

# Engineering a Multi-Ethnic Society: The Case of Brcko District

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## Abstract

In this paper, I investigate the effects of a political experiment conducted in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, where two different approaches to managing ethnic diversity were implemented within the territory of one country. Focusing on ethnic voting, I conduct a geographic regression discontinuity analysis to evaluate whether the policy that minimized the level of state institutionalization of ethnic categories in a newly-formed District led citizens to embrace multi-ethnic parties and outlook, as was posited by international actors. I find no systematic differences in ethnic voting between the villages in which the policy was implemented, and the villages which remained under the consociationalist system with institutionalized identity divisions. Given that the experiment of Brcko District is often described as a model to emulate in areas with ethnic tensions, the results imply the limitations of the impact that foreign imposed governing arrangements can have on reconfiguring identities and inducing behavior changes.

**Keywords:** Bosnia and Herzegovina; Brcko District; ethnicity; identity; institutionalization; integration; ethnic voting; power-sharing