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# PARTITION AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA-PAKISTAN AND CYPRUS

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**Abstract:** This article argues that partition – a peacebuilding approach in a post-conflict society – can lead to the transformation of intrastate conflict to interstate conflict, thereby providing a helpful insight for further comparison of partition with multi-ethnic settlements such as federalism/powersharing and reconciliation. While advocates of partition maintain that intrastate conflict caused by a security dilemma between ethnic groups can be settled only by partition, this article argues that partition could cause the transformation of conflict rather than settling it. The cases of India-Pakistan and Cyprus provide the empirical evidence. The partition of India and Pakistan transformed intrastate conflict within India into interstate conflict between India and Pakistan including nuclear competition. The partition of Cyprus contributed to interstate conflict between Greece and Turkey. Therefore, this article concludes that the transformation of conflict reduces the value of partition, and that it is necessary to take this point into consideration when partition is compared with alternatives such as federalism/powersharing and reconciliation.

**Keywords:** *peacebuilding, powersharing, India-Pakistan, Cyprus, Greece-Turkey*

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## Introduction

As a piece of the special issue, rather than discussing federalism/powersharing and reconciliation themselves, this article examines a counter-concept of them, or partition, thereby contributing to a further understanding of their implications. Partition is an antithetical idea to multi-ethnic peacebuilding approaches such as federalism/powersharing and reconciliation to a post-conflict state. While many authors have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each peacebuilding approach when methods of conflict settlement are considered, it does not seem that an agreement on which is the best has been reached. Since Chaim Kaufmann argued for partition as a policy for the settlement of intrastate ethnic conflict, there have been intense controversies. While this article does not deny that partition contributes to inhibiting violence within a state, it points out that partition could transform an intrastate conflict into an interstate one rather than settling it. While the literature on partition has noted this side effect of partition, there does not seem to be an in-depth study of it. Hence, rather than simply comparing partition with federalism/powersharing and reconciliation, this article demonstrates that partition sometimes results in several new security issues at the international level. For this purpose, it examines two cases of partition, India-Pakistan and Cyprus. Through this work, it provides insights which help further comparison of partition and multi-ethnic settlements.

First, this article reviews the theory of partition. Second, it shows that the partition of India-Pakistan led to interstate conflict between them. Third, it explains that the partition of Cyprus contributed to preventing interstate conflict between Greece and Turkey from deescalating. Fourth, based on lessons from these case studies, it further discusses the side effect of partition and shows the flaws of arguments for partition. Fifth, it notes that the decision of which peacebuilding approach to implement should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Finally, it concludes that the transformation of conflict reduces the value of partition, and that it is necessary to take this point into consideration when partition is compared with alternatives such as federalism/powersharing and reconciliation.

### *1. Reviewing the theory of partition*

The core argument for partition is that when intense ethnic conflict occurs, the separation of rival groups is the only solution and attempts to establish an intermingled community of these groups can lead to further violence (Downes 2006; Johnson 2008; Kaufmann 1996, 1999). The theory of partition is based on two arguments regarding ethnic conflict. The first is that 'in ethnic wars both hypernationalist mobilization rhetoric and real atrocities harden ethnic identities to the point that cross-ethnic political appeals are unlikely to be made and even less likely to be heard' (Kaufmann 1996,

137). While constructivists point out that ethnic identities are not fixed, Johnson (2008, 146) argues that '[a]dvocates of partition need not accept ethnic identity as given' because ethnic wars themselves construct ethnic identities in the process of war.

The second argument is that 'intermingled population settlement patterns create real security dilemmas that intensify violence, motivate ethnic "cleansing," and prevent de-escalation unless the groups are separated' (Kaufmann 1996, 137; for arguments on the security dilemma in ethnic conflict, see Posen 1993). Downes (2006, 51) describes distrust prevailing in ethnic conflict where each side fears that it would be in peril of ethnic cleansing if it disarmed based on a peace agreement that was not honoured by the other side. 'Defensive vulnerabilities' and 'offensive opportunities' (Kaufmann 1996, 139) in an ethnically intermingled settlement intensify security dilemmas, and violent conflict in such situations would be resolved only by the separation of the warring groups. Multi-ethnic settlements could not mitigate the security dilemmas and each ethnic group would be opposed to such solutions because of fear and hatred intensified by the conflict.

Based on these two arguments, advocates of partition point out that: whereas 'restoring civil politics in multi-ethnic states shattered by war is impossible because the war itself destroys the possibilities for ethnic cooperation,' partition 'reduces both incentives and opportunity for further combat and largely eliminates both reasons and chances for ethnic cleansing of civilians (Kaufmann 1996, 137; also see Mearsheimer & Van Evera, 1995). These arguments are a thorough critique of peacebuilding through federalism/powersharing and reconciliation. Proponents of partition clearly claim that multi-ethnic settlement approaches do not lead to peace in post-war societies because ethnic civil wars destroy prerequisites for such approaches, namely loyalties to a state rather than ethnic groups and inter-ethnic cooperation/compromise (Downes 2006, 52-53; Kaufmann 1996, 155-157).

When advocates of partition attempt to prove that the theory of partition is valid, they refer to the cases of India-Pakistan and Cyprus as empirical evidence (Johnson 2008; Kaufmann 1999, 2007). These two cases seem to be consistent with the theory of partition. However, the next two sections of this article demonstrate that India-Pakistan and Cyprus transformed intrastate conflict to interstate conflict and resulted in security issues in international relations.

## *2. The partition of India-Pakistan and their interstate conflict*

When India and Pakistan became independent in 1947, partition was conducted. India has two main ethnic groups; Hindus constitute the majority and Muslims the minority. They used to live together peacefully under British rule because the target of their antipathy was the British, not each other (Hagerty 1998, 64). However as independence became a reality, anxiety about Hindu majority rule emerged among Muslims and it drove them to demand a homeland for themselves, Pakistan, in 1940

(Hagerty 1998, 64-65). During the middle of the 1940s, the Hindu-Muslim violence became intense (Paul 2005, 7) and eventually the British separated and created both India and Pakistan as independent states (Hagerty 1998, 65; Paul 2005, 7). This partition led to population transfers which lead Kaufmann (1999, 237) to point out that '[t]he 1947-51 population exchanges resolved Hindu-Muslim security dilemmas throughout most of India and Pakistan'.

Although Kumar (1997, 26) posits that partition did not create peace by demonstrating that 'the riots that followed in 1947-1948 left more than a million people dead in six months and displaced upwards of 15 million', Kaufmann (1999, 230) argues that '[t]his correlation ... is spurious' because this violence was caused not by the partition itself but by security dilemmas between the ethnic groups. Kaufmann points out: because security of all the ethnic groups was assured by British imperial power, the removal of British rule created the security dilemma between Muslims and Hindus and this security dilemma led to the partition and the subsequent population transfers and violence.

However the partition transformed intrastate conflict within India into interstate conflict between India and Pakistan. These two states have experienced several near-war situations and crises, three major wars and even nuclear competition. In particular, Kashmir has been a main factor in the conflicts between the two states. Kaufmann (1999, 237) argues that the Kashmir conflict 'occurred not because India was partitioned but because Kashmir, whose population was about two-thirds Muslims, was not'. This argument assumes that if Kashmir had been partitioned, there would not have been conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan. However, Hagerty (1998, 67) explains that the matter of legitimacy on which each India and Pakistan are grounded made it difficult to realize the partition of Kashmir. The legitimacy of Pakistan is based on the premise that 'the subcontinent's Muslims [can] safeguard their political rights only through the formation of a separate country'. Therefore Pakistan cannot allow Kashmir –where Muslims are the majority– to stay in India because it means that the legitimacy of Pakistan would be denied. Meanwhile, Indian ideology is based on the 'successful incorporation of all minorities, including Muslims, into the Indian political order'. If Kashmir were handed over to Pakistan, it would repudiate this ideology because it would serve to indicate that Muslims in Kashmir want to be in Pakistan rather than in India and this would allow other ethnic groups throughout India to doubt its legitimacy. Therefore Hagerty points out that 'Kashmir is a zero-sum test for each state's legitimating ideology: one's validity invalidates the other'.

It might be argued that even though interstate conflict between India and Pakistan occurred, the partition was meaningful because it eventually contributed to mitigating violent conflict between Hindus and Muslims within India. This argument is not without merit. However in this case the cost of partition seems to be too high: the interstate conflict between India and Pakistan has led to three wars and the proliferation of

nuclear weapons in South Asia. There is no doubt that violent intrastate conflict is a serious issue but it could be argued that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is at least as serious as, or perhaps more serious than, ethnic civil war – not only because of fear of nuclear war between them but also because of the danger that nuclear weapons could inadvertently come into the possession of terrorist groups. Although nuclear deterrence theory would suggest that the probability of interstate nuclear war between India and Pakistan remains low (Hagerty 2009) and the international community has committed to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to terrorists; the damage caused by nuclear weapons would be catastrophic if used. Furthermore, Bajpai (2009) argues that the presence of nuclear weapons enabled Pakistan to resort to sub-conventional or unconventional wars such as insurgency and terrorist attacks in the recent Indian-Pakistani crises over Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> Given these points, what is obvious is that partition caused several and arguably quite serious security issues at the international level.

### 3. *The partition of Cyprus and interstate conflict between Greece and Turkey*

Cyprus was partitioned into the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1974.<sup>2</sup> The escalation of the *enosis* movement<sup>3</sup> of Greek Cypriots led to violent conflict between the majority Greek Cypriots and the minority Turkish Cypriots. When the ethnic conflict became intense in 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus and occupied the northern part of the island. Eventually, this resulted in a de facto partition. Although thousands of people had been killed by the time of the partition, since then casualties have been almost zero up to now. Kaufmann (2007) assesses historical counterfactuals or what would have happened if Cyprus had not been partitioned. According to Kaufmann (2007, 208-215), avoiding the partition would have led to further ethnic cleansing and a civil war. Therefore, Kaufmann (2007, 220-221) argues that the partition of Cyprus contributed to the settlement of violent conflict there.

Certainly, the partition appears to have resolved security dilemmas and settled violence in Cyprus, but it can be argued that it transformed intrastate conflict within Cyprus into interstate conflict over Cyprus between Greece and Turkey. Although Greece and Turkey were traditionally in conflictual relations, they enjoyed a relatively good relationship for a period after World War II because of shared communist threats (Krebs 1999, 358). However Krebs argues that the issue of Cyprus extinguished their

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<sup>1</sup> Nuclear deterrence theorists also acknowledge this point. See Hagerty (2009, 109-110).

<sup>2</sup> However, the international community recognizes only the Republic of Cyprus and only Turkey approves the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

<sup>3</sup> The *enosis* movement is the movement to pursue the unification of Greece and Cyprus.

two decade friendship. The partition made this issue an enduring factor in the Greek-Turkish conflict. Kumar (1997, 29) shows that '[a] violent demonstration by Cypriots in August 1996 resulted in Greece and Turkey threatening war' and points out that '[t]he costs of containment, therefore, include permanent vigilance on the part of NATO and the Atlantic allies'. On the other hand, Kaufmann (1999, 258, note 85) counter-argues that the case Kumar highlights was 'no more than some moderately warm rhetoric by Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, plus Turkish protests about attacks on three consulates'. During 1997-1998 Greece and Turkey had a crisis over the deployment of missiles by Cyprus and exchanged threats of war, but this crisis deescalated because of mediation by the EU (Rumelili 2003, 236-237).

It seems that the situation has at no point been so serious that it could have lead to war, but it is also the case that the partition made the issue of Cyprus an enduring factor in the Greek-Turkish conflict. This article does not argue that the partition of Cyprus was meaningless; it acknowledges that it stopped violence. Rather it underscores that the partition contributed to preventing interstate conflict between Greece and Turkey from deescalating.<sup>4</sup> The Greek-Turkish conflict has been managed due to mediations by NATO and the EU (Kalaizaki 2005; Rumelili 2003, 236), while Cyprus is still a bottleneck for improving Greek-Turkish relationships.

#### *4. Lessons from the case studies*

These case studies of India-Pakistan and Cyprus show the side effects of partition. They demonstrate the flaws of partition theory. First Kaufmann (1996, 151) argues that '[t]hose considering humanitarian intervention to end ethnic civil wars should set as their goal lasting safety, rather than perfect peace'. However partition is not always effective at creating lasting safety either, given that it can transform intrastate conflict to interstate conflict and create new security problems at the international level, as the case studies above have shown. Partition seems to be a compromise rather than a solution. As Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl (2009, 118) note: '[a]t the limit, if ethnic diversity drives conflict, if all states are partitioned into ethnically homogeneous nation-states, the risk of intrastate conflict should decline as the risk of interstate conflict goes up'. Advocates of partition argue that while partition changes intrastate conflict into interstate conflict, interstate conflict is easier to manage by mutual deterrence (Kaufmann 1996, 150) or diplomatic pressure (Johnson 2008, 151). However it does not mean that there is no probability of interstate war. Actually, the interstate conflict between India and Pakistan eventually led to three wars and a fear of nuclear war, and the mutual possession of nuclear weapons led to unconventional/sub-conventional

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<sup>4</sup> Kaufmann (2007, 215) also admits that 'non-life-threatening costs of partition include further poisoning of Greek-Turkish relations'.



wars such as terrorism rather than deterrence. While advocates of partition attribute this point to the imperfect partition over Kashmir, they do not seem to offer an answer about how to resolve the problem of conflictual legitimacy between India and Pakistan. Thus the theory of partition needs to be further developed in order to answer the question of how to overcome these challenges.

Second, Kaufmann (1996, 159) argues that 'lasting peace requires removal of the security dilemma' and '[t]he most effective and in many cases the only way to do this is to separate the ethnic groups'. However as the case studies above show: partition can transform an intrastate conflict into an interstate conflict, which is quite problematic in terms of security dilemma theory. The idea of the security dilemma originates from the argument that anarchy or the absence of a political authority over sovereign states is a defining characteristic of international politics (Booth & Wheeler 2008, 2) and the anarchic situation in international politics leads to the security dilemma (21-78). While the argument of the security dilemma within states is derived from international politics (Posen 1993), an intrastate security dilemma could be mitigated with more feasibility than an interstate security dilemma. This is because effective institutions can be established in domestic politics which would drastically reduce tendencies towards anarchy within the state (Hartzell 1999). Though in international politics institutions such as the EU or NATO may play major roles to mitigate interstate security dilemmas, their capability still seems to be limited (Krebs 1999; Rumelili 2003). Partition is problematic in that it would lead to a new security issue which is caused by an interstate security dilemma and is more difficult to mitigate because of the anarchic nature of international politics.

### 5. Case by case

While advocates of partition maintain that multi-ethnic settlements run a greater risk of the resumption of ethnic war than partition (Johnson 2008; Downes 2006, 51), there are still controversies over this argument (Horowitz & Weisiger 2009; Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2009). Therefore it is not reasonable to eliminate peace-building approaches through federalism/powersharing and reconciliation as a solution to a post-war state. Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl (2009) demonstrate that there are cases where war recurred after partition while there are also cases where war ended without partition, and partition will work only under limited conditions. In addition, some studies of peace-building show that a multi-ethnic conflict settlement is possible even after a serious violent conflict and therefore suggest the possibility of a successful federalism/powersharing and reconciliation peacebuilding approach. For example: in Bosnia, victims of ethnic cleansing in an area returned to their homeland after the war and it contributed to the marginalization of ethnic nationalists there (Belloni 2005).

It is not simple to decide which peacebuilding approach is the best – the answer to this question seems to differ case-by-case so further empirical study will be needed.

What is important is not to simply choose either partition or a multi-ethnic settlement approach but to compare the cost, benefit and feasibility of each approach to each conflict. In this sense the transformation of conflict needs to be taken into consideration for this comparison.

## **Conclusion**

Rather than discussing federalism/powersharing and reconciliation themselves, this article has provided insights for further comparison of these multi-ethnic settlement approaches and partition in post-conflict societies by demonstrating that partition can transform an intrastate conflict into an interstate conflict. In the case of India-Pakistan the partition has led to interstate conflict including wars, nuclear competition and terrorism. In the case of Cyprus the partition created safety within Cyprus but made the issue of Cyprus an enduring factor in interstate conflict between Greece and Turkey (although the conflict has not yet lead to war). These side effects reduce the value of partition as a conflict settlement approach.

The examination of these side effects has provided a means by which to consider which conflict settlement approach is appropriate in a given case. Kaufmann (1999, 248) argues that '[w]e should not fail to separate populations in cases that have already produced large-scale violence and intense security dilemmas', and advocates of partition point out that partition is effective at creating lasting safety. However as discussed above, partition needs to be considered not only at the intrastate level but also at the interstate and global level. It is important to compare the cost, benefit and feasibility of each approach to each conflict as federalism/powersharing and reconciliation can be alternatives to partition. Only by doing so can reliable conflict settlements and reconciliation be achieved.

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