

(Re)Drawing Borders of Peace and War: A Political Geography of State Partition

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SOAR Scholarship Proposal



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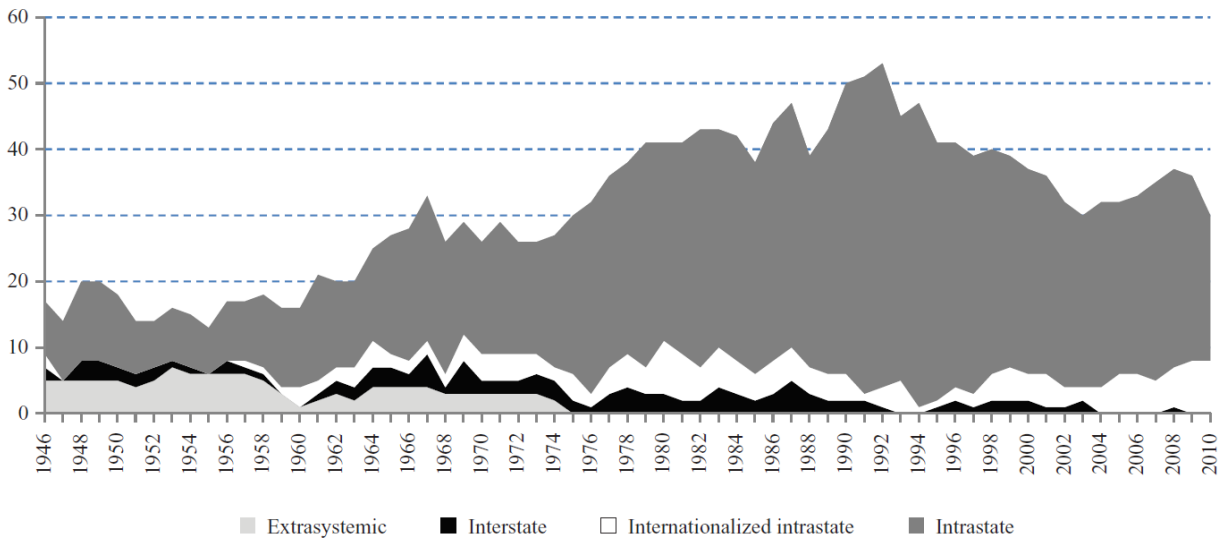
1. Abstract

War and conflict are a constant reality of human history. Traditionally conflicts would be terminated when one of the warring parties would defeat its adversary or adversaries. However, the 21st century has witnessed the increasing use of conflict resolution strategies to try to manage contemporary warfare, particularly intrastate conflicts. Several strategies have received significant emphasis such as power-sharing schemes, third-party intervention, mediation and negotiations, and reconciliation (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse, 2011). When all other options have been exhausted, a solution of last-resort has been to promote the territorial partition of states – i.e., the transforming a single state into two or more states (Waterman, 1996). Partition – sponsored by the international community – has been employed in multiple situations in recent history in order to separate the belligerent factions and try to secure a peaceful settlement to the dispute – e.g., partitions of India (1947), Palestine (1947), Korea (1954), Vietnam (1954), Pakistan (1971), Cyprus (1974), Yugoslavia (1990s), Serbia (2008). With the exceptions of Ethiopia (creation of Eritrea in 1993) and Sudan (creation of South Sudan in 2011) partition has not been an option for addressing the conflicts which have scoured the continent for over half a century. This fact solicits perplexity taking into consideration the number of intrastate conflicts that have ravaged African countries and contributed to millions of deaths. This is particularly relevant considering the fact that the borders of Africa are still predominantly the arbitrary borders established by the colonial powers (Fisher, 2012). Accordingly, the current research proposal seeks answer the question of why the international community has hesitated to endorse partition as a conflict resolution strategy in Africa? The research project will analyze what factors have led the international community to sponsor territorial re-arrangements in numerous other regions, yet be silent regarding Africa, and consequently try to establish a framework for understanding under what conditions is partition entertained by the international community.

2. Process/Methods

Whereas interstate conflicts have been declining since the end of the 2nd World War, the number of intrastate conflicts, in contrast, has been on the rise (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 – NUMBER OF ARMED CONFLICTS BY TYPE, 1946–2010



(SOURCE: Themnér and Wallensteen, 2011: 526)

While there are significant regional variations in the level of violence of these conflicts, studies demonstrate that Africa has been the most violent region over the last quarter century (Melander, 2015). The international community has long acknowledged this situation and tried to engage with the conflicts in Africa by employing a wide assortment of conflict management strategies – e.g., power-sharing schemes, third-party intervention, mediation and negotiations, and reconciliation. In fact, of the current 16 peacekeeping operations led by the United Nation’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations, nine are located in Africa (Figure 2).

While the international community has sought to actively address the conflicts in the African continent it has been reluctant to sponsor or endorse partition as a mechanism for managing intrastate war. While partition is not a panacea for resolving all internal disputes in warring states and is acknowledged as a strategy of last-resort, it does present itself as an option to separate the parties in conflict and ensure international recognition to the different parts (Waterman, 2006). This strategy has been employed in numerous situations over the last century

Borders created through some combination of ignorance and malice are today one of the continent's major barriers to building strong, competent states. No initiative would do more for happiness, stability, and economic growth in Africa today than an energetic and enlightened redrawing of these harmful lines. (Zachary, 2010)

Nevertheless, the international community has turned a blind eye to this fact and continues to view partition with suspicion. In particular, Western states have customarily claimed that the international community does not have a need for additional borders and, therefore, favor mechanisms such as negotiation, power-sharing, regional autonomy, and federalism over the creation of new states (Johnson, 2008). Even in situations where *de facto* states exist and which reveal "empirical statehood", international recognition has faltered. The Republic of Somaliland is a case in point. Whereas Somaliland has all the characteristics of a modern state, the majority of the members of the UN do not recognize it as a sovereign state, but rather as part of Somalia.

In this research project we analyze why partition has been embraced in Europe and Central Asia and not in other conflict and war-torn regions, such as Africa. We will ultimately seek to identify if there is a discernible pattern of behavior which will allow us to establish a framework for understanding under what conditions partition is considered by the international community.

We will use a comparative approach to analyze in which situations the international community endorsed partition. More precisely, we will analyze primary sources, particularly official national documents and international deliberations (e.g., UN General Assembly), to identify the rationalizations for endorsing partition in some states and rejecting it in others. In particular, we will focus on the situations in Eritrea and South Sudan and compare their political situation and dynamics to other African countries experiencing intrastate conflict. Furthermore, we will contrast these situations to their European counterpart in the former-Yugoslavia to try to determine if there are distinct regional patterns for sponsoring partition as a conflict resolution strategy. We will complement our analysis of these documents with personal interviews with United Nations staff who may provide further insight into the organizational dynamics informing

these decisions. Additional interviews with academic experts will also be sought to provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding the phenomenon of partition.

3. Timeline

	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17
Primary & secondary readings	■	■	■	■	■							
Interviews with United Nations personnel / representatives				■	■							
Analysis of research findings				■	■	■						
Theoretical conceptualization					■	■						
First systematic paper writing						■	■					
Revision of the first draft (editing & proofreading)							■	■				
Writing of final version of paper								■	■			
Production of poster for dissemination				■	■							
Presentation of poster at VCSU student symposium					■							
Paper proposal submission to NGPH Conference					■							
Paper presentation at NGPH Conference										■		
Preparation of paper for journal submission										■	■	
Journal submission												■

4. Budget

ACTIVITY	PRICE/HOUR	HOURS	TOTAL
Research	\$10	50	\$500
Writing	\$10	30	\$300
Presentation/publishing	\$10	10	\$100
Acquisition of books, articles, and/or poll and survey data, communications,	\$100	---	\$100
Conference fees, travel expenses	\$250	---	\$250
TOTAL			\$1,250

5. Dissemination

After finishing the research and assessing the reasons why the international community does not endorse partitioning in regions such as Africa, the findings will be disseminated at multiple events and venues. First, it will be disseminated at the Student Scholar Symposium at Valley City State University in May 2017. This allows for the presentation of the initial findings to the VCSU campus community. It will also be presented at the Northern Great Plains History Conference in Grand Forks, North Dakota in September of 2017. When the research is finalized, it will be submitted to an academic journal (to be designated) in order to disseminate the findings to a broader audience.

6. Educational Objectives

Completing this research project allows me to improve and prepare for my future educational endeavors. I plan on attending graduate school and this experience will provide a unique learning opportunity because it will allow me to develop my research skills, particularly those emphasizing qualitative analytical methods. It will also help me develop a demanding and innovative work ethic that will be useful in my future educational career. Partaking in this academic research project will allow me to start my academic career and build and consolidate the tools needed for my future academic and personal success.

7. Integrative Nature of Work

This research project incorporates multiple areas of study. The research proposal draws on and incorporates the knowledge base of several disciplines, particularly Political Science (International Relations Theory) and Human Geography (political geography). The current research proposal departs from the majority of the studies regarding partition because it does not focus exclusively on one disciplinary perspective. Rather, the study seeks to understand the relationship between geographic phenomena (e.g., borders) and political behavior (e.g., conflict). In particular, the study seeks to integrate these two distinct fields in order to develop a framework that explains the geographic differences in the international community's policies.

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