

# Partition, Power Sharing and Peace: A Spatial Analysis\*

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## Abstract

Does the partitioning of states along ethnic lines reduce conflict? While most existing theories argue that partition prevents conflict recurrence by separating the parties, others dispute these findings. Rather than being driven by a separation logic, we argue that partition pacifies by reducing ethno-political domination. But power sharing can also reduce domination and thus bring peace within fixed state borders. Adopting a spatial approach, we reconceptualize partition as decreased cohabitation in dyads of transnationally-defined ethnic groups. Difference-in-differences analyses based on a global dataset (1946–2017) reveal mixed evidence that partition *per se* reduces intergroup conflict. Whereas its incomplete application is more likely to increase this risk, analysis using an index of domination shows that partitions that produce low-domination outcomes are more peaceful than those that do not. Moreover, we find that power sharing can also exert a pacifying effect without the destabilizing geopolitical side effects of border change.

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