progress of become “one of us”. Maybe the most obvious example is “adoption of Western norms of military professionalism by post-communist states desperate to join NATO” [3]. Also Eastern enlargement of NATO can be shown as a evidence.

Moreover, NATO defined new types of threats such as proliferation, piracy, economic security, intrastate conflict, terrorism, environmental security and health security. Among these new security threats; health security and environmental security can be seen as a fresh and interesting areas for both scholars and nation states. In general terms, health security tends to interest in rising of HIV/AIDS problem and its effect for international community. Also, environmental security which focuses on environmental degradation, also nation states have started to set this issue in their agenda because it directly related with water supply or other energy supply. In addition to this, NATO sets crisis management and conflict resolution as a top of their agenda. NATO’s new definition to threat types became new study areas for scholars and also policy areas for nation states. To sum up, with end of the Cold War, security studies changed dramatically. It was enriched in terms of scope of security studies, new study areas occurred within security studies.

Among new security threats “conflict” seems most noteworthy and also precarious threat for every kind of actors in international system. “Conflict” is defined discord of action, feeling or ideas in literature. According to Kegley, conflict may be seen as inevitable and occurs when two parties perceive differences between themselves and seek to resolve those differences to their own satisfaction [5]. In global scale, there are two types of conflict, interstate and intrastate conflict. However, this paper specifically will examine definition of intra-state conflict, causes of intra-state conflict, why intra-state conflict is described as a security issue, its multidimensional effect on actors of international system and finally, analyzing of Cyprus issue as sui generis case.

**What Is Intra-state Conflict?:** Intra-state conflict means conflict occurs within the borders of sovereign nation or state. Despite of interstate conflict, intra(within)state conflict involves both state and non-state actors and comparison to interstate conflict intrastate conflict does not end up with agreements but mostly it results with intervention of third party such as former Yugoslavia issue. These two types of conflict still occur all over the world. However, after end of the Cold War, there was a new trend which is intra-state conflict have been rising. Disintegration of multinational countries played

important role in this rising such as Soviet Union or former Yugoslavia. It triggered emphasizing on ideology and nationalism, also goals of conflict sides changed. Accordance with effects of ending Cold War, causes of conflicts also changed. Intra-state conflicts have mostly ideological, ethnic or religious reasons. For example, former Yugoslavia case had a ethnic reason between Albanians and Serbs. As well as, Rwanda issue as a intra-state conflict is motivated by ethnic hatred between Hutus and Tutsis. In related with rising of intra-state conflicts, non-state actors became more important. Since 1988 when almost the Cold War ended, there have been four interstate conflicts but 44 intra-state conflicts occurred.

**Intra-state Conflict as a Security Issue:** Intra-state was defined as a major security threat instead of interstate war especially after end of the Cold War because international cooperation directly reduced the risking of inter-state wars. In other words main threat does not come from major inter-state confrontations any more, but from intra-state conflicts. Sources of intra-state conflict can be described with the help of level of analysis. First of all, individual level of analysis shows that there are two important point as a sources of conflict; effective leaders such as Milosevic and social identity has played important role in intrastate conflict in terms of feeling "superiority" from other groups. Secondly, state level analysis points out economic or political gain which means unfair distribution of national welfare and political power. Also, form of government causes intrastate conflict, in authoritarian, totalitarian, and other non-democratically constituted states can causes high social tension, may easily escalate a conflict . The last level is global level of analysis claim that intrastate wars may be a product of conflicts between states that share a transnational ethnic group or of meddling by external powers. In short, the general characteristics of intra-state are motivated by religious and ethnic differences. Unfortunately, due to characteristics of intra-state conflict, intra-state conflicts became more deadly and violent during a decade such as example of Yugoslavia or Rwanda, so, "increasingly internal conflicts, rooted in ideas of human identity and often expressed with frightening intensity, is the major threat to stability and peace, at the individual, local and international level" [6].

The nature of intra-state conflicts, as mentioned above, makes it insoluble, durable conflicts in a short term. First reason why intra-state conflicts are considered as a security issue is threaten to human rights in the individual level. Armaments during internal conflicts directly violate human right of civil population. "With internal conflicts, once the genie of violence is out of bottle, it is very hard to put it back again" [7]. According to Rome Statue of International Criminal Court, Murder; extermination; torture; rape; political, racial, or religious persecution and other inhumane acts reach the threshold of crimes against humanity only if they are part of a widespread or systematic practice. For example, in Kosovo case, Albanians directly were targeted by Milosevic and he made a ethnic cleansing began in 88, killing at least 10.000 Albanians [8]. All kinds of human violation were experienced after fall of Yugoslavia, " the human costs of fighting in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina included about quarter of million dead, millions of refugees, mass rapes and other atrocities, and devastation of entire cities and regions" [9].

Secondly, the reason why internal conflicts are considered as a security issue is threaten to world peace and stability. The possibility of spill over effects make internal conflicts as a more problematic for international community. Although internal conflicts starts and continue within a national border, there are some possibilities to spread all of the region and also world.

"Because of the increasingly complex interdependence among states, such conflict tends not to be confined within the boundaries of the particular state for long, if at all, but rapidly diffuses. It spills over across frontiers and enmeshes other states, or parts of states, in its grip. This process of diffusion and contagion means that low-level intra-state conflicts can potentially escalate into more intense inter-state ones"[6].

The fear of possible spread of a such conflict rises the concern of int'l community. There are several factors can triggered any possible spread especially pursuing of self-interest of neighbor states. In order to pursue their self-interest, they can support one side of conflict sides. Also, Diaspora population who, immigrated to another country, belong an ethnic identity of conflict sides can play effective role. This population can support one side of conflict in terms of

economic and political. Economically, diaspora population can send money to groups, it escalates conflict. Also politically, they provoke other people who belongs same groups all around the world so there would be new intra-state conflict. Both external factors directly might cause spread of the intra-state conflicts in whole region and also world. Moreover, generally intra-state conflicts are motivated by ethnicity as mentioned above because of this, world community is afraid of breeding a new conflict in other multiethnic states.

Consequently, there are two important motivations to make intra-state conflict as a security issue. Firstly, in individual level, intra-state conflicts lead a huge violence within state borders. It violates human rights and targets civilian population in the state. Second reason can be analyzed with international level, possible spill over effect that triggered by external factors such as diaspora population and spreading of ethnic feelings. All of the reasons clearly make intra-state conflict as a security threat for international community in every sense.

**Multidimensional Effects of Intra-state Conflict on actors of International Community:** As mentioned above, due to characteristic of intra-state conflict, its effect can be called as “multidimensional” because it influences international institutions and as well as states. Because of complexity of nature of intra-state conflicts, starting with analyzing of its effects on international institutions is more preferable. Initially, existence of intra-state as a new form of security threat, influence both structures and policies of international institutions. Rising violence threats and insoluble characteristic of internal conflict give more responsible to international community. Intra-state conflicts generally end up with intervention of non-state actors especially NATO and UN. However, during the Cold War era, NATO and UN were designed to deal with inter-state wars because of this, UN and NATO had to make structural changes. Most of examples of intervention were authorized by Chapter 7 of UN Security Charter.

Intervention of int’l institutions called “humanitarian intervention” which means that a state using military force against another state when the chief publicly declared aim of that military action is ending human-rights violations being perpetrated by the state against which it is directed. The most known example of humanitarian intervention is NATO’s in Kosovo. However, there are some problems in the case of intervention. One of the problem is “sovereignty” issue which refers that intra-state conflict occurs in one nation state and any kind intervention can be counted as a violates state sovereignty. Other problem, nation states as a member of these international institutions has their own national interest because of this “...it difficult to agree on a common course of action and settled for a unified response...” [10]. This problem is experienced in every intra-state conflict, the most near example is Libya case. International institutions not only take responsibility to end conflict, also they take responsibility of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in conflict area because of effects of intra-state conflicts on international institutions, some of scholars called this situation as a “internationalized internal conflicts” which means that now conflicts is beyond of the conflict area and justifying in global level. In short, after end of the Cold War effects of intra-state conflicts especially have been felt by mostly international institutions. They have to take more responsibility in the case of protection of world peace and stability.

Afterwards, intra-state conflict directly affects states which are the main actors of international system. When analyze effects of intra-state conflict on state, it can be distinguished two part, effects on “host state” and other states. Obviously, the most influenced state is “host state” in terms of physical and political. In terms of physically, during the intra-state conflict, nearly all infrastructure of state is destroyed. Use of weapons in intra-state conflicts causes destruction of state which included hospitals, public areas, houses, bridge and any other facilities that civilians have to use. According to the “G17 estimations, overall damage made by NATO bombardment counted about 29.6 billion USD” [11]. Not only destroying physical facilities but also causes economic downturn of state. After immediately the intra-state conflicts, poverty and unemployment are experienced as a major problem in the host states because nearly all money stock is reduced and inflation dramatically rise. Actually, economic downturn and destroying facilities are interdependent each other. Even in the post conflict era, host states suffer recovering economic and physical devastation. To exemplify, after end of the Kosovo crisis, in Serbia “nearly half of the labour force is unemployed - there are approximately 600,000 to 800,000 jobless people, in addition to 340,000 who are on compulsory leave” [11].

Secondly, political effects of intra-state conflict on host states are inevitable. In other words, conflict can cause collapse of central authority in host state and it triggers a set of political problems for state. Collapse of central authority gives birth to another main problem which is another conflict for power struggle. "All major groups desire to get a dominant position to run the country and pursue a more privileged status in comparison with other groups". This situation generally is experienced post conflict era, after all of violence ended people and international community fear that any possible new conflict for power struggle.

Effect of intra state is not limited with host states also felt by other nation states in international system. Existence of intra-state conflict in any region influences nation state's policy immediately. In the case, making peace for conflict, they mostly prefer take a decision under umbrella of international organizations with other nation states. However, intra-state conflicts affect nation states in two main problem, refugee issue and economic. Refugee problem is one of the possible consequences of intra-state conflicts because in order to escape violation, people aggregate in borders. Nation states really concern on sponsoring refugee camps and internal security threat from refugees. In Kosovo case, "The Kosovo crisis resulted in about 1.5 million Albanian Kosovar refugees and Internally Displaced persons"(1) but only 7.000 people come back to their homeland. Furthermore, economic instability and downturn in a state effect other nation states because of their investment in host state of conflict and possible unbalancing in international market. They have to withdraw their investment in that country and it can causes loss of money. So, all of these show that intra-state conflict has a complex nature and as a result of that it has multidimensional effect on actors of international community. Influence of intra-state conflict can be categorized two main level, international institutions and nation states as a main actor of international system. Maybe the most concrete effect is developing of humanitarian intervention.

**Cyprus as a Sui generis Case for Intra-state Conflict:** As a last part of this paper, Cyprus issue will be examined as a case study in order to show reasons why intra-state conflict is described as a security threat and understand effects of intra-state conflict clearly. Although, it is considered intra-state conflict, final status of Cyprus makes it sui generis in world political history. First of all, historical insight is very important to understand today's situation of Cyprus. Cyprus Island were ruled by Ottoman Empire for 306 years however, after WW1, Cyprus was given to Great Britain as a colony, after a while Greek Cypriots rebelled in order to unify with Greece. This movement known as a "Enosis". In 1959 when after withdrawal of Great Britain, London Agreement was signed by Turkey, Great Britain, Greece and Cyprus. According to this agreement, there was a federal government which had to have Greek Cypriots President and Turkish Vice President. Also, there was obligatory to have seven Greek Cypriots ministers and three Turkish Cypriots ministers. However, even this agreement and new constitution couldn't hinder intra-state conflict in Cyprus Island. After three years later, President III. Macarios suggested some changing on constitution which reduce rights of Turkish Cypriots. Afterwards, Turkish side opposed his suggestion, after this opposition Greek Cypriots started to attack Turkish Cypriots. Greek troops settled illegally, this intra-state conflict was tried to end up by UN when they composed buffer zone between north and south, actually first partition was made in 1964 by UN. Turkish government threatened to intervene island and made bombardment on the island in order to protect Turkish Cypriots rights. Then, with the pressures of US, Greece withdrew their troops from island. However, it was not the end of conflict in the island. After "coup d'etat" in Greece, the tension in island rose again. In 1974 when again "Enosis" movement started, Turkey intervened Cyprus which depends on Guarantee Treaty but this intervention was called as a "invasion" by UNSCR 353. In 1983, Turkish Republic of Northern Cypriots was declared but without Turkey no actors of international community recognize TRNC, so, there were Republic of Cyprus which became member of European Union and TRNC which is "*de facto*" state occurred. Throughout years, there have been many negotiations trial especially conducted by Kofi Annan. In 2004, there was referendum in the island for unification, Turkish side accepted but Greek side rejected. So, issue is still insoluble and there is no peace agreement yet. So, violation of human rights and possible escalation of interstate conflict between Turkey and Greece are concrete example of reasons that make intra-state conflict as a security threat.

After historical background, Cyprus issue is not only intra-state conflict but it is totally sui generis case. The existence of “*de facto*” state which is TRNC and EU membership of Republic Cyprus made more complex situation. In the analyzing of Cyprus issue as a intra-state conflict directly reflects complexity of Cyprus issue. First, Cyprus issue as a intra-state conflict affected nation states especially Turkey, Greece and Great Britain. Turkey had to intervene Cyprus in order to end violate towards Turkish Cypriots. Even this intra-state conflict about resulted in interstate conflict between Turkey and Greek however it was not. A long time, Turkey and Greek experienced diplomatic crisis because of Cyprus issue. Also, due to intervention of Turkey, Turkey was put embargo by United Nations for a while. On the other hand, effects of Cyprus issue directly influenced international institutions. UN still does not recognize Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Membership of Republic of Cyprus of European Union made more complex the situation of island. It also locked Turkey’s accession to European Union. In short, effects of Cyprus issue as a intra-state conflicts led to serious and unexpected international problem in long term. Cyprus issue might be the most obvious example which shows multidimensional effect of intra-state conflicts.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, immediately after end of the Cold War, there were new security threats occurred such as environmental security, drug trafficking and health security can be listed as a new security threats. Changing is not only limited with bring new subject, it also resulted with a new theoretical perspective-constructivism in security studies. In the light of these developments, maybe the most destructive one is intra-state conflict especially after multiethnic states started to partite such as Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia. These intra-state conflicts became world’s new security threat. Actually, any of actors was ready to deal with this new security threat in international system.

There are main aspects that make intra-state conflict as a security issue, reasons can be analyzed with level of analysis. Intra-state conflicts are totally violates human rights in individual level. Violating human right may be the most important reason to consider intra-state conflict as a security threat. Even violates of human right is main motive of intervention of international institutions. Furthermore, In the global level, intra-state conflict starts in any nation state borders, however, sometimes it can show spill-over effect which mean possible spread over of conflict to another areas in the world. In short, mainly violating of human rights and possible spillover effect make intra-state conflict as a undeniable threat for security. In the last part, Cyprus issue which, is still insoluble, can clearly show that aspects of intra-state conflict as a security threat, complexity of its nature and unexpected effects of conflict in long term. Today, still intra-state conflict is one of main concern of every actor in international community, in some areas still suffers remains of intra-state conflict. In future, there are still hopes for peaceful world for which does not mean only absence of big world wars but also reconstructing peace in conflictual areas.

### REFERENCES

1. Baldwin, D., 1997. The Security Concept. *Rev. Intl. Studies*, 23(1): 5-26.
2. Walt, S., 1991. The Renaissance of Security Studies, *International Studies Quarterly*, 35: 211-239.
3. Farrell, T., 2002. Constructivist Security Studies: Potrait of a Research Program. *International Studies Review*, 4(1): 49-72.
4. Schimmelfening, F., 1998. NATO Enlargement: A Constructivist Explanation, *Security Studies*, 8(2-3): 198-234.
5. Kegley, C.W., 2007. *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*. 11th ed. Thomson-Wadsworth.
6. Bloomfield, D. And R. Ben, 1998. *The Changing Nature of Conflict and Conflict Management Democracy and Deep Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiator*. Ed. Peter Harris and Ben Reilly. Stockholm: International IDEA.

7. Ware, Helen ed., 2007. *The Non-Sense Guide to Conflict and Peace*. Oxford: New Internationalist.
8. Kupchan, C.A., 2005. Independence for Kosovo, *Foreign Affairs*, 84(6): 14-20.
9. Kaufmann, S., 2001. *Modern Hatred: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Cornell.
10. Caplan, R., 1998. International diplomacy and the crisis in Kosovo, *International Affairs*, 74(4): 745-761.
11. Hatzikonstantinou, G. And S. Pantelis, 2001. *International Conference Restructuring, Stability and Development in Southeastern Europe*.