

# International and Intranational Conflict

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the difference between international conflict and intranational conflict, and how both types of conflicts occur. The particular areas of focus include:

1. International vs. Intranational Conflict
2. Causes of Intranational Conflict
3. Social Identity Theory
4. Response to Intranational Conflict

## 1. International vs. Intranational Conflict

While they sound very similar, international conflict and intranational conflict are two different things.

As you probably know, international conflict (also known as interstate conflict) refers to conflict between separate nations.

On the other hand, **intranational conflict** (also known as intrastate conflict) refers to conflicts that arise within a nation. Typically, this type of conflict occurs between different ethnic groups or political within a country.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Intranational Conflict

Conflict between differing groups on a national scale within the boundaries of a single political state/entity.

## 2. Causes of Intranational Conflict

Because one nation is often home to multiple cultural groups with different values and traditions, these differences can sometimes lead to intranational conflict.

### IN CONTEXT

In current events and throughout history, there have been many instances of intranational conflict. Sometimes, it takes the form of a civil war, such as the American Civil War, which was a conflict between groups—clustered regionally in the north and the south—with different ideas about the

country's economy, power, and, most significantly, slavery.

Intranational conflict doesn't have to reach the level of open warfare. The struggle to end the apartheid system in South Africa was an intranational conflict between the supporters of apartheid, who were white, and the opponents of apartheid, who were Black, mixed, and other racialized groups under the apartheid system. While there was a lot of violence in the final years of apartheid (as, indeed, there was throughout its entire history because it was a violent system), the conflict never reached the point of being a war.

Due to internal pressure from the opponents of apartheid, the growing power of the anti-apartheid political movement of the African National Congress, and international pressure, in the late 1980s the government entered negotiations with the African National Congress and, over the course of several years, the apartheid system was dismantled.

Within a nation, there can be different groups competing for things such as power, resources, and wealth.

Conflicts can also arise between groups who may have been at war in the past, or who have had animosity for one another for years, or even centuries.

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## 3. Social Identity Theory

One way to explain the reasons behind intranational conflict is through Social Identity Theory, which discusses the concept of in-groups and out-groups.

When conflicts like this have been going on for so long with elements of control and discrimination, members of groups involved begin to associate their identities very strongly with their particular group.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** Think of people in the United States who still care about and identify with the Confederacy. Some white people identify so strongly with their racial in-group that they romanticize a time period when their in-group held even more direct power over the out-group than they do today.



### BIG IDEA

Intranational conflicts often arise out of discrimination between groups and control by one group over another. Quite often, this is the result of a competition for power, wealth, or resources; if one group has the political power, that group may not be sharing its wealth and resources with the other group.

With a long and intense conflict comes a strong identity with the in-group, which can perpetuate the conflict.

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## 3. Response to Intranational Conflict

Although intranational conflicts are happening within a single country, other countries often respond. This response leads to two separate issues:

- **Sovereignty:** Refers to the established right of a nation or a recognized government to determine its own policy and law in its country. Nations have a right to decide how they want to run things, and what their

laws and policies will be. So, when one group is implementing policies that discriminate against another group, this is technically the right of the country's government within its borders.

- **Interconnection:** Refers to how the conflicts and the decisions made in one country impact other countries. This impact is particularly strong in instances of human rights violations. If these human rights violations are disturbing and offensive enough, such as in cases of genocide, the international community may respond. This can result in trade embargoes, cutting off aid to a country, and perhaps even military intervention.



#### BIG IDEA

When the actions of one country, or sovereign nation, impact the values and the conditions of the rest of the world, other nations often respond because of this interconnection.



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### Sovereignty

The established right of a recognized government to determine internal policy and law of its country.

##### Interconnection

In international conflict, the understanding that the decisions of one country have an impact on other countries through various kinds of formal and informal relationships.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned the difference between **international conflict** and **intranational conflict**. International conflict occurs between separate nations, but intranational conflict occurs between groups within a single nation. **Social Identity Theory** is one way to explain the **causes of intranational conflict**, as the longer a conflict has gone on, the more strongly members of the groups involved associate their identities with their particular group.

You now understand that international conflict can sometimes occur as a **response to intranational conflict**. This response from outside countries can lead to issues of **sovereignty**, or the right of a country to make its own rules and policies, and **interconnection**, or the impact of one country's conflicts on other countries. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Interconnection

In international conflict, the understanding that the decisions of one country have an impact on other countries through various kinds of formal and informal relationships.

##### Intranational Conflict

Conflict between differing groups on a national scale within the boundaries of a single political state/entity.

##### Sovereignty

The established right of a recognized government to determine internal policy and law of its country.

