

# Global Citizenship Education in Social Studies: Experiences of Turkish Teachers and Students in International Conflict and War<sup>1</sup>

Sosyal Bilgiler Dersinde Küresel Vatandaşlık Eğitimi: Uluslararası Çatışma ve Savaşlara İlişkin Türk Öğretmen ve Öğrencilerin Deneyimleri

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## To cite this article/Atıf için

Ersoy, A. F. (2013). Global citizenship education in social studies: Experiences of Turkish teachers and students in international conflict and war. *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırmalar Dergisi-Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1(1),

**Abstract.** With the impact of the media, international conflicts are increasingly becoming a part of both everyday life and global citizenship education. The purpose of this research was to understand the perceptions of students and teachers about the incidents of international conflict and war, how teachers present these issues in social studies course, and the problems teachers encounter in this process. This study was carried out as a qualitative case study research. The data were collected by participant observations carried out in Social Studies lessons and by semi-structured interviews with the participating teachers and students. The data were analyzed using interpretive thematic analysis. The findings from this study revealed that the teachers in this study acted in protective, emotional, rational and tentative modes while teaching the issues of international conflict and war. The study also found that the teachers' behaviors while teaching controversial issues had an influence on the students' knowledge, skills and attitudes on the subject. In addition, the students' age and maturity level, gender, socio-economic and cultural level had an influence on learning about these issues. Finally, the findings indicated that the teachers who participated in this study did not have sufficient knowledge and experience in teaching controversial issues and international conflict and war.

**Keywords:** Social studies, citizenship education, global citizenship, controversial issues, conflict and war, peace education

**Özet.** Uluslararası çatışmalar medyanın etkisiyle gerek günlük yaşamın gerekse de küresel vatandaşlık eğitiminin bir parçası haline gelmeye başlamıştır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, uluslararası çatışma ve savaş olaylarını Türk öğretmen ve öğrencilerin nasıl algıladıklarını, bu konulara sosyal bilgiler derslerinde nasıl yer verildiğini ve karşılaşılan sorunların neler olduğunu anlamaktır. Araştırma nitel durum çalışması olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler katılımcı gözlem ve yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Veriler yorumlamacı tematik analiz ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmada öğretmenlerin uluslararası çatışma ve savaş konularını öğretirken koruyucu, duygusal, akılcı ve çekimser tarzlarda davrandıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmada, öğretmenlerin tartışmalı konuları öğretirken öğrencilerin konuya ilişkin bilgileri, becerileri ve tutumların da etkilendikleri bulunmuştur. Ek olarak öğrencilerin yaş ve olgunluk düzeyleri, cinsiyetleri, sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel düzeyleri de tartışmalı konuları öğrenmelerini etkilemektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın bulguları öğretmenlerin uluslararası çatışma, savaş ve tartışmalı konuların öğretiminde yeterli bilgi ve deneyime sahip olmadıklarını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Sosyal bilgiler, vatandaşlık eğitimi, küresel vatandaşlık, tartışmalı konular, çatışma ve savaş, barış eğitimi

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<sup>1</sup> This study was presented in part at the 89<sup>th</sup> National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Annual Conference, Georgia, Atlanta (November, 2009).

## Introduction

International conflicts and wars lead to various problems such as refugees, poverty, violence, death and psychological disorders and threaten security and development today as they have always done. Oxfam (2005) points out that there have been more than 120 wars and conflicts in the world since the end of the Cold War in 1989. Today, scientific and technological advances have accelerated information sharing at the global level, increased awareness of international conflicts and caused many people to be part of these conflicts in some ways (Merryfield & Remy, 1995). Meanwhile, the media introduced international conflicts and wars to the world of children as well, leaving them face to face with a complicated and challenging situation (Kreidler, 1984). Research indicates that contemporary conflicts and wars rank top among the issues about which children are concerned most regarding the future (Srouf & Srouf, 2006), have a negative impact on children's psychology and cause them to exhibit more aggressive and anxious behaviors (Barnett, 1999; Goldin, Levin, Persson, & Häggglöf, 2001), and have a negative impact on their political attitudes (Shamania & Kimhib, 2006).

Equipping children with the skills to deal with future conflicts and wars is regarded as one of the goals of global citizenship education. Today, citizens are expected to care about global problems as well as local ones and to be capable of getting involved and undertaking responsibility in solving these problems (Merryfield & Remy, 1995; Marshall, 2009; Oxfam, 2006a; Quillen, 1944). When global citizens obtain information about issues of peace and conflict, they also need to possess co-operation and conflict resolution skills and believe that people can make a difference (see Figure 1, Oxfam, 2006b, p. 4). Therefore, children need to gain a global perspective and acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to solve global problems (Marshall, 2009). In addition, global citizenship education is supposed to support world peace by developing students' skills in conflict resolution (Falk, 1994 cited in Brown & Morgan, 2008). As global problems, issues of international conflict and war are among the basic elements of the global citizenship education.

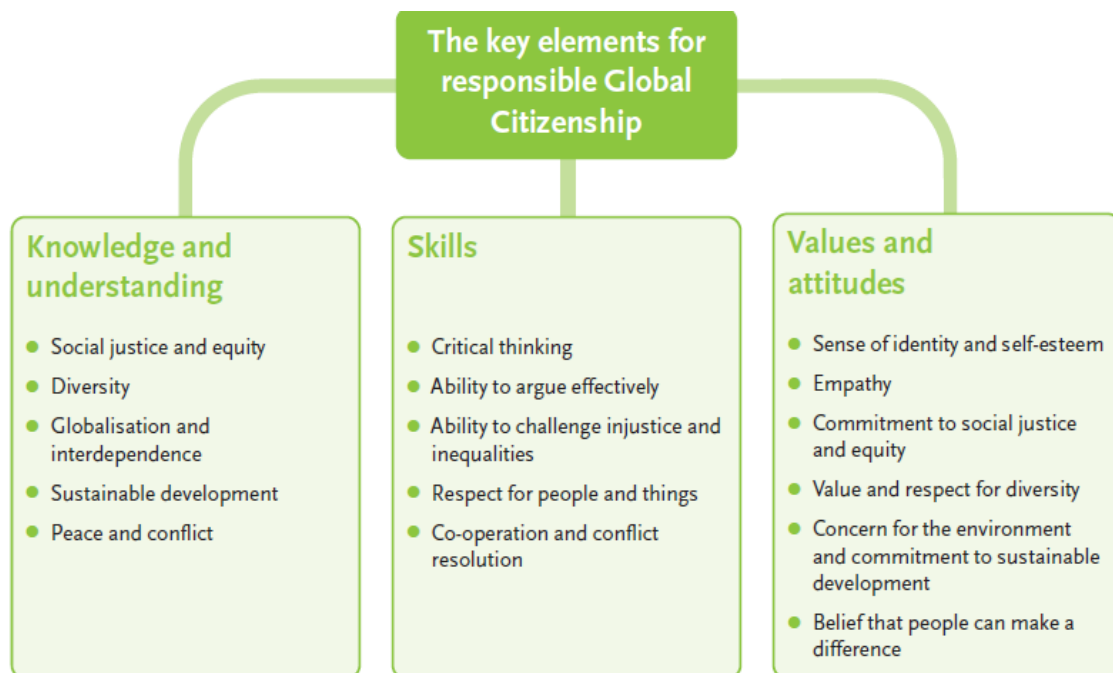


Figure 1. The key elements for responsible global citizenship

Source: Oxfam (2006b). *Curriculum for global citizenship: A guide for schools*. Oxfam Development Education, UK, p. 4.

The process of education should emphasize international life, participation and undertaking responsibility in international life and international interdependencies and address problems such as peace, under-development, mineral resources and environmental protection (Năstase, 1983). What is more, students should be able to contribute to world peace by acquiring the skills for identifying and implementing solutions to the conflict, recognizing and avoiding dangerous situations, evaluating successful solutions, rejecting behaviors that support violence, supporting a cause in a negotiable and calm manner, and eliminating prejudices and tolerating differences to prevent crime in their society (UNICEF, 2007). The focus of this process should be not on aggression, misery and failure but on hope and success (Jenkins, 1998 cited in Brown & Morgan, 2008). International conflicts and wars need to be gradually covered in the curricula of global citizenship education in every age level (see Table 1, Oxfam, 2006b, p.7).

Social Studies teachers play an important role in students' gaining skills of global citizenship. The aim of Social Studies education is to educate global citizens who are sensitive to the problems of the world, seek solutions to these problems and are aware of their personal responsibilities (Evans, 1987). Covering controversial issues in social studies as apart of global citizenship education helps students gain some skills and values that will prepare them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and support their development as global citizens (Oxfam, 2006a). Social Studies teachers prepare students for citizenship roles by covering many controversial political, social, and societal issues and enable them think critically, communicate effectively, accept different perspectives, be interested in conflict situations, recognize bias and think multi-dimensionally (Crick, 1998; Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Hess, 2004; Wilson, Hass, Lauglin, & Sunal, 2002). Bickmore (1997) states that by bringing the social and political conflicts that occur in other parts of the world at different times into the classroom in order to analyze current events, teachers present historical issues and different perspectives especially on ideals and perform an efficient and democratic citizenship education by enabling students to encounter and discuss cultural and ideological differences. Merryfield and Remy (1995) suggest that international conflicts and wars belong to Social Studies curriculum because they deal with people and their communication with other groups ranging from their family to the global community in general. Also, Yamashita (2006) emphasizes that teachers should cover these issues so that students can have a better understanding of international conflicts and wars and make more informed decisions later in their lives. Merryfield and Remy (1995) state that, in Social Studies class, issues of international conflict and war can be associated with the subjects of global history, world cultures, national history, management, and economy. Bickmore (1993) states that students are likely to have less developed conflict management skills, which are required for citizenship in the future, unless the issue of conflict is covered in this course's curriculum.

The importance of teaching international issues in ensuring peace in the world was better understood after World War II (Ishii, 2001). At that time, many teaching materials concerning international conflict and peace education were prepared by international organizations and non-governmental organizations (Oxfam, 2005; UNESCO, 1992, UNICEF, 1995). On the other hand, although international conflicts and wars are an important subject of education, some studies point out that the current wars are not examined in-depth but they are approved or overlooked at schools (Field, Burlbaw & Davis, 1994; Merryfield & Remy, 1995) and students do not have adequate information on these issues (Haavelsrud, 1970; Yamashita, 2006). However, students do want to learn about and understand these issues (Oxfam, 2006a; Stabbak 2004; Yamashita, 2006). Davies (2005b) states that some factors seem to promote conflict rather than peace such as not teaching controversial political issues at schools, competitive education in general, punishment regimes, fear culture, nationalism, obedience to authority, neglecting the creation of

safe identities, competitive and testing-based teaching methods, on the one hand and teaching different culture, gender and religions on the other.

**Table 1.**

*International Conflict and War in Curriculum*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Knowledge and understanding (peace and conflict)</b>	<b>Skills (Co-operation and conflict resolution)</b>	<b>Values and attitudes (Belief that people can make a difference)</b>
<b>Under 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• our actions have consequences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• co-operating</li> <li>• sharing</li> <li>• Starting to look at resolving arguments peacefully</li> <li>• Starting to participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• willingness to admit to and learn from mistakes</li> </ul>
<b>Ages 5-7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conflicts past and present in our society and others</li> <li>• causes of conflict and conflict resolution – personal level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tact and diplomacy</li> <li>• involving/including society and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness that our actions have consequences</li> <li>• willingness to co-operate and participate</li> </ul>
<b>Ages 7-11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• causes of conflict</li> <li>• impact of conflict</li> <li>• causes of conflict and conflict resolution – personal level</li> <li>• strategies for tackling conflict and for conflict prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accepting and acting on group decisions</li> <li>• compromising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• belief that things can be better and that individuals can make a difference</li> </ul>
<b>Ages 11-14</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• causes and effects of conflict, locally and globally</li> <li>• relationship between conflict and peace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• willingness to take a stand on global issues</li> </ul>
<b>Ages 14-16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conditions conducive to peace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negotiation</li> <li>• mediation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• willingness to work towards a more equitable future</li> </ul>
<b>Ages 16-19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complexity of conflict issues and conflict resolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negotiation</li> <li>• conflict resolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• willingness to work towards a more equitable future</li> </ul>

Source: Oxfam (2006b). *Curriculum for global citizenship: A guide for schools*. Oxfam Development Education, UK, p. 7.

Research on the way international conflict and wars are taught is still limited. Davies (2005a) suggests some modes in which wars are presented at schools in a circle of negative and positive poles: hate curriculum, defence curriculum, stereotypes and allegiance, war as routine, and omission from discussion as negative factors and of tolerance, personal conflict resolution, education for humanitarian law, dialogue and encounter and active challenge to violence as positive attitudes. (see Figure 2, Davies, 2005a, p. 23). Kurt (1999) benefited from simulation technique in order to teach the Bosnia war crimes. In addition to these, several other studies about peace education at schools report a decrease in students' prejudice and stereotypical thoughts (Biton, & Salomon, 2006; Maoz, 2000). However, every international war does not necessarily bring about the same reactions for every country and nation and individuals'

perspectives are affected by many factors from their cultural background to international affairs. For example, Biton and Salomon (2006) found that Israeli children see peace as lack of violence whereas Palestinian children perceive peace as independence and equality. Thus, societal differences must be considered when teaching these issues. At the time of this study, there was no research in Turkey about teaching current conflicts and wars. There was only one study conducted with elementary school teachers about peace education. According to this study, the teachers particularly emphasized respect for differences for global peace and claimed that the exam-based education system in schools did not contribute to peace education (Demir, 2012). Children’s experiences in their socio-cultural environment, family, religion and the media and their learning at school play a key role in the development of their perception of conflicts and teaching these issues. Therefore, there is a need to determine children’s perspectives on international conflict and war and teachers’ classroom application and practices in different socio-economic and cultural societies. This research emerged as a response to this need.

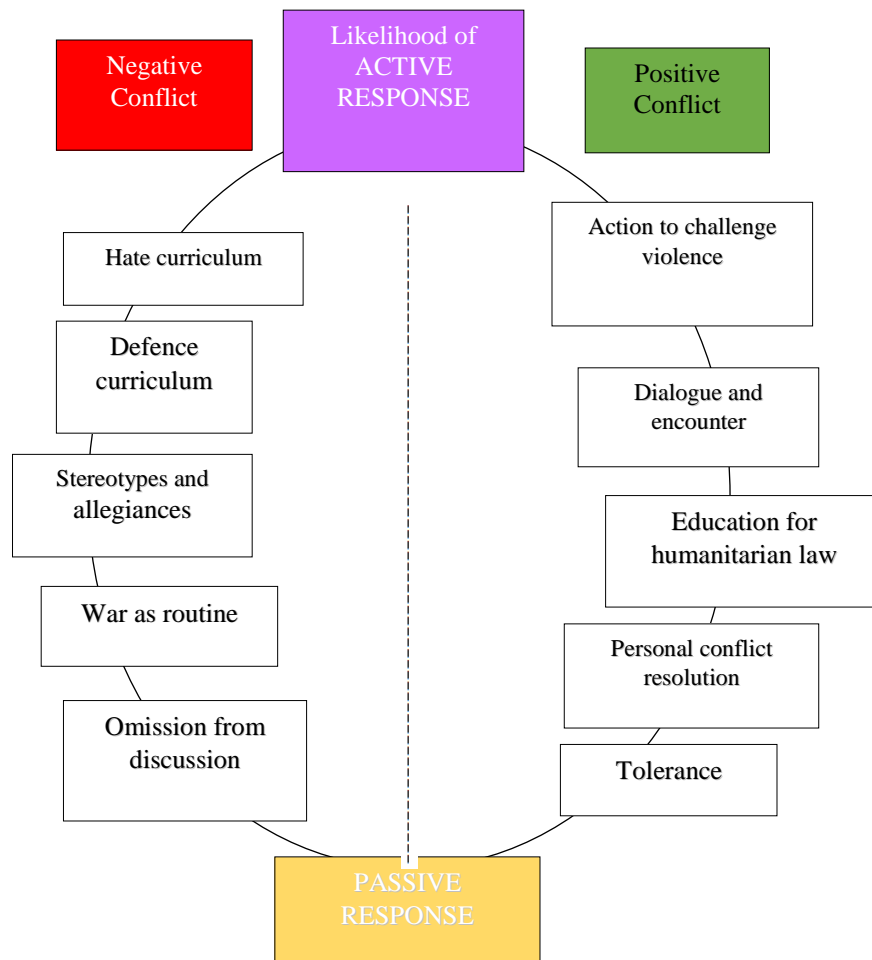


Figure 2. Approaches to teaching about conflict

Source: Davies, L. (2005a). Teaching about conflict through citizenship education. *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1(2), p. 23.

### Research Questions

The aim of this research is to identify the factors affecting the perceptions of students and teachers about the incidents of international conflict and war, how teachers present these issues

in Social Studies course, and the problems they have. The following questions were answered in this study:

1. What are the factors affecting students' perception of and information about the current wars?
2. What are the factors affecting teachers' perception of and information about the current wars?
3. What are the practices of teachers related to teaching about the current wars in social studies course?
4. What are the gains made by students in social studies course about the current wars?
5. What are the problems faced by teachers in social studies course in teaching about the current wars?

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was mentioned as a sample incident in this study, has been a current issue in the agenda of the world since World War II and it has been followed closely in the political and social agenda of Turkey as well. The Turkish media has always recognized the important place of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which meant that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been one of the most controversial current issues in Turkey. However, there have always been opposing views on this issue in Turkey just as throughout the world. Meanwhile, the focus of the controversy in Turkey was Turkey's humanitarian aid to Palestine and acting as a negotiator. The political differences in Turkey led to diversification in attitudes of the people about this war. Also, Turkey's social formation with a large Muslim population living in a democratic and secular state structure and the roles undertaken by Turkey for peace in the Middle East during the incidents in the area have contributed to the controversy of this conflict. Considering the natural reflection of this global conflict in Social Studies course curriculum, this paper emerged as a result of the need for obtaining data regarding teaching these issues. The researcher felt that there would be some differences between the attitudes of teachers of Social Studies and students' perceptions. Therefore, the focus of the research was the ways in which the issues of international conflict and war are presented in global citizenship education, educational deficiencies, and the factors shaping students' perception and challenges. Data from this research will present strategies for teachers in teaching international conflict and war and insights for researchers for future studies. In addition, it will also contribute to the development of educational policies, curricula and textbooks about global citizenship education. Finally, the findings from this research may be useful in designing teacher education programs.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

This research was conducted based on the qualitative holistic multiple-case study research approach in two elementary schools with different socio-cultural and economic characteristics in a Central-Anatolian city of Turkey. *West City Elementary School (WCS)* (code name) was a state school in the outskirts of the city. Its students typically came from families with lower and middle socio-economic status. In general, only the students' fathers were employed in the family and the mothers were housewives. Their fathers usually worked as casual laborers or as civil servants. The parents were either elementary or secondary school graduates. The other school in the study was *North City Elementary School (NCS)*, which was a private school in the city center. All of the students came from families with higher socio-economic status. In general, both the fathers and mothers of the students were employed. The students' parents had high-paying jobs such as business people, doctors, and lawyers. The parents were usually higher-education graduates.

The research included 6 volunteer female teachers from these schools. In Turkey, there are three hours of Social Studies classes per week from 4<sup>th</sup> Grade to 7<sup>th</sup> Grade. Social Studies course is taught by elementary school teachers in Grades 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> whereas it is taught by teachers of Social Studies in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grades. For this reason, the study enrolled 4 elementary school teachers, 2 teachers of Social Studies, and 25 students attending the classes of these teachers. The students in the study were chosen among those who expressed different opinions in the class discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, that made it possible for the study to include as many varied opinions as possible. There were 13 female and 12 male students in the study and 13 of them were from lower socio-economic status families while 12 came from higher socio-economic status families. Among the participants, five students in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, five students in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, seven students in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade and eight students in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade voluntarily participated in the study.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Research data were collected by participant observations carried out in Social Studies lessons and then by semi-structured interview sessions with the teachers and students. The observations were carried out from October, 2009 to April, 2010 in the classes of six teachers. Participant observations were conducted and field notes were taken. The observation time was approximately 210 teaching hours. Each class lasted about 40 minutes (see Table 2). There were intensive observation sessions during the peak times of conflicts.

**Table 2.**

#### *Information about Observation Period*

<i>Field</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Observation time</i>
Classroom teacher	State	4	30 teaching hours
Classroom teacher	State	5	23 teaching hours
Social studies teacher	State	6	26 teaching hours
		7	24 teaching hours
Classroom teacher	Private	4	25 teaching hours
Classroom teacher	Private	5	27 teaching hours
Social studies teacher	Private	6	29 teaching hours
		7	23 teaching hours

The interviews were conducted by using an appropriate voice recorder in a convenient place at the schools at the end of the term and each session took approximately half an hour. During the interviews, the students were asked what they thought about the current wars, what they learnt about the current war and from whom they learnt that information, and what they learnt in Social Studies lessons. On the other hand, during the interviews, the teachers were asked what they thought about the teaching of the current wars in Social Studies course and how they taught about these issues, what resources they provided for students and the problems which they encountered in teaching about these subjects.

Research data were analyzed with interpretive thematic analysis. Although the study was based on Davies' (2005a) patterns of teaching international conflict and war, this analysis approach was preferred considering that there might be different teaching practices in different cultures. This is because thematic analysis is based on theoretical point of view and at the same time it provides researchers with flexibility and creativity in re-establishing the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data triangulation was used to increase the study's trustworthiness. For this

purpose, both the students and the teachers were interviewed and observed. In addition, data analysis was followed by a member check. An expert was involved in the peer review process during data encoding and theme (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The students' schools, ages and grades and the teachers' branches, grades and schools were stated in presenting the research data. Also, opinions of the students and the teachers were presented with direct quotations from the interviews.

## Findings

The teachers tended to follow protective, emotional, rational and tentative approaches while teaching about international conflict. Based on these approaches, Table 3 shows information about the teachers' modes of teaching about international conflict and war, perspectives on teaching about conflict, teachers applications and student acquisitions. The teaching approaches followed by the teachers were found to affect the skills for global citizenship to be acquired by the students.

**Table 3.**

*Teachers' Modes of Teaching about International Conflict and War, Opinions about Conflict Education, Teacher Applications and Student Acquisitions*

<i>Teachers' Mode</i>	<i>Opinions about conflict education</i>	<i>Teaching applications</i>	<i>Student acquisitions</i>
Protective	It adversely affects students Students cannot understand these subjects	Letting students relax by allowing them to express themselves Reducing their concerns Raising national awareness	War is a natural process Wars are difficult to resolve Working hard to avoid this situation
Emotional	Children should be taught about wars Guilty and not guilty parties of wars should be taught	Trying to show the right side	Developing prejudice and generalization or accepting the existing clichés and generalizations
Rational	Children should be taught about wars Students should have multidimensional perspectives about the causes of wars Students should think about the solution of these problems	Empathizing with both sides of the war Focusing on solution of the problem Criticizing national and global political policies Developing individual and national responsibility Emphasizing world citizenship	Being sensitive about the issues of conflict and war Accepting different opinions about these subjects Understanding that prejudice and generalizations are wrong Realizing that these problems can be solved through collaboration Undertaking responsibility in solving these problems Being able to critically evaluate national and global policies
Tentative	Students should learn about international conflict	Showing the causes and consequences of conflict Avoiding political issues Guiding students towards different learning resources Developing national awareness	Being sensitive about the issues of conflict and war Evaluating in terms of human rights Democracy is not practiced throughout the world

### Protective

The two teachers at NCS adopted an indifferent mode of teaching because they did not mention the current wars in Social Studies course. These teachers thought that the current wars were difficult to understand for students (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades), high school entrance exams in Turkey



didn't include any questions about them and they could adversely affect students' psychology. Nevertheless, although these teachers were protective discourse about these issues during their classes, their students themselves mentioned the topic in the classes. For example, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students asked their teachers if she watched the images of war in television news and what she thought about them. However, the teacher ignored their question and told them to focus on another task. Therefore, the teacher did not see the current wars as a teaching subject. She explained that she did not include the current wars in lessons deliberately by saying, "Actually, I'm not raising these issues because I worry that they are affected by them... really deeply. Of course I watched those images. There were awful images." A 5<sup>th</sup> grade student in the same school started a discussion during the lesson by claiming that there should be no trade with Israel. The teacher just watched the students discuss the issue with each other and then turned back to the subject in the syllabus. This teacher preferred to focus on academic achievement and followed the subjects covered in the textbooks. The teacher explained her behavior by saying, "These matters need to be discussed only after the actual subject in the syllabus is studied. As a matter of fact, these children will be sitting for exams this year and I'm not sure if they need these issues as the school subjects are more important and they are just too young..."

During the interviews with the students from these teachers' classes, a lot of students just expressed their feelings about the war and said that they were sorry for civilian casualties. For instance, one of the children said "I'm really sorry because civilians are killed too... What is more, children are killed there; what is their fault?" (Female, WCS, 4<sup>th</sup> grade). Feeling sympathy for children killed in war, the younger children (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade) were worried about the future. One of them said, "They used bombs and children were killed. They did not do anything wrong. Perhaps, their ancestors did something bad... it's not their fault..." (Male, WCS, 5<sup>th</sup> grade). The teachers in this group advised their students to be alert and work hard so that their students' level of future anxiety could be reduced and their country wouldn't experience similar incidents. For example, a teacher said "I warn them that we have to be alert, work hard and care for our country. I explain that less developed countries experience this kind of things, so we must work hard".

While the students were discussing the war, the protective teachers let them express their feelings and approved their opinions but gave no information about the causes or course of the war. As a result of this, these teachers' students couldn't get adequate information about the cause and course of the conflict and the efforts and methods to resolve that conflict at national and international level. Therefore, for these students, war remained as an issue which is completely complex and difficult to solve. In the interviews, most of the students replied "I don't know" when they were asked about the cause of the war. When they were asked whether they wanted learn about these issues at school the majority of the students (18) said they wanted to. For example, a student explained the benefit of learning about these subjects by saying, "I believe that we should have awareness about this subject even though we're children... because it is always people that start wars. If we have awareness about these subjects, these wars are unlikely to break out in our time as we will be the adults of the future" (Female, WCS, 5<sup>th</sup> grade).

## **Emotional**

One of the teachers at WCS who included this subject in her lesson had a biased view of the issue. The teacher described herself as a nationalist and conservative and her view of conflict issues was affected by her background, prejudices and the cultural structure in which she lived in. The teacher said "They [the Israeli] believe that they are Allah's (children and see themselves as the chosen race)" and added that she learnt this from her teachers, history books and father. Although the teacher did not directly declare her biased opinions, she did not make any effort to eliminate the students' social prejudices and stereotypical judgments. The interviews, on the

other hand, revealed that not all of the students of this teacher had a biased view of this conflict but the teacher played a role in reinforcing students' opinions if their family had already a biased opinion about this war. When those students from conservative families in this teacher's class mentioned their parents' views of the war, it was found that their opinions were similar to those of the teacher. For example, a student said "They told in the news... they struck our land again... about 100 people were killed... most of them were children... my parents told me so and sometimes they mention it in the news too..." (Male, NCS, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade). According to a female student in the same classroom, who were neutral about this war, ethnic and religious differences wouldn't change the effects of war on people. War is difficult for all people, so we need to help people. In the interview, this student said, "I'm deeply sorry... We cannot ignore it when someone declared war on the French, British, Turkish peoples... because they are also people living in this world. We must help them as well".

The teacher included this international conflict in her lesson by associating it with the Turkish War of Independence. While presenting the notion of sovereignty, the teacher told the students that the nation's flag and anthem should be respected and she emphasized patriotism by saying that the students' ancestors sacrificed their lives for the independence of this country in the War of Independence and associated it with this conflict. The teacher explained, "This war appeared as an issue during the lesson when I was telling the students that today we are living free thanks to our ancestors. I gave Palestinians as an example... they are not free. Their country is under attack... We were able to survive a horrible war but we do not appreciate what we have got". In the interview, she also explained her aim by saying, "No one gives us our independence; we earned it with everything we got". This teacher had a conservative and nationalist approach about this issue and stated that international wars were a matter of power struggle but she did not present any information about the start or course of the war and she did not state that this incident was a problem of the world and individuals and countries can take responsibility in solving this problem. The teacher tried to develop a sense of national unity by making use of this subject and pointed out that a country can protect itself against these wars by becoming a powerful state.

During the class discussions among the students about the war, there were differences between the attitudes of the female students and male students. The female students expressed their sadness in a more emotional approach. They either didn't want to talk at all or gave responses such as "It's too bad", "I'm really worried", or "That's enough; I do not want to talk about it". On the contrary, the male students displayed a stricter attitude saying, for example, "We should go and fight in the war, too". The interviews showed that the perceptions of the female students and male students about the current wars and conflicts were different. For instance, a student said "I feel very bad because innocent people are dying at wars. War is a very bad thing" (Female, NCS, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade) and another said, "I felt sorry for children in this war most. Their suffering despite their innocence was very sad." (Female, NCS 6<sup>th</sup> Grade) The male students, on the other hand, had a more self-centered perspective through which they looked at the current incidents of conflict and war in terms of national interests and power relations. Some of them said "They are attacking us, so why don't we attack them?" Also, the traditional perspective of the emotional teacher might have encouraged them to express similar opinions more comfortably. What is more, the other teachers interviewed also stated that gender differences were effective in making sense of these incidents and they noticed the differences in perceptions of the male and female students as well.

### **Rational**

When presenting this subject in class, one of the teachers in WCS followed a rational approach and tried to ensure that the students could gain awareness, develop empathy, eliminate their

prejudices, think critically and in multidimensional ways and develop problem-solving skills. This teacher started the lesson by asking, “Do you watch the news? What’s happening in our country and around the world?” The teacher explained that she made use of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to make students recognize the problems of the world and find solutions to them:

My goal was to show them that incidents like that happened in the world. I wanted the children to think about what can be done... We should defend the victimized no matter who they are and we should warn those who victimize other people no matter who they are... We cannot just ignore injustice. The whole world is ours and everyone can be affected by this negativity...

This teacher explained the causes of the war, the world’s attitude, what can be done to solve the problem and how to solve these problems. The teacher also explained what individual responsibilities might be as well as the role of NATO and the UN for the world peace. The students of this teacher were more knowledgeable about the reason for this conflict and the course of the war. About the cause of the war, a student said, “I think they want to own and control this land. In the end, both of the parties want Gaza.” (Female, NCS, 5<sup>th</sup> grade) The students also mentioned the civilian casualties during the war and the weapons used in this process. According to most of the students, conflicts should be resolved by means other than wars or conflicts and all countries should work hard for that. They added that all countries should become involved in the prevention of international conflict and war. These students thought that other countries should help a powerless and victimized country regardless of its religion because it is in a difficult situation. They considered the position of Turkey within the framework of this thought. Most of them believed that Turkey should spend effort to end this conflict and the war and therefore approved Turkey’s aid campaign and role as a mediator. One of them explained the role of Turkey and the world in this conflict by saying “Turkey is a very charitable country. It was the right thing for Turkey to help because Turkey helped a country which needed its help. No one is doing anything, though... The world leaders could have come together and given warnings” (Male, WCS, 4<sup>th</sup> grade) However, some of the students stated that Turkey gave an emotional response [because they follow the same religion] in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but Turkey did not spend the same effort for all the wars in the world. Also, some of them did not approve Turkey’s role as a mediator for peace. These students argued that this is the UN’s task. For instance, one of them stated that the UN failed to ensure international peace by saying “The United Nations should have used its authority. Well, if the nations of the world had been able to come together, they could have been able to stop this war. However, they could not use their right. They just stepped back...” (Female, WCS, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade) Most of the teachers said that they became more sensitive about this war and took responsibility during the aid campaign for Gaza held in the school. Particularly 9/10-year-old students of the lower socio-economic status school-WCS were found to be more sensitive. A student said, “I made a donation... During the ceremony, I felt empathy for the children there. Here, we feel upset just because we can’t play computer games sometimes but they are worried whether they could survive the next day. I tried to empathize with them.”(Male, WSC, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade).

Discussion of different aspects of international wars in this teacher’s lesson caused the students’ sensitivity about the issue to go beyond the class. Moreover, these students stated that they tried to understand each other and be tolerant when they had differences of opinion in the discussions outside the class. For example, one of them said, “I respect my friends’ ideas. I have this friend who does not think like me. We disagree at some points, but then we arrive at a common conclusion ... We have opposing views about [Turkey’s] sending troops or not. I support it but my friend does not.” (Male, WSC, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade).

By allowing the students to express their opinions, the teacher first exposed their prejudices and stereotypical opinions and then tried to destroy them. Having noticed that some of the students

took the Palestinian side, the teacher asked the students to think about the reason why these two nations may be fighting by trying to sympathize with Palestinian and Israeli citizens. The teacher explained her behavior by saying, "Let's put ourselves in those children's place. What would we do in such a case... What is important here is not to be of the same color, religion or faith; we're talking about a human regardless of religion or race. We should help anyone facing injustice..."

The discussions in this teacher's lesson and the interviews with the students revealed that for them, television news was the most important primary sources of information about the wars. In addition, it was determined that the media's view of the conflict played an important role in shaping the perception of the children and society and the prejudices and stereotypical judgments were more prevalent especially on lower age groups, who didn't have developed skills of questioning and critical thinking and on children from conservative families with lower socio-economic levels who didn't have enough information about the incident and had an emotional attitude towards it. Some of the teachers said that some television channels' presentation of this conflict as a religious war caused some students to perceive this war as a religious war. A student, for example, told about what she saw on TV by saying "They are bombing mosques... Muslims are usually killed." (Male, NCS, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade) Some of the teachers claimed that the media images of war adversely affected the students' psychology and said, "They are frightened of the images they see on TV... A normal person cannot stand it... In foreign countries, violent images, for example those including blood are not directly presented. Well, we show the most negative."

This teacher's class discussions revealed that the students' families were another important primary source of information about the current wars for them. When asked about the source of their information, the students usually told they learned it from their parents. For instance, a student said, "I learnt from my father that the war broke out because Gaza is in Israel." (Male, NCS, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade) In the interviews, one of the teachers said that the conservative families with lower socio-economic level did not follow these incidents but tended to have an emotional or religious attitude and children are adversely affected by the conversations at home. The teacher explained, "The parents of student knowing about the subject have got jobs and a higher level of educational background. They regularly read newspaper or keep up to date with current developments through other media. However, there are also other children whose parents do not talk about this subject... They just do not know and cannot say anything about the subject. For example, they do not have a newspaper subscription..." In addition, the teacher believed that conservative approaches of the families led their children to consider this war with religious feelings.

### **Tentative**

A teacher from WCS and another from NCS adopted a tentative attitude when presenting issues of war and conflict. These teachers did mention this war but they just provided a superficial level of relationship with the course subjects and they refrained from presenting a critical perspective. About presenting the issue of war in the lesson, the teacher in WCS said, "I think that is a crime against humanity. This is a clear example of a world order in which the weak are victimized by the powerful. We need to discuss these issues so that they can stand against injustice... and express their opinions". The teacher in NCS said, "The Social Studies course narrates history. What has happened between Israel and Palestine is a history. In fact, the children are witnessing history".

In their classes, these teachers dealt with war in terms of human rights and emphasized the need for the development of democracy in the world. The teacher in NCS said, "We try to teach our students the universal sense of the love of humanity. We know what bad consequences war can cause. Therefore, I see this war as a shame on humanity". In their lessons, these teachers tried to have their students develop an awareness of the current events but they did not promote an in-

depth analysis of the issue and make the students think about a solution to this problem. Instead, they mentioned the cause of the war, the weapons used in the war, and the effect of war on civilians. They made comparisons with US-Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Also, although the teachers did not express their views on the subject in class, they allowed their students to express theirs. In general, the teachers either approved their students' views or remained silent. The teacher in NCS explained, "I chose to remain silent when they reacted aggressively or were clearly biased about the issue. It is the students that are supposed to talk. We just presented the topic objectively. On the other hand, we tried to raise their awareness of national values and told them they were wrong when they responded aggressively and with a bias". However, the teachers tried to change the subject especially when the students began to criticize government policies. When the students criticized the government's policies regarding this war, the teacher in NCS said "OK. Why don't we make a search on this subject in the Internet and see what people think" and therefore encouraged them to investigate the subject first. The teacher in WCS justified this attitude by saying:

I tried not to deal with political issues ... I asked them to read and search on the Internet. They can always tell what I could not say. We tried not to enter politics. I think politics should not be allowed in education, too... There is the past; we all know it we saw things, or saw people who experienced these things. Something unpleasant may happen if children are manipulated.

The teacher in WCS justified the opinion that "political issues should not be discussed in class" by saying that "I'm worried that students could be manipulated into the various political groups". The teacher pointed out the maltreatment experienced during the military coup by the young who were interested in politics and in the political history of Turkey. The teacher was concerned that violent incidents of those times such as disrupted education, many young people quitting school, students and teachers killed during the period of the military coup could happen again and she acted in a tentative manner. The military coups in the political history of Turkey prevented people from discussing political issues in the society and at school. For this reason, many teachers and families believe that "political issues should not be discussed at school". Therefore, the teachers were worried about the reaction of families. For instance, the teacher in WCS said, "As a matter of fact, what we discuss here in class can be heard by students' parents at home just like we hear about what is told in their homes and this can cause misunderstanding. Similarly, particularly when the students in NCS mentioned about political parties during the discussion about this conflict, the teacher warned the students by saying, "please do not use the names of political parties and try to avoid political matters" and therefore intervened in students' criticizing the government on this subject.

The majority of the students of the tentative teachers believed that it is always the powerful attacking the weak in international wars. This opinion was expressed more by the students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. One of the students criticized the war by saying, "It is already the end of the world if the powerful attack the weak" (Male, WCS, 7<sup>th</sup> grade). The students of the teachers who acted in a tentative manner also thought that the wars of this kind were routine, they could not be resolved, and they can happen again in the future. The teacher in WCS explained, "The children watched it on TV and the media... they watched the situation of the children there and bombs exploding... they already witnessed the America-Iraq war 3-5 years ago. Actually, their faith in democracy was shaken. The belief that the powerful win everything was confirmed for them".

The superficial presentation of the issues of war in these teachers' lessons did not meet the students' knowledge needs on this subject. During the interviews, the students in 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades said they wanted to learn about these subjects in more detail and they had a better understanding of these issues when they were discussed in class. For example, a student said, "we see them in the news, but our teacher can tell us because she is closer to us and more knowledgeable. We cannot exactly understand things in the news. Our teacher can tell us till we

can understand” (Female, NCS, 6<sup>th</sup> grade). Another student claimed that future generations will be raised as unthinking citizens because of not teaching about these political issues and criticized the education system by saying “wars... we need to know what to do in case of war... people do not learn about anything... they are unable to comprehend politics and they cannot be sure about what to do and how to prepare for the future” (Male, WCS, 7<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The results of this study revealed that most of Social Studies lessons failed to adequately present the issues of international conflict and war so as to equip the students with global citizenship skills. The majority of the teachers were unable to teach in a way that would have the students gain multi-dimensional thinking, problem-solving skills, empathy and tolerance in an interdependent world. When teaching about the international current wars, some of the teachers displayed an indifferent mode of teaching, some of them tended to follow a more national and nationalist approach and therefore reinforced the social stereotypical ideas and prejudices, and some others considered them as political issues and refrained from analyzing and criticizing them in class. Only one of the teachers tried to have the students develop sensitivity to global problems and focused on the students’ establishing empathy, critical thinking and problem-solving. This result suggests that teachers do need training for global citizenship education. On the other hand, the key points that need to be developed in students in teaching international conflicts and wars include strategies for the resolution of the peace such as critical thinking, rational inquiry (Levine & Cox, 2005), prevention of prejudice and stereotypical judgments (Prutzman & Johnson, 1997), problem solving, tolerance and empathy development. Teachers should teach students how to evaluate issues of international conflict and war from a multidimensional perspective that is appropriate for their level in terms of historical, economic, political and social aspects in Social Studies. For this purpose, they should make sure that students develop necessary skills to access and interpret various sources of information and analyze the actions before, during and after the war based on human rights and values. Moreover, teachers should encourage students to think about solutions and peace by using class discussion about current conflicts and war. Students need guidance from teachers about the first-hand information sources including different opinions and read, observe and establish empathy. Several reasons for teachers’ lack of knowledge and experience in teaching about the issues of international conflict and war emerged in the study. One of these reasons, as stated by the teachers during the interviews, was the fact that they were concerned about the possible pressure from the school administration, parents and society because the issues of international conflict and war were related to politics. Another reason was that, particularly in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grades Social Studies course, the teachers usually addressed national and local issues but they did not address global issues concerning world politics. This result was probably due to the fact that the teachers had an inadequate point of view of global citizenship education and stronger perception of national citizenship. This situation might have been caused by the inadequate global citizenship education in teacher training programs. Teachers need to be given global citizenship education to achieve this goal. In addition, by providing a convenient political environment and laws to discuss these subjects in class, teachers should be given their academic freedom.

Students need to learn current issues of conflict and war, but schools cannot meet their needs in this regard, so they turn to the media and the family environment to acquire information. This situation indicates that in Turkey, the media is the source which students obtain most information about the international current wars. Findings from several studies suggest that children learn about the issues of international conflict from the media most, followed by the family (Alvik, 1968; Brock-Utne cited in Hall; 1993; Connell cited in Hall, 1993; Field, Burlbaw & Davis, 1994; Geddie & Hildreth, 1944; Oxfam, 2006a). These findings also show that school is the least

effective place in terms of students' learning about the issues of international conflict and war. This is another factor in students' acquiring many social prejudices and stereotypical ideas about these subjects outside the school. In addition, this study determined that those students who met similar stereotypical ideas and prejudices in family, school, the media and the society adopted these opinions more easily and these opinions were intensified. Prutzman (1994) states that teachers and parents have an important role in preventing prejudiced statements and if they fail to meet these roles, children will take them as models, thinking that biased and stereotypical ideas are right. Prutzman further states that these biases are not used only in certain cases but they may also cause more violence and hate crimes (cited in Prutzman and Johnson, 1997). Continuation of prejudice and stereotypical ideas certainly prevents the development of sustainable social peace and nature at both local and global level. For this reason, by creating a classroom environment where children can discuss the subject and explain their thoughts, teachers should identify their prejudices and develop strategies to prevent them. Bickmore (1997) states that teachers should bring conflictual situations into the classroom in Social Studies lessons and create an open classroom environment to identify students' views of intolerance, recognize their interpersonal and social conflicts and establish a framework for an active citizenship education a pluralistic democracy. Also, Prutzman & Johnson (1997) emphasize the importance of having students recognize their own prejudices and stereotypical ideas. Results of this study show that today, on the other hand, only having children recognize their own stereotypical judgments at school will not be enough. Teachers should convince students that prejudice and stereotypical judgments are an obstacle to peace and provide them with strategies to cope with the existing stereotypical ideas and prejudices in the society. Students should be taught not only how to recognize such prejudices around but also how to deal with them when they face them.

According to the results of this study, the students' level of development and maturity level, gender, social and cultural environment was effective in their comprehension of the issues of international conflict and war. Teachers should know their students very well and plan their teaching accordingly. Younger students (age 9-11) in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grades tend to follow a more emotional approach to conflict and war incidents and have difficulty in making sense out of them. Therefore, these students are more affected by the incidents conflict and war and worried about them. At the same time, these students more quickly adopt what they have learned in their environment and they are open to social influence. On the other hand, older students (age 12-14) in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades are able to take a little more critical stance towards the information they gain from their environment and they are not influenced by this information as much as younger students. Evidence suggests that logical reasoning develops with age (Haavelsrud, 1970) and feelings of young children can be volatile and variable but adolescent children can have sound ideas (Hoffman & Bizman, 1996). As shown by the results of this study, students' logical reasoning skills need to be improved at a young age so that they won't develop an anxious and desperate attitude towards these issues.

Findings from this study also showed that the students' perspectives on war varied based on gender. The female students tended to have more emotional and sensitive views of the war and conflict whereas the male students adopted a more aggressive approach with mottos such as 'let's go and fight'. While the female students exhibited an attitude more open to dialogue by suggesting that there might be other ways to avoid fighting, the male students considered war as inevitable. Studies about the perception of war report similar findings regarding gender. Male students tend to be more interested in the incidents of conflict and war than female students (Geddie & Hildreth, 1944; Tolley, 1973, cited in Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993; Frydenberg et al, 2001) and female students tend to regard interpersonal quarrels and disputes, things closer to them in social relations, as a war whereas male students see war as army and soldiers, things not so usual in their daily lives (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993). Teachers should be aware of the

differences between male and female students' perspectives, guide male students into dialogue and negotiations, and try to reduce female students' anxiety and concerns by developing their skills of logical reasoning.

Another factor affecting the students' perceptions of conflict and war was their socio-economic level. The students from upper socio-economic level were able to think in a more questioning and critical way about international conflicts and wars. These students criticized the governments, the United Nations and international agencies for not fulfilling their responsibilities. During the interviews, they said that this subject was discussed at home. Also, these students were able to take an unbiased stance towards the incident of international war. Alvik (1968), states that students from upper socio-economic level are more capable of skills related to reciprocal reasoning and moral judgment about war. Another point emphasized by the teachers in this study was the fact that the younger students from traditional and conservative families with low socio-economic level were more open to social influence. On the other hand, the students who are older and come from upper socio-economic levels are influenced less by social effects since they can evaluate events critically. For this reason, teachers should act knowing that students who are younger and come from traditional families with lower socio-economic levels are more influenced by the society. Teachers should know students' socio-cultural environment very well and be aware of the opinions students can obtain from this social environment.

### **Limitations**

This research is limited to only the observations in the Social Studies lessons in Turkey and the interview data from the teachers and students. No data were obtained about the impact of the other courses and the contribution of the culture at the school on global citizenship education. More comprehensive studies which simultaneously examine the contribution of all courses in teaching international conflict and war, extracurricular activities and school culture are needed. In addition, conducting action research with teachers about this subject in different programs might facilitate the preparation of training materials for teachers.

As a result, this study actually highlights the significance of global citizenship education and studies in this area for maintaining global peace and development. Offering global citizenship and peace education within each level of education and curriculum and in activities bringing together school and society in many countries remains among the important steps to be taken to give future generations a safer and more peaceful life.



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