

Working Paper: Can Conflicts Unite a Nation?

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Working Papers

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Abstract: Despite the global commitment to fostering peace, the world suffers from violent conflicts. Related literature connects intrastate ethnic conflicts to polarization, but the relationship between the other types of conflicts and polarization is unclear. I build a simple model where conflicts initiated by an external aggressor can reduce the political polarization of a country. Furthermore, I assess how violent conflicts in the form of foreign state-supported territorial disputes are related to the region-specific political support of the winner in presidential and parliamentary elections, exploring regional panel data from Georgia and Ukraine. The analysis suggests that differences in political preferences across regions decrease after a conflict. Finally, I confirm a negative association between conflicts and political polarization using country-level data from around the world. The model and evidence from the country-level data suggest that the structure of public policy could be a potential channel for political preferences alignment after a conflict.

