

## THE RISE OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM, INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

This article aims to discuss the rise of ethnic nationalism and related intra-state conflicts in the post-Cold War era, also attempting to come up with some recommendations for the resolution of such conflicts. By looking through major ethnopolitical conflicts around the globe and trying to find out some main points in common, the study reaches the conclusion that these conflicts are, in general, associated with, but not limited to, restrictions of ethnic identity, legal, economic and cultural discrimination, anti-democratic regimes, unfavorable economic conditions, collapse of state authority, and international support. The study also reveals that ethnopolitical conflicts cannot be resolved through force only. Although a reasonable use of force may be functional in terms of stopping immediate violence and providing a cooling-off period for negotiations, multi-level efforts are said to be needed by domestic and international actors to be responsive to the underlying causes of intra-state conflicts discussed in detail.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Nationalism, Intra-State Conflicts, Ethnic Conflicts, Ethnic Conflict Resolution, Peace Building.

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## **Etnik Milliyetçiliğin Yükselişi, Devlet-İçi Çatışmalar ve Çatışma Çözümü**

### **Öz**

Bu makale, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde yükselen etnik milliyetçilik ve bununla bağlantılı devlet içi çatışmaların temel sebepleri üzerine analitik bir tartışma ortaya koymaya çalışmakta, aynı zamanda söz konusu çatışmaların nasıl çözülebileceğine ilişkin bazı öneriler geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Küresel ölçekte cereyan eden etno-politik çatışmaların kimi ortak yanlarını tespit etme çabasından hareket eden çalışma, söz konusu çatışmaların, genel olarak, etnik kimliği baskılamaya yönelik sınırlamalar, yasal, ekonomik ve kültürel ayrımcılık, anti-demokratik rejim, elverişsiz ekonomik koşullar, adaletsiz kaynak dağılımı, devlet otoritesinin çökmesi ve uluslararası destek unsurlarıyla bağlantılı olduğu sonucuna ulaşmaktadır. Çalışma, ayrıca, devlet içi çatışmaların yalnızca askeri güç temelinde çözülemeyeceğine vurgu yapmakta, makul düzeyde bir güç kullanımının fiziksel şiddeti önleme bağlamında fonksiyonel olabileceğine, ancak kalıcı bir çözüm için, ulusal ve uluslararası aktörler tarafından sorunların altta yatan nedenlerine cevap verebilecek çok yönlü çabalar ortaya konması gereğine işaret etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Etnik Milliyetçilik, Devlet İçi Çatışmalar, Etnik Çatışmalar, Etnik Çatışma Çözümü, Barışın İnşası

## **Introduction**

The conventional wisdom in the world, until the end of the Cold War, was that ethnic nationalism was an outdated concept and largely resolved problem. On both sides of the Cold War, the trend seemed to indicate that the world was moving toward internationalism rather than nationalism. As a result of the threat of nuclear warfare, great emphasis on democracy and human rights, economic interdependence, and gradual acceptance of universal ideologies, it became fashionable to speak of the demise of ethnic nationalism.

Despite contrary expectations, however, a fresh cycle of ethnopolitical movements have emerged in Eastern Europe, including the Balkans, Central Asia, Africa, and many other parts of the world (Sutherland, 2011). The rise of ethnic nationalism, in turn, led to eruption of so many ethnically-driven intra-state conflicts. The essence of intra-state conflicts involves inter-group rivalries between two or more ethno-cultural groups that feel different from each other. But this rivalry would especially be translated into an overt conflict when the groups, or at least one of them, view their relationship as unfair under the existing political order. The groups that perceive themselves as underprivileged, then, would seek changes through conflict, ranging from recognition of cultural rights to autonomy, to political separation or full independence. The conflict is usually directed towards the members of dominant group(s) or to the state authority dominated by them. Thus, in almost all intra-state conflicts, the very legitimacy of the state is also under question.

The era of intra-state conflicts appears to be holding. However, the international community cannot be said to be well prepared to this trend. Major international organizations, including the UN, were designed to cope with inter-state problems, historically the main source of threat to global peace and security. On the other hand, the fact that internal conflicts occur within the borders of states made major international actors reluctant to intervene as well, either for legal concerns or for concern to avoid probable loses. Thus, unless they really escalate, the international community has preferred not to involve in intra-state conflicts.

Yet such conflicts somehow need to be managed and resolved, or else international peace and security will not be in a stable situation, since even if intra-state conflicts appear to be local, they can quickly gain an international dimension due to global interdependence and to various

international support. This article attempts to provide some explanations regarding the rise ethnic nationalism and related conflicts by observing many points that seem to be common in major internal conflicts around the globe, trying to come up with some recommendations for their resolution as well.

### **The Question of Ethnic Identity**

Before getting into a detailed discussion, a few points need to be clarified with respect to the issue of ethnic identity as a core variable in intra-state conflicts.

The ethnic criteria used by conflicting groups to define themselves may include common descent, shared historic experiences, or valued cultural traits. In some cases, race and blood ties may also be very important, but in general, there is no warrant for assuming that any one basis for ethnic identity is *inherently* more important than any other. In the final analysis, the self-attachment to a group is a matter of personal feeling, which may be subjectively defined based on different criteria.

It should be also noted that as we learn from research on human development, no one is born with a distinct identity. One's sense of self, or identity, is slowly developed as the individual enters into a wide variety of social interactions with other individuals in a given environment (Cote and Levine, 2014, pp. 14-19). Thus, in this process of socialization, the factors impacting on the crystallization of ethnic identity may vary. While some social environments give more weight to race or common descent, some others may emphasize other bases for ethnic identity, such as religion, language, or shared culture.

Yet what we know for sure is that, ones ethnic identity is formed, it becomes rather resistant to change. Although change and mutability are endemic in all social identities, hypothetically speaking, we observe that this happens only exceptionally. The reason for this lies in the fact that there usually is a very strong relationship between ethnic identity and one's sense of self. Since an established ethnic identity satisfies the individual's need to know who s/he is and who others are, as well as the need to belong, to love and to be loved, it is rather inflexible to change. Indeed, the self-esteem of individuals often rises and falls with the fate of their group. A success of an in-group uplifts the individuals in that group and a failure hurts them (Clogan, 2002). The fact that people may

be willing to die rather than to change their identities and that the group may cling to its identity all the more when political and military pressure is intensified are perhaps understandable within this context.

While ethnic identity is a natural and universal phenomenon, it would be erroneous to assume that ethnic identity itself is a direct cause of ethnic conflicts. If that were the case, then so many ethnic groups around the globe would be in constant conflict just on the ground of their differences. However, we observe that this is not the case and indeed, cooperation among diverse ethnic groups is as common as inter-group conflict, if not more common. In light of that, it would be reasonable to argue that intra-state conflicts result from certain negative conditions. Then, what are those conditions?

## **The Structure of Intra-State Conflicts: Major Malign Conditions in Common**

### ***Restrictions on Ethnic Identity***

First of all, whether we look at the intra-state conflicts that the UN has intervened in the post-Cold War period or major others, it becomes apparent that these conflicts are not independent of the desire to express distinct group identity. Such conflicts tend to occur when groups feel serious restrictions on the expression of their ethno-cultural distinction. The restrictions talked about here may involve limitations to the use of local language (i.e., in schools and courts), exclusion of certain ethnic groups from political power, or limitations to the expression of local customs. In general, the greater the scope of real or perceived restrictions the more likely the potential for ethnic challenge against the status quo. Hence, contrary to the common sense, ethnic identity is valued in and of itself, and for many ethnic groups, the mere urge to express their distinct identity may be independent of the pursuit of economic well-being or power (Gurr, 1996, p. 53).

A strong sense of group identity and collective grievances with respect to real or perceived restrictions are both necessary conditions for sustained ethnic mobilization, but they are not sufficient. Some degree of cohesion is also needed to convert common grievances and identity into purposeful action. A group's cohesion is shaped by its social, political, and economic organization, past and present. Cohesion tends to be greater among groups held together by dense networks of communication and

interaction (Gurr, 2015, p. 3). It is also greater among groups concentrated in a single region, such as the Tamils of Sri Lanka, rather than dispersed, like the Chinese of Malaysia.

### ***Legal, Economic and Cultural Discrimination***

Another common point in different ethnic conflicts around the globe seems to be discrimination. The most apparent aspect of discrimination is legal discrimination; that is, unequal treatment of minority groups by dominant groups and not creating conditions for their progress (Banton, 1994). In most Third World countries, inequalities among ethnic groups in status and access to political power have also been deliberately maintained through local law and public policy. State building almost everywhere in the Third World resulted in policies aimed at assimilating minority peoples, restraining their historic autonomy, and extracting their resources and labor force for the use of the state, dominated by a certain ethnic group, or groups. Some minority peoples, including most of the overseas Chinese of Southeast Asia have been able to share power and prosperity at the center of new states. Some others, particularly those in Africa where the reach of state power is limited, have been able to hold on to *de facto* local autonomy. Yet the general effect of state building or expansion of state power in most parts of the world has been to substantially increase the grievances of most ethnically distinct groups, those who have either not being strong enough to protect their local autonomy or not been allowed to participate in power at the center (Gurr, 1993, pp. 25-27).

Having said that it should also be mentioned that discrimination is not limited with legal discrimination, most evident in the Third World. Evident inequalities in status and well being may also cause deep grievances for underprivileged ethnic groups elsewhere, called structural violence. For instance, minorities in Western countries usually work in lower-status jobs and have a clearly low level of income. Even though there is no legal restriction for upward social mobility, these people are mostly entrapped in underprivileged conditions and very few can actually get ahead in the system. The discontent regarding their disadvantage in comparison with privileged groups may, at times, motive these people for political mobilization. Many minority groups' occasional uprisings in European countries, the hidden tension between White and non-White Americans, between the Black and White in South Africa do not seem to be independent of this kind of structural discrimination. The perception

of limited possibilities for upward social mobility tends to anger and motivate many minority groups to utilize conflict as a means to achieve what the privileged groups have (Yilmaz, 2007b, p. 12).

Also, minorities in multi ethnic states often face cultural discrimination. That is, social practices would be such that while dominant group culture is valued, minority norms and customs are disvalued and marginalized. Some examples of cultural discrimination may include making fun of minority languages and customs, portraying minorities as “bad people” in movies and television programs, excluding them from popular social gatherings, and negatively stereotyping them as a group, in general (Galtung, 1990, p. 291).

By discrimination policies, dominant groups aim to assimilate minorities, but indeed, in-group solidarity usually increases within ethnic groups facing serious legal, structural or cultural discrimination. The groups whose underprivileged status is maintained through repression may be hesitant to act on dominant groups in the short run, but they certainly nurture deep grievances against them. Eventually, these grievances may manifest themselves in conflict when conditions become suitable for ethnic mobilization.

### ***Anti-Democratic Regimes***

Just having talked about the issues of the urge to express ethnic identity and discrimination, the characteristics of political system should also be taken into account as these issues are also linked with it. It is usually the case that liberal democratic regimes provide many structural mechanisms preventing, at least, legal discrimination and easing identity expression. For example, in most liberal democracies, minority rights are strictly protected by law, different ethnic groups have a space to exercise their group identities, and social problems can find democratic channels to express themselves. Equally or more important, the distribution of political power can be shaped, or re-shaped, through political elections. Therefore, issues concerning ethnic groups can be peacefully dealt with in liberal democracies before they escalate to large-scale conflicts (Gartner, Honig and Akbulut, 2015).

That aside, a burgeoning literature has discussed the pacific culture of democracies, usually called as “democratic culture”. In its origin, democratic culture is driven from the interactions of individuals with

the system of democracy but in time, it becomes a reality dominating inter-individual relations. Democratic culture promotes peace through common social practices, such as openness to dialogue, tolerance to differences, peaceful resolution of social conflicts, rejecting violence as a means to handle problems as well. Such qualities not only foster social harmony but also give rise to the belief that conflict may produce win-win solutions and it may not be a solely negative phenomenon (Muravchik, 1996, p. 576).

On the other hand, in authoritarian, totalitarian, and other types of anti-democratic regimes, the absence or weakness of systemic mechanisms that can alleviate social tension may easily escalate ethnic issues to the point of violent conflict. In such regimes, dominant group privileges are usually supported by local law and popular culture too, perpetuating, thus, discrimination and repression at the political level, as well as at the societal level. Hence, it is perhaps no coincidence that serious internal conflicts tend more frequently to occur in anti-democratic societies.

### ***Unfavorable Economic Conditions***

Another factor that contributes to the occurrence of ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic societies is unfavorable economic conditions. When the intra-state conflicts that the UN has intervened are examined, it becomes clear that the GDP per capita in these countries is approximately \$2000 according to the data by *The World Factbook*. Even in some countries, such as Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Haiti, it is well under this figure. Research shows that there is a strong correlation between human needs deprivation and conflict. If people are not satisfied in terms of their basic needs, they may easily become conflict-prone against other individuals and the system under which they live (Burton, 1979, 1990, 1997).

Aside from widespread poverty, in countries suffering from serious intra-state conflicts, there usually exist great gaps in the distribution of welfare among different ethnic groups. While dominant groups often get the "lion's share" and enjoy prosperity, most minorities suffer poverty and they are entrapped in a structural violence (Gurr, 2015, p. 14). This relative deprivation of economic well-being in comparison with dominant groups may motivate disadvantaged ethnic groups for political mobilization.



### ***Collapse of State***

Sometimes intra-state conflicts may also result from the collapse of state authority. Just as serious ethnic conflicts may lead to the collapse of the state at times, the collapse, by itself, may also give rise to inter-ethnic conflicts.

To be more specific, first of all, state collapse causes a local anarchy in which individuals and group find themselves in a state of serious insecurity. In the absence of a central authority, security is inevitably subjectively pursued, whereby many social conflicts occur out of it. Additionally, in-group solidarity usually increases in the absence of a central authority as individuals try to get a sense of security by clinging more to their group. Increasing in-group solidarity, in turn, exacerbates ethnocentric behaviors, that is extreme in-group favoritism and discrimination against out-groups, a social-psychological component of inter-group tension, if not conflict (Yılmaz, 2007b, p. 28).

Second, the collapse of the state also results in a power struggle for governance among rival groups. All major groups want to get a dominant position to run the country and pursue a more privileged status in comparison with other groups. Yet since different groups play the same game, their efforts inevitably clash and the power struggle among them may manifest itself in serious inter-group conflicts (Lyons and Samatar, 1995, pp. 2-7).

In addition, with the collapse of the state, both local and foreign investments decrease, whereby the fulfillment of people's basic needs becomes very problematic. As a result of that, spreading poverty, on the one hand, and pursuit of needs fulfillment with subjective methods, on the other, may create a conflict-prone structure.

In short, although it is not the only cause, the collapse of central authority may be a serious source of inter-group conflicts. As a matter of fact, the inter-ethnic conflicts occurred in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia after the disintegration of them in the early 1990s also do not seem to be independent of the dissolution of central authority.

### ***International Support***

The factors that have been addressed and discussed so far are among

major internal dynamics of serious intra-state conflicts. Yet the rise of ethnic nationalism and related ethnic conflicts are also tied with international support and they may not be fully understood without taking this dimension into account.

To begin with, foreign sympathizers can contribute substantially to an ethnic group's cohesion and political mobilization by providing material, political, and moral support. For example, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has organized and supported oppositional activity by Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel's occupied territories. Rebellious Iraqi Kurds, likewise, have at various times had the diplomatic support of the Iranian regime, Israel, and the United States. Similarly, on Cyprus, Greek Cypriots have been supported by Greece, while their Turkish counterparts by Turkey.

The most destructive consequences usually occur when competing powers support different sides in ethnopolitical conflicts. Such proxy conflicts are often protracted, very deadly, and not likely to end in negotiated settlements unless it is in the interest of external powers (Mumford, 2013). Proxy wars were especially common during the Cold War, yet by no means were limited to superpower rivalries. As it is remembered, in their 1980s war, both Iran and Iraq encouraged Kurdish minorities on their enemy's terrain to fight from within.

Ethnic mobilization is also prompted by the occurrence of ethnopolitical conflict elsewhere through the processes of *diffusion* and *contagion*.

Diffusion refers to the spillover of conflict from one region to another, either within or across international boundaries. For instance, right after the end of the Cold War, about a dozen ethnic groups in the Caucasus, including the Ossetians, Abkhaz, Aeries, Chechens, Ingush, and Lezghins, have been caught up in ethnopolitical struggle through the diffusion of proactive and reactive nationalism. Political activists in one country usually find sanctuary with and get support from their transnational kindred. Generations of Kurdish rebels in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran have sustained by far one another's political mobilizations in this way. Likewise, the Chechens outside Russia, descended from the exiles and political refugees of an earlier era, gave open support to their rebellious cousins in the Caucasus. As a rule, a disadvantaged group's potential for political mobilization is increased by the number of segments of the group in adjoining countries, by the extent to which those segments are

mobilized and by their involvement in overt conflict (Gurr, 1996, p. 72).

Contagion, on the other hand, refers to the process by which one group's actions provide inspirations and guidance for other groups elsewhere. While, in general, internal conflicts are by themselves contagious, the strongest force of communal contagion tends to occur within networks of similar groups. Informal connections have developed, particularly since the 1960s, among similar groups that face similar circumstances so that, for instance, New South Wales Aborigines in the early 1960s organized freedom rides, and Dayaks in northern Borneo in the 1980s resisted commercial logging of their forests with rhetoric and tactics remarkably like those used by native Canadians in the early 1990s. In general, groups that are tied into networks acquire better techniques for effective mobilization: plausible appeals, good leadership, and organizational skills. More important, they benefit from the inspiration of successful movements elsewhere, successes that provide the images and moral incentives that motivate activists (Yılmaz, 2007a, p. 25).

In sum, myriad international actors help shape the aspirations, opportunities, and strategies of ethnic groups in conflict. Thus, the nature of international engagement is a major determinant of whether ethnic conflicts are of short duration or long, and of whether they end in negotiated settlements or humanitarian disasters. Contagion may not be preventable due to advanced communication in today's world that is largely beyond the control of any international actor, but conflict resolution efforts in intra-state conflicts certainly require a stable international environment, especially far from major-state confrontations.

### **Intra-State Conflict Resolution**

Despite their complexity in terms of both internal and external dynamics discussed above, most intra-state conflicts are still tried to be "resolved" by the use of force to a large extent in practice. At the national level, this is done through suppressing rebellious groups by national military and police forces. At the international level, UN and regional forces are deployed for one of three purposes: to stop immediate violence, to help recasting the institutions of the society, or to provide protection and the basic necessities of life, often through the establishment of safe havens (Foley, 2017). Depending on the requirements of a given situation, one or another of the above approaches is chosen, or they can be combined if needed.

It must be admitted that sometimes a certain degree of force would be an integral part of the overall conflict resolution process in intra-state conflicts. Take international peacekeeping, for example. Especially when adversaries are engaged in mutual violence or armed clashes, peacekeeping often appears to be the most urgent strategy. Until violence is stopped, or at least managed, it is unlikely that any attempts to resolve competing interests, to change negative attitudes or to alter socio-economic circumstances giving rise to conflict will be successful. In fact, by far, thousands of civilian and military peacekeepers who have toiled over the past five decades have been successful, in general, in keeping people alive and in preventing conflict escalation in most inter-ethnic conflicts (Aoi and Coning, 2017, p. 288).

By the same token, in the absence of peacekeeping forces, any group wishing to sabotage a peace initiative may find it easier to provoke armed clashes with the other side, since there is no impartial buffer between the sides which can act as a restraining influence. The absence of a suitable control mechanism may enable even a small group of people committed to violence to wreak enormous havoc, whereas the presence of an impartial third force can be an important factor for stability (Kjeksrud and Vermeij, 2017, p. 227).

On the other hand, the deployment of national forces in conflict settings would be problematic, for these forces tend to take side and act in favor of dominant groups that are in power. Thus, intervention just by national forces would indeed exacerbate tension and escalate the conflict. Nevertheless, provided that they are neutral, just, and reasonable, even national forces can be said to be functional in terms of excluding some radical wings from the essence of the problem (Yılmaz, 2016, pp. 409-410).

However, it would be quite erroneous to assume that intra-state conflicts can be resolved through force only. These conflicts may be suppressed through force for a while, but they cannot be resolved in the conflict resolution sense. What is more, violent tactics eventually invite counter violence. If real progress is to be made toward resolution, the international community, in general, and the UN, as well as the parties themselves, in particular, ought to address at least the following areas:

## ***Democratization***

Sometimes it is argued that democracy and peaceful co-existence of different groups in ethnically heterogeneous states are only exceptionally possible, for democracy creates favorable conditions through which distinct groups naturally seek separation (Walzer, 1992, p. 6; Fukuyama, 1998, p. 119).

However, as a challenge to such democracy pessimists, Arend Lijphart's influential work on consociationalism, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, sets out the conditions under which stable and democratic multi-ethnic states are possible. This work proposes a democratic system of government that differs from the traditional Westminster majoritarian model. In its pure form, the Westminster model is characterized by one-party cabinets, a two-party system, a first past the post electoral system, a unitary and centralized government and an unwritten constitution. Consociational democracies, on the other hand, involve multi-party cabinets, a multi-party system, proportional representation, political decentralization and written constitutions which recognize certain rights of minority groups (Lijphart, 1977, 1999).

There are, according to Lijphart, four main characteristics of consociationalism, one of primary importance and three of secondary importance. The primary characteristic is the grand coalition of political leaders that represent all the significant communities. This elite cooperation is, for Lijphart, the central feature of consociational democracy. The secondary characteristics are the existence of a veto power for all communities on legislation that affects their vital interests; a system of proportionality in parliament, the civil service, and other government agencies; and a high degree of segmental autonomy so that each community has a considerable degree of freedom to run its own internal affairs (Lijphart, 1977, 1999).

Such a democracy model outlined by Lijphart can be quite helpful for conflict prevention and resolution in multi-ethnic societies. It may allow all distinct groups to express themselves freely, while, at the same time, let them enjoy the benefits of unity. Although there is an ongoing debate about the meaning of democracy, "democracy necessarily means granting some degree of political power to those who are ethnically different" (Muravchik, 1996, p. 584). The existence of a balance of power between various groups would prevent any group from becoming dominant and

forming a majority rule on its own.

In fact, liberal democracies which are closer to Lijphart's consociational model have been key factors for most successful multi-ethnic states, including Switzerland, Canada and Belgium. We should also recall that the absence of such democracies in authoritarian states, as in the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia and the former Czechoslovakia, gave rise, in addition to other reasons, to the build of serious latent conflicts, leading eventually to political disintegration. Thus, promoting pluralistic democracies would be a significant step to take on the way to resolving internal conflicts of the post-Cold War era.

### ***International Stability***

Another issue that internal conflict resolution efforts have to address is inter-state dimension. This dimension is important due to two reasons. First, an unstable inter-state environment that can be characterized by severe competition among states, particularly among major powers, is likely to be conflict encouraging, since states tend to exploit internal conflicts for their own ends, mostly by using them as a policy tool to weaken their rivals. It is not surprising, therefore, that many internal conflicts break out as internal manifestations of external power struggles.

Second, being in need of military and political support from others, ethnic groups, too, usually seek external allies and often turn for support to neighboring countries with whom there are ethnic, cultural bonds. States facing such a danger respond by creating alliances with those who are enemies of their neighbor and its allies. So, in time, states may find themselves embroiled in large balance-of-power conflicts (Lobell, 2004). Hence, peaceful resolution of internal conflicts may very well be contingent on the reduction of international tension.

In addition, a stable international environment is also essential for the UN and regional organizations to work effectively, or else these organizations, far from promoting peace and security, can easily become arenas of major state confrontations. For instance, it is a well-known fact that during the Cold War era, the UN was hobbled by the excessive use of veto power due to the superpower conflict. Only the thaw of the Cold War has created a constructive political atmosphere and only after that has an effective UN intervention become possible. As a matter of fact, while there were only 13 peacekeeping operations during the whole Cold War period, from

1948 to 1988, a further 20 were created from 1988 to 1993. At present, as of November 2017, the number has reached 71.<sup>3</sup>

So from every angle, a stable international environment is vital to internal conflict prevention and resolution. The general international environment today is not as threatening as it was during the Cold War. The general relaxation in superpower politics has undoubtedly contributed to the peace process in Kosovo, the Congo, Sudan, Liberia, and East Timor, to give a few recent examples.

### ***Economic Well-Being and Distributive Justice***

A third focus for internal conflict resolution would be the action to address economic inequalities between or among groups that seem to be a contributory factor in many violent internal struggles. Although ethno-cultural identity is valued in and of itself (Gurr, 2000), the economic dimension is still important, for a multi-ethnic state characterized by uneven distribution of wealth is a state where ethnic antagonisms are likely to grow. Economic well-being, on the other hand, may contribute to a sense of security and give ethnic minorities a stake in the system. Donald L. Horowitz calls this the “distributive approach” to ethnic conflict resolution, as opposed to structural approaches based on creating a political framework. He points out that such an approach may include preferential policies aimed at raising certain groups to a position of equality through investment, employment practices, access to education and land distribution (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 653-681).

In fact, successful ethnically-heterogeneous states, such as the United States, Canada and Switzerland, are those that offer prosperity to their citizens. On the other hand, it is almost a rule that countries suffering internal clashes in the post-Cold War period, such as Somalia, Burundi, Liberia, Haiti, Sudan and Sierra Leone, are those where the ordinary suffer poverty, as well as evidently unjust distribution of wealth. The frustration of basic human needs and struggle against the privileged for better conditions often lead to serious social conflicts (Burton, 1997). Thus, conflict resolution efforts must be supported by economic programs aimed at increasing living standards and reaching distributive justice as much as possible. Discussing the details of such programs is beyond the aim of this article, but it can be certainly argued that no durable peace can be attainable in the absence of economic well-being and distributive

<sup>3</sup> Source: Retrieved: 08.11.2017, <http://www.un.org>.

justice.

### ***Confidence Building***

A final area that also needs particular attention in the process of resolving internal conflicts is to build trust between competing groups. In almost all violent internal conflicts, because of prolonged mutual hurts, parties develop intense distrust towards each other, perpetuating that in the form of group stereotypes as well. They see and acknowledge negative aspects of each other that fit or support the stereotype and ignore other aspects that do not fit. This tendency, in turn, inhibits communication and joint search for a peaceful solution. It separates the parties like an invisible wall at the cognitive level (Stangor, 2000). Therefore, building confidence between the parties in conflict often emerges as an important pre-requisite of constructive inter-communal dialogues.

It should be acknowledged that confidence building is not an easy task for peace makers, since past hurts penetrate group identities to such an extent that removing hostile feelings requires much time and multi-level efforts. Yet there are several strategies that may be utilized to that end. For example, one way to overcome relational issues at the group level would be the so-called “track-two diplomacy”. Joseph V. Montville, one of the pioneers of this approach, defines the term as an unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations aiming to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict (Montville, 1990, p. 162). Empirical evidence shows that if well-organized and undertaken for a reasonably long time, people-to-people meetings and discussions, oftentimes working through problem-solving workshops mediated or facilitated by psychologically-sensitive third-parties, provide an opportunity for disputants to examine the root causes of their conflict, to explore possible solutions out of public view and to identify obstacles to better relationships. What is more, by allowing face-to-face communication, they help participants arrest dehumanization process, overcome psychological barriers and focus on relation building. Best of all, any success in informal meetings would spill over into formal ones because those who change their negative images about the other side would push the formal negotiation process with a new perspective or they may become formal negotiators in later life (Davies and Kaufman, 2002).



Track-two diplomacy is an area where UN specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would play a major role as third-parties. They would arrange and facilitate problem-solving workshops between adversary groups, working as intermediaries in the process as well. Although not necessary, third-party help is usually needed in organizing track-two diplomacy, since the parties in conflict cannot easily take unilateral actions due to the concern for appearing weak, as well as intense hostile feelings towards the other side (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 196).

The possibilities for easing antagonism between rival groups would also be enhanced when the groups are brought together to work toward some common ends. The creation of supranational bodies that have the responsibility for fulfilling key economic and social needs would gradually bring about a transfer of loyalty from the narrow cultural group to the supranational bodies. Eventually, particularistic antagonisms would be dissolved as the participants become caught up in a web of mutual dependence.

A scientific support to this idea comes from a series of experiments conducted by Muzaffer Sherif, a social psychologist, in an American school camp. In his experiment, Sherif divided a group of boys into two groups and conflict between them was then encouraged. He observed that as inter-group hostility increased, so did intra-group solidarity. The mutual hostility was overcome when the two groups were brought together to engage in cooperative acts for some common ends that they could not obtain on their own. This led Sherif to conclude that only the pursuit of superordinate goals, the goals that can only be achieved by cooperation of conflicting groups, can overcome stereotyping and reduce hostility (Sherif, 1967).

Of course, in real-life conflict settings, it is certainly advisable to avoid over optimism, for the differences separating the parties would be more complex and deeper than the differences created by artificially dividing up school-kids in a summer camp. But nonetheless, having and working on common goals would enhance bonds between the parties in conflict in a number of ways. One would be reducing the salience of group boundaries; that is, people who are working towards common goals are in some sense members of the same group and thus are not so likely to be antagonistic towards each other. Another would be by a reinforcement mechanism; as the two parties work together, each of them rewards the other and produces a sense of gratitude and warmth in the other. Pursuing common

goals also means that each party sees itself as working on behalf of the other, a view that is likely to foster positive attitudes (Pruitt et al., 2004, pp. 136-137).

A final strategy that can be utilized to transform hostile inter-group relations would be designing, or re-designing, formal education to serve inter-communal relationship building. In most countries suffering from internal strife, formal education is shaped and used by dominant groups to perpetuate their privileged positions. Further, historical enmities with respect to rival groups are transmitted from generation to generation. Naturally, no social peace is feasible under such circumstances. Thus, if progress is to be made toward internal harmony, educational programs should be planned to this end. In this regard, such programs must definitely avoid any sort of discrimination and eliminate subjectively-judged historic enmities. They make emphasis, instead, on intellectual and moral qualities, such as critical thinking, openness, skepticism, objectivity and respect for differences. Education of that sort would be a powerful tool in the hands of any peace builder, for the whole process of child raising may have a critical impact on attitudes and beliefs in later life (see, Harris and Morrison, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

Many thought that when the half-century of Cold War ended, the world would be freed of conflict unleashed by the ideologies of fascism and communism. It is true that we are unburdened of the contingent threat of nuclear annihilation, but not of conflict. After the Cold War disappeared from center stage, the global drama centered on the rise of ethnic nationalism and a rash of small wars, most of them inside the borders of states. These conflicts can be as serious, costly and intense as any in the past, which require effective resolution strategies so that peace can be secured.

By trying to analyze the structure in which ethnic nationalism and related conflicts tend to rise, this article has aimed at developing a comprehensive peace approach that may be helpful in the resolution process of internal strife. It has been addressed, in this respect, that when violence breaks out, a reasonable use of force, particularly in the form of UN peacekeeping, if possible, may be required to separate antagonists and reduce psychological violence. Yet once a cooling off period is obtained, it must be accompanied by peacemaking efforts, involving areas of democratization, economic

development and distributive justice, international cooperation, as well as confidence building, as summarized above. As a result, there is a need for a multi-level peace strategy in effectively coping with the intra-state conflicts of the post-Cold War era.

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## Özet

Soğuk Savaş'ın ideolojik çekişmelerinin büyük ölçüde sona erişinin ardından dünya barışını tehdit eden yeni bir tehlike, sayıları giderek artma eğilimi gösteren devlet içi etnik çatışmalardır. Soğuk Savaş döneminde yaygın inanç, ideolojik kamplaşmaların büyük ölçüde sosyal kimlikleri yeniden şekillendirdiği, dünya uluslarının artan karşılıklı bağımlılık temelinde entegrasyonlara yöneldiği, dolayısıyla etnik milliyetçiliğin büyük ölçüde sona erdiği yönündeydi. Oysa Soğuk Savaş'ın ardından, etnik temelli milliyetçiliğin yükseldiği ve buna bağlı çatışmaların sıklıkla yaşandığı yeni bir döneme girilmiştir.

Ne çatışmayla yüz yüze kalan ulusların, ne de genel olarak uluslararası toplumun bu sıcak gelişmeye pek hazırlı olduğu da söylenemez. Uluslararası arenada mevcut düzenleme ve örgütlenmeler, genellikle uluslararası çatışmaları önlemek, ulus-devletler arasında barış ve işbirliğini geliştirmek amacıyla dizayn edilmişlerdir. Çünkü tarihsel olarak barışa yönelik en büyük tehlike, devletler arası çatışmalardan gelmiştir. Dolayısıyla uluslararası kurumlar bünyesinde geleneksel olarak devlet içi çatışmalar bir risk unsuru olarak algılanmamıştır. Bu yüzden de yükselen milliyetçilik ve bununla alakalı etnik kökenli çatışmalarda var olan uluslararası kurumlar çoğu kez yetersiz kalmaktadır. Çatışma yaşayan ulus-devletler ise ağırlıklı olarak güç kanalıyla sorunları çözmeye çalışmaktadır. Ancak çoğu kez tek yapabildikleri, çatışmaları yalnızca geçici bir süre bastırmaktır.

Tehdit sinyalleri artan etnik milliyetçilik ve devlet içi çatışmaların barışçıl bir biçimde çözümleri, her şeyden önce bu çatışmaların doğru analiz edilmelerini ve buna göre stratejiler geliştirilmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu makale de işte bu vizyonla kaleme alınmıştır. Eserde, global ölçekte cereyan eden farklı etnik kökenli çatışmaların bazı temel ortak yönlerini tespit edilmeye çalışılmış ve bu çerçevede etnik barışın tesisi sürecinde neler yapılabileceği tartışılmıştır.

Dünya çapındaki etnik çatışmalar, kendi koşullarına göre farklılıklar gösterebilirler de, bazı ortak paydalara da sahiptirler. Bunlar, çalışmada ayrıntılı olarak değinildiği üzere, etnik kimliği baskılamaya yönelik sınırlamalar, yasal, ekonomik ve kültürel ayrımcılık, anti-demokratik rejim, elverişsiz ekonomik koşullar, adaletsiz kaynak dağılımı, devlet otoritesinin çökmesi ve uluslararası destek unsurlarını kapsamaktadır.

Etnik çatışmalar çok nedenli olduklarından, bu sorunların çözümleri de çok yönlü çaba gerektiren ve epeyce zaman alan kompleks bir süreçtir. Uygulamada söz konusu çatışmaların ağırlıklı olarak güç yoluyla “çözölmeye” çalışıldığı gözlenmektedir. Oysa güç kanalıyla bu sorunlar sadece baskılanabilir ama gerçek anlamda çözülemez. Üstelik şiddet, karşı şiddeti davet eder. Şiddete maruz kalan gruplar eğer zayıf konumda iseler belki hemen aynı oranda karşılık vermeyebilirler. Ancak uzun vadede bunu bir grup travmasına dönüştürüp intikam almanın arayışı içerisinde girerler. Doğal olarak böylesi bir zeminde sorunun yapıcı bir biçimde ele alınması ve çözümü mümkün olamaz.

Bununla birlikte, etnik barışı tesis sürecinde gücün fonksiyonel olabileceği durumlar da söz konusu olabilir. Taraflar arası fiziksel şiddetin önlenmesi, uzlaşma mantalitesinden uzak radikal kesimlerin sorunun genelinden uzaklaştırılması, insani yardımların çatışma bölgelerine güvenle ulaştırılması ya da varılan bir antlaşmanın korunması hallerinde olduğu gibi. Fakat güç kullanımı konusunda son derece titiz davranılması ve gücün başlı başına bir araç haline gelmemesi gerekir. Kullanılan güç, amaçla orantılı şekilde makul bir düzeyde tutulmalı ve mümkün olduğunca tarafsız olmalıdır. Bu bağlamda, uluslararası güçlerin, özellikle Birleşmiş Milletler barış güçleri ve bölgesel güçlerin, taraf tutma eğilimi yüksek ulusal güçlere göre daha fonksiyonel ve yararlı olabileceği söylenebilir.

Dolayısıyla etnik kökenli çatışmaları önlemeye ya da çözmeye yönelik çabaların, gerektiğinde makul düzeyde ve tarafsız güç kullanımını da kapsayan, ancak mutlaka çok yönlü bir temelde gerçekleşmesi gerekir. Eserde tartışılan nedenler çerçevesinde bu, asgari düzeyde, etnik kimliği ifade serbestisine olanak sağlayacak formüllerin bulunmasını, ayrımcılığın önlenmesini, demokratikleşmeyi, refah düzeyinin yükseltilmesini, gelir dağılımının farklı etnik gruplar arasında göreceli olarak adil hale getirilmesini ve taraflar arasındaki psikolojik bariyerlerin azaltılmasına yönelik güven tesis edici önlemlerin alınmasını gerektirir. Bunların yanı sıra, etnik çatışma çözümü, gerginlikten uzak, özellikle majör güçlerin işbirliği halinde olduğu istikrarlı bir uluslararası ortamı da gerekli kılar.

