

DEALING WITH INTERETHNIC CONFLICT IN EUROPE: HISTORIC AND RECENT EUROPEAN POLICIES IN MULTIETHNIC STATES AND REGIONS

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ABSTRACT: *This study analyses the evolution and effectiveness of public policies aimed at managing interethnic conflict in Europe through a comparative examination of historical and contemporary governance strategies in multiethnic states. It demonstrates that although ethnicity remains a central axis of political mobilisation, the success or failure of policy responses depends less on their stated normative goals than on underlying configurations of power, legitimacy, and structural inequality. The findings show that strategies based on separation and assimilation, while historically dominant, have repeatedly failed to produce lasting stability by entrenching divisions, suppressing minority identities, and provoking counter-mobilisation. In contrast, conciliatory approaches grounded in negotiation, institutional pluralism, and power-sharing offer more sustainable, though politically fragile, mechanisms for managing diversity. The study concludes that no single model of interethnic governance ensures success, and that effective conflict management requires a balanced integration of cultural recognition, political inclusion, and procedural fairness. It further argues that enduring pacification depends on the continuous renegotiation of belonging within democratic frameworks capable of accommodating difference*

Keywords: *assimilation; conciliation; Europe, interethnic; multiethnic; policy; separation.*

1. Introduction: background, hypothesis, methodology and limitations

Most modern states are characterised by an ethnic constitutional order, often being regimes dedicated primarily to promoting the interests of a single ethnic group within their own borders. Problems arise when these states contain societies that are strongly divided along ethnic lines, in which case the regimes' devotion to establishing, perpetuating, and even deepening the specific ethnic character of these states jeopardises both their long-term stability and the sincerity of their democratic institutions (Peleg, 2004). The politicisation of ethnicity involves the coagulation of personal desires for significance and belonging into a group demand for respect and power. This begins with the cognitive awareness of group members of the relevance of politics to the well-being of their ethnic group's cultural values, followed by the stimulation of concern for ethnic belonging. Once mobilised into self-aware ethnic groups, members' behaviours are directed toward political actions based on their awareness and concerns. The effects of ethnic politicisation can enhance, hinder, or even nullify political integration at the state level. They can either

legitimise the political system or cause it to lose its legitimacy, stabilising or undermining regimes and governments. However, since it constantly introduces new actors and new modes of participation onto the political scene, its initial impact tends to disrupt existing processes and institutions.

One of the main reasons why ethnicity is so often politicised is the instrumental advantage that politicising ethnicities brings in the competition and struggle for power, prestige, authority, position, wealth, and income. Therefore, even if ethnicity has not always been politicised in all historical eras and under all social conditions, this is likely to happen if the correlation between ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, and the distribution of political power generates systems of structural interethnic inequality, and if those consciously interested in maintaining or changing this correlation decide that it would be in their interest to mobilise ethnicity as a political resource or lever for action, with multiethnic societies providing the optimal conditions for introducing ethnicity into the political arena. Currently, the politicisation of ethnicity is problematic and ambivalent. It serves both as a means of supporting aggression, oppression, and

imperialism and as a protective shield against these hegemonic tendencies. Ethnic minorities, who feel threatened by the possibility of being overwhelmed by the power of dominant groups and the central state apparatus that embodies the forces of modernisation, politicise themselves in a desperate attempt to resist the oppressive forces. It is precisely for these reasons that the politicisation of ethnicity may appear to be a conservative cultural reaction against modernity, while at the same time promoting structural changes and the redistribution of power (Rothschild, 1981). It can both „press or seduce them into a defensive constriction of their horizons, and yet it can also liberate them from a directionless anomie, expand their humaneness, and deepen their self-esteem. It can be suspicious and hostile or flexible and affirmative toward the 'outside' world and other ethnic and nonethnic groups. It may enhance or restrict freedom and progress. It is potentially creative or destructive” (Rothschild, 1981, p. 256).

There are several types of interethnic divisions. Although not forming a majority, a dominant group may subordinate several ethnic minorities, as in the cases of Yugoslavia or interwar Czechoslovakia (Rothschild, 1981). The most common situation, however, is one in which a dominant majority subjugates one or more ethnic groups, as in the cases of Cyprus and Northern Ireland. The reverse of the medal, which is increasingly rare today, usually applied to colonial regimes, where a dominant minority subjugated an ethnic majority (Peleg, 2004; Rothschild, 1981). The interest in the chosen topic and its socio-academic relevance stems from the central question that guides this article: to what extent can public policies be successfully used to manage interethnic tensions? The primary research hypothesis is that the success of public policies in resolving ethnic conflicts is neither universal nor guaranteed, but rather depends on a combination of factors and the strategic directions preferred in this regard, as this article will demonstrate. In this regard, we have opted to use a methodology that combines a thorough study with a critical presentation of the existing literature. This article employs the case study method, utilising a multiple-case design and the comparative synthesis technique to analyse the evolution and differences in Europe when it comes to the three main ways of dealing with multiethnic states and regions, as exposed in

Terrence E. Cook's 2003 outstanding book: separation, assimilation and conciliation, each of the three being analysed both from the perspective of favouring the dominant groups and the dominated ones, respectively.

From a theoretical standpoint, this topic holds significance as it revitalises scholarly discourse within the field, with the case study serving as a bridge between established theoretical concepts and their potential for practical implementation. At the same time, the subject demonstrates clear practical relevance, as the paper offers an in-depth examination of both the strengths and shortcomings of various approaches to employing policies in the management of interethnic relations. Such an assessment is particularly pertinent in today's context, characterised by the persistence of interethnic conflicts and the continued infringement of minority rights on a global scale.

Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that this research is not without its constraints. As the paper will demonstrate, there remains a lack of broadly accepted frameworks or proposals concerning interethnic policies, which in turn restricts the extent to which this study can provide definitive recommendations. Moreover, the chosen methodological approach is subject to its own limitations, as the past two decades have yielded comparatively little academic progress in the field of interethnic policy, which in turn influences the analytical depth of the case study, notwithstanding its applied dimension.

2. Separatist policies

The first of the main strategic directions of public policies on ethnic groups aims to separate them, whether it involves separating groups from a favored ethnic group, separating one group from another in order to weaken one of them, or concentrating an ethnic group in a particular territory in order to exploit its skills, control it, or even kill its members, thus becoming genocide. This typically involves highlighting the real or perceived differences between the groups and utilising them, at least in part, to distinguish the dominated group from the dominant one. Policies of physical distancing often accompany this deep mental differentiation. Like the other two main strategic directions, this direction of interethnic public policy can be used to benefit both the dominant group and the dominated groups.

2.1. Separatist policies benefiting dominant groups

In the first case, separation can range from mild social segregation to, in the worst case, more aggressive forms of exclusion from the state, from denial of access to specific roles to even the right to life, in the extreme case of physical genocide. Such segregation often implies that the dominated ethnic groups are inferior, at least culturally, if not genetically. The dominant group must use stereotypes to justify its separation from the dominated groups. This typically involves a form of homogenisation of the dominated ethnic groups, which is not based on their objective characteristics. On the contrary, to further highlight the contrasts between the two categories of groups, the dominant ethnic group must exaggerate all real characteristics, in its case, the positive ones. In contrast, the dominated groups must exaggerate the negative ones. Most of the time, stereotyping involves ascribing specific positive characteristics to the dominant group and negative ones to the dominated group. A lesser-known example of this was the persecution of Roma ethnic groups in Western Europe in the 15th-19th centuries, when they were branded, had their heads shaved, or, in the case of women, had their ears cut off.

Dominant groups also employ separatist public policies regarding migration. If there is no urgent need for their labour, they will often block unwanted groups at the borders or encourage them to emigrate, sometimes in a violent manner (Cook, 2003). Although, like genocide, with which it often goes hand in hand, since both are integral strategies in the struggle to consolidate empires, expulsion is strongly condemned by the international community as violating the limits of legitimate political action concerning ethnic groups (Guzina, 2007; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Peleg, 2004; Rothschild, 1981; Smooha & Hanf, 1992), this remains a tempting solution for dominant groups because it represents a quick method of irrevocably changing the ethnic profile of the state's population in the direction they see as necessary and urgent. In other words, despite its cruelty and severity, expulsion can be seen as an attractive solution by the dominant groups precisely because it promises a definitive solution to a troublesome problem, „much as the surgical amputation of a limb 'cures' its gangrene”

(Rothschild, 1981, p. 156). Although a relatively recent case was the expulsion of Roma citizens from the Czech Republic to Slovakia in 1993, history provides examples of this dating back to the 13th-16th centuries, a period when England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Bohemia, and the Germanic states systematically expelled Jews living on their territories, as did the Third Reich between 1933 and 1938.

The dominant ethnic group also tries to remove and keep dominated groups away from jobs it considers desirable, especially if they are even slightly politically sensitive. Between 1933 and 1938, Germany removed all Jews from jobs in the public service. Later, apartheid (1948-1991) created an elaborate system of racial eligibility for jobs, and in 1990, Serbs decided to remove Albanians from public service in Kosovo. Sometimes, except for servants, dominated groups are even prohibited from living alongside dominant groups. This territorial separation often involves the concentration of dominated populations, making them vulnerable not only to the usual forms of control but also to murder. An early example was the territorial isolation of Jews in Catholic countries during the Catholic Reformation (1545-1648), with the same fate in the Tsarist Empire from 1791 onwards, and then again by the National Socialists in the Polish ghettos between 1939 and 1944. The Roma ethnic group was also forbidden from continuing their nomadic lifestyle in the Holy Roman Empire in the 18th century.

Another common practice involves denying dominated groups the right to own land. If the dominated already own land, it may be expropriated by the dominant ethnic group, usually invalidating the local culture's sense of ownership, as was the case with Aboriginal tribes in European colonies. Deprived of the land they had previously inhabited, the natives had to adapt to survival in increasingly restricted spaces, even though those patches of wilderness did not provide them with sufficient hunting or gathering opportunities. Except for enslaved people, the dominant groups do not want the dominated to reproduce, in extreme cases resorting to violent measures such as genital mutilation, with the dominant ethnic groups often denying the very humanity of their victims. Nevertheless, although they only talk about differences, they are perfectly aware of an essential similarity they share with the dominated groups, namely the desire to control

the same homes, land, jobs, and so on, which is one of the main reasons behind the unbridled rage that leads to genocide (Cook, 2003).

Genocide is more likely when attempts are made to build or maintain an empire (as in the case of the Ottoman Empire or the Third Reich), when an ethnic group has neither political or military power nor geopolitical resources such as its own state or a strong diaspora to defend itself (as was the case with the Armenians in 1915-1917 or the Jews and Roma in 1939-1945), when a previously subordinate ethnic group becomes vulnerable as a result of the disintegration of the political control system built by the dominant group (as was the case with the ethnic cleansing in the Yugoslav Wars of 1991-2001) or when the states involved are not democratic, which includes all the examples mentioned above (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981; Stavenhagen, 1996). Although it is not always stated as a government objective, an ethnic group may commit genocide against other groups with the tacit support or approval of a government. The goals may be to remove the political or cultural dominance of the target group, to avenge real or imagined offenses, to suppress an insurrection or revolt, and to terrorise the target group until it becomes submissive and passive (Stavenhagen, 1996).

However, although they aim to put an end to interethnic conflicts once and for all, neither expulsions nor genocides are particularly successful in doing so, as they always lead to feelings of fear combined with fierce and historically rooted resentment among the prolific descendants of the victims, as was the case with the ethnic cleansing during the Yugoslav Wars, which was a direct consequence of those committed previously in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH, 1941-1945) during World War II (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Stavenhagen, 1996).

The logic of segregation can punish even those who want to assimilate willingly into the dominant culture. Thus, dominant ethnic groups can discourage, through verbal condemnation or even legal punishment, members of dominated groups who attempt to speak, dress, or engage in any other acts similar to those practised by the dominant groups, especially if they claim to be members of the dominant ethnic group. Even members of dominant groups who oppose the segregation of minorities are not exempt from

discrimination and may even be killed (Cook, 2003).

2.2. Separatist policies benefiting dominated groups

In the case of dominated groups, they are forced to resort to separatist public policies in situations where they find themselves, separation being a voluntary political strategy that involves their physical removal from the control of hostile dominant authorities (Cook, 2003). This can manifest itself in several ways, such as individual or collective emigration, internal migration or, in its most radical form, secessionist movements (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). In the case of migration, such a strategy is feasible only if the members of the dominated groups are able and have the necessary resources to leave, and if they perceive the place to which they are migrating as a destination that can offer them a better life. In the case of both collective emigration and secessionist movements, dominated groups will, like dominant groups, construct an image that emphasises differences. While the image constructed by dominant groups was almost entirely negative in order to justify ethnic segregation, dominated groups see themselves as at least as good, if not superior, to dominant groups in order to justify their desire for separation (Cook, 2003).

In the case of secessionist movements, several factors may encourage a dominated group to resort to such a strategy, such as identifying as a distinct nation, geographical concentration and the existence of a neighboring nation-state, expectations of economic improvement, the fact that the dominated group considers itself politically disadvantaged and does not believe it is possible to improve its political weakness within the state in which it is located, the fact that it does not expect to encounter difficulties in achieving secession, but also that it sees its future as both economically viable and feasible in terms of its military defense (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993). Usually, dominant groups oppose this radical strategy. However, there have been rare cases where they have accepted or even encouraged the secession of subordinate groups, as in the case of the independence of the Norwegians (1905), Slovaks (1993), and Montenegrins (2006) (Rothschild, 1981; Smooha & Hanf, 1992). Even when secessionist

movements succeed in gaining independence, their triumph rarely signals the end of interethnic conflict, which most often continues within or between successor states, often with brutal consequences. Therefore, even if secessions may sometimes be legitimate, they do not eliminate the need to use other methods to manage interethnic tensions (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000).

There are numerous secessionist movements active, to varying degrees, even today. In Europe, Spain is facing secessionism among the Basques and Catalans, France among the Bretons, Corsicans, and Occitans, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland among the Welsh, Scots, and Catholics in Northern Ireland (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981), Italy with that of the Lombards, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia with that of the Hungarians, North Macedonia and Serbia with that of the Albanians, Russia with that of Chechnya and Tatarstan (Cook, 2003), Moldova with that of Transnistria (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993) and Cyprus with that of the Turks in the north of the island (Cook, 2003; Smooha & Hanf, 1992).

3. Assimilatory policies

The second main strategic direction of public policies regarding ethnic groups involves their cultural integration, which can be more moderate, in the form of acculturation, or more radical, in the form of assimilation. Acculturation involves the seemingly rational and sometimes benevolent adaptation of dominated ethnic groups to the dominant culture in key aspects of political and socioeconomic life, while tolerating the ethnocultural particularities of ethnic minorities in other, less important areas. Although dominant groups may claim that such a strategy is conciliatory, even if it is indeed well-intentioned, it typically does not involve a significant redistribution of power to their subordinates (Rothschild, 1981). Another more moderate approach involves, on the one hand, respect for the individual civil rights of all citizens and, on the other hand, refusal to grant any recognition or support for minority languages and cultures, insisting that all public educational institutions, government institutions, street signs, and public holidays must reflect the dominant language and culture (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000).

„One thing common to assimilation as a

strategy, whether chosen by the dominant (the often nonequalizing, nonconsensual form) or rather by the dominated (more equalizing, voluntary), is the denial that one deals with a fundamentally different human nature, at least for those who are the target of assimilation”, which is supposed to be able to and must become the majority group in certain respects (Cook, 2003, p. 62). When assimilation is complete, ethnocultural characteristics may disappear and become irrelevant, even to members of the assimilated group (Rothschild, 1981). If the extreme form of segregation was genocide, the radicalisation of assimilationist public policies leads to ethnocide, that is, the extinction of cultural differences. In this case, aggressive assimilators may even prohibit the use of the name with which the target group identifies, in order to eliminate any source of differentiation and thus attempt to standardise it with the dominant group. Other methods used for this purpose are forced conversion to the dominant religion, destruction of monuments and cultural sites, expropriation of land, mass displacement of ethnic minorities, and imposition of the dominant language; these measures are often disguised under the pretext of assimilation (Cook, 2003; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; Stavenhagen, 1996). An early example of such practices is the English attempt to eliminate the Welsh language in 1536. Later, the dictatorships of Stalin in the Soviet Union (1924-1953) and Franco in Spain (1936-1975) sought to eradicate the Abkhaz and Chechen, and the Catalan, respectively (Cook, 2003). Currently, however, such policies are rare, and even when they are adopted, they do not always succeed in eliminating differences; sometimes, they even fail to quell the political expression of demands from dominated ethnic groups (Rothschild, 1981).

Although zealous assimilators have focused on eliminating differences related to religion, political ideology, language, clothing, and so on, some assimilation processes occur unplanned, one example being assimilation through racial mixing, which could uniform the racial configuration of the entire human species in the long term (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). Whether voluntary or forced, selective or collective, and although they may sometimes appear egalitarian, assimilationist public policies always presuppose the superiority of the dominant culture (Cook, 2003), their long-term goal being to compel all citizens to identify themselves as members of a single,

common national culture (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). In their aggressive form, they begin by using threats and coercion, both through economic sanctions such as fines and by discouraging non-compliance. Once the punitive techniques have achieved their goal, means of rewarding those who comply are used, with obedience being praised and rewarded economically. Threats and coercion cease only when the assimilation process is considered complete (Cook, 2003).

Although ethnopollitical awareness is currently so high that any attempt to implement total assimilation is likely to fail, in addition to being condemned at the international level (Guzina, 2007; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992), the transition to a supraethnic identity may be a more promising and acceptable assimilationist public policy in the eyes of other states. While it may seem downright ridiculous to try to convince, for example, Croats, Ukrainians, and Welsh that they are Serbs, Russians, and English, respectively, it certainly seems much more plausible to convince them that they are, primarily or secondarily, Yugoslavs, Soviets, and British, respectively. As always, the responses of ethnic group leaders to such an attempt by the dominant regime remain crucial to its success or failure, as both members of dominant groups and ethnic minorities may raise objections to the adoption of supraethnic identities (McGarry, 1993; Rothschild, 1981).

3.1. Assimilatory policies benefiting dominant groups

Dominant groups may implement assimilationist public policies for administrative benefits or to reduce costs. Although the dominant ethnic group may sometimes claim that assimilationist public policies are imposed for the welfare of the target groups, the sincerity of such claims is often questionable, especially if the dominant group demands that the dominated groups renounce their identity and pride in being different (Cook, 2003). Especially in their collective form, the real purpose of these policies dictated by dominant groups is not to grant those who are dominated total equality (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). Most often, the aim is strictly to control target groups in order to prevent them from breaking the law or rebelling, with the worst-case scenario being their cultural annihilation.

Instead, the dominant group may plan limited assimilation for only certain members of the dominated group, sometimes maintaining segregationist policies for the rest. History, however, also offers us positive examples in this regard, found mainly among traditional empires, such as the Roman Empire, which was far more assimilative. For the latter, culture, behaviour, and lifestyles were accepted. Those who adopted the culture and manners of this empire could even be accepted into its elite. As proof, on the one hand, Italians no longer formed a majority in the Roman Empire's elite, and the emperors themselves often came from outside Italy. Moreover, it seems that the Roman Empire had no prejudice against black Africans.

On the one hand, in their selective form, assimilationist policies used by dominant groups ensure that only certain members of dominated ethnic groups will adopt their culture. These are usually co-opted into lower administrative positions or other equivalent leadership roles. Although they offer specific opportunities to some members of dominated groups, these positions are often limited in scope. In addition, favoured members may pay dearly for these positions by sacrificing their previous identity, sometimes even having to express disapproval of it and accept, or at least appear to accept, the dominant groups' standard view that the culture of subordinate groups is inferior to their own. In addition to the loss of identity, although the selected individuals may enjoy a better material situation, it is unlikely that they will be able to use their new positions to help the rest of the dominated ethnic groups, since the reason they were selected was precisely because their attitudes fit the culture of the dominant group like a glove, often preventing them from using their skills and powers to lead the group they come from. The new identity may be even less satisfying, as the respect shown by members of the dominant group may be less genuine than they would like to appear. In contrast, underprivileged members of the dominated ethnic group may look down on those who are favoured. In extreme cases, members of dominated groups may even kill those among them who are considered collaborators with the dominant ethnic group. For example, when the Romans occupied Israel, the Sicarii assassinated not only the occupiers but also Jewish collaborators such as the Pharisees and Sadducees.

On the other hand, in direct opposition to segregation is the collective form of assimilationist policies, through which dominant groups attempt to make the dominated as similar to them as possible, at least in certain respects. Thus, instead of deepening the difference between groups, the dominant ones try to reduce it or even eliminate it. If segregationists considered the dominated groups to be inferior by birth, collective assimilators consider them to be corrupted by an unfavourable environment or inadequate education. Therefore, at least in principle, ethnic minorities can be assimilated. This process is sometimes carried out by force, especially when the dominant group imposes assimilation and punishes those who dare to fight to remain different. In the past, attempts were made to collectively assimilate Roma citizens in communist Romania (1947-1989) (Cook, 2003) and Hungarians in the Socialist Republic of Romania (1965-1989) (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993).

3.2. Assimilatory policies benefiting dominated groups

Concerning dominated groups, the assimilation process often results from an individual choice, being more likely if the individual has lived for a long time in a place with a low concentration of members of his or her ethnic group, if he or she perceives the rewards of assimilation as obvious, or if their physical appearance or spoken language is similar enough to allow them to blend in with the dominant ethnic group. Unplanned collective assimilation also occurs among dominated groups. On the other hand, if the dominated group deliberately decides in favour of public policies of collective assimilation, the process will most often be limited, without culminating in ethnocide (Cook, 2003). Leaders of dominated groups may treat collective assimilation as a public policy recommendation, especially when faced with a choice between maintaining the integrity of the group's identity and guaranteeing safety and a better life, often considering the latter option to be the most beneficial for the group. Although rare, history shows us that there are situations in which an entire group assimilates following a decision made by its leader (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). One such example dates back to 988, when the entire population of Kievan Rus followed

Vladimir the Great's example after his conversion to Orthodoxy (Cook, 2003).

4. Conciliatory policies

If the other two main strategic directions of public policies on ethnic groups are at opposite ends of the spectrum, reconciliation, which underpins the third, can be considered the middle ground in the attempt to ease interethnic tensions, which is why it is currently the most common approach, especially when an ethnic minority is either too important demographically, politically, or economically to be ignored at the state policy level, or when it can, in one way or another, neutralise public policies that it perceives as being directed against its own interests. Regardless of the form it takes, conciliation always avoids extreme views that consider dominated groups to be either entirely different or, at the very least, potentially fully similar to the dominant group. Instead, conciliatory policies prefer to treat groups as similar in some respects and different in others, giving both categories the recognition necessary to achieve political arrangements. They are therefore undoubtedly preferable to separatist and assimilationist policies if their goal is to resolve interethnic conflicts. By negotiating almost perpetual compromises between rival ethnic groups, they embrace the idea of pluralism in its true sense, which involves accepting certain prerogatives of groups, whether informal norms or even laws (Cook, 2003; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; Smootha & Hanf, 1992; Stavenhagen, 1996). However, both parties involved must adhere to these principles and consider the system to be legitimate in order for any form of conciliation to achieve its objectives (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). This can happen either voluntarily or through coordinated actions aimed at obtaining this legitimacy through the more or less subtle exercise of authority by dominant groups. In any case, this is not a unidirectional or irreversible process. A group may withdraw its agreement on the legitimacy of the political system if its expectations change and are not accommodated, if the system itself changes to the detriment of the group, or if the dominant groups lose their effectiveness. Like political legitimacy, political integration is not a condition, but a process that must be constantly regained and re-earned.

There are several reasons why dominant and

subordinate groups may simultaneously desire the adoption of conciliatory public policies. For example, particularly if the country has recently experienced civil war, a well-founded reason could be to avoid escalating interethnic violence. Another reason may be the desire to avoid jeopardising the existing socioeconomic well-being of all ethnic groups involved and of society as a whole, especially if one of them dominates politically while another dominates economically, or if the groups believe that any change could worsen their situation. The desire of the leaders of the ethnic groups involved to maintain their power may also justify conciliatory measures that avoid the risk of being dethroned by more militant opponents within those groups (Rothschild, 1981). In short, the operational applicability and even the existence of such reasons for managing and containing interethnic tensions peacefully always depend on context and cannot simply be assumed, since it is much more tempting to consolidate ethnic leadership by aggravating the conflict or resorting to violence (Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992), actions that may seem more straightforward, quicker, and safer than conciliation, especially when the political culture of ethnic groups or even society itself considers compromise to be somewhat dishonorable. However, it must be acknowledged that when ethnic stratification is so rigid and unequal, and deprivation goes hand in hand with blatant injustice, the motives behind such a peaceful and conciliatory approach on the part of the leaders of subjugated groups may be viewed with suspicion. At the same time, their militant challenge may be seen as more morally appropriate.

However, if these motives exist and are both operational and situationally appropriate, they may prompt ethnic group leaders to design and refine specific political mechanisms and regulatory techniques (Rothschild, 1981). One of them is the deliberate depoliticisation of issues that could fuel interethnic tensions (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981). A technique that can be facilitated by authorising prestigious and seemingly ethnically neutral leaders of public and functional interest to advise political leadership with recommendations that are intended to be objective, scientific, and apolitical. Similar in this regard would be constitutional or institutional arrangements designed to keep issues that may stir up interethnic tensions off the central

government's political agenda and resolve them at other decision-making levels, as is the case with decentralised political systems (Rothschild, 1981). Another conciliatory political strategy involves an agreement between the leaders of ethnic groups to maintain government coalitions regardless of election results or shifts in public opinion. Moreover, even if militant opponents manage to gain notoriety despite this agreement, attempts are made to co-opt them into the interethnic coalition. Such implicit or explicit agreements exist in countries such as Belgium (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981). Belgium also has a mechanism similar to the permanent coalition arrangement, which grants all ethnic groups the right to veto policies that affect their vital interests (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992).

For better or worse, all these mechanisms and procedures for managing interethnic tensions are elitist because they depend almost exclusively on the ability and insight of ethnic group leaders to sometimes override the wishes of those they represent in order to serve their long-term interests, which are supposed to be best incorporated into mutual compromises whose advantages only they can understand in that context (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Peleg, 2004; Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992). Their success is heavily dependent on their timely implementation, as legitimising them may become impossible if attempts are made to apply the strategies when it is already too late. An example of this is the belated conciliatory gestures made by the Serbs towards the Croats just before the outbreak of World War II, when the latter could no longer place their trust in promises of institutional bipolarism, permanent coalitions, and restraint on the part of the dominant Serbs. Another problem with these strategies and mechanisms is that, on the one hand, they can function perfectly from a procedural and technical point of view, while at the same time ignoring certain more or less tacit desires that have the potential to erupt at any time, sometimes precipitated by external factors. In the case of the permanent coalition in Belgium, another adverse effect can be observed despite the success of the agreement, namely, the disillusionment of the electorate with the instrumental usefulness of elections that are claimed to be democratic, which can lead either to the dissociation of voters from politics or to a kind of perennial scepticism

towards their leaders. After all, the techniques for managing interethnic tensions mentioned above are costly and are based explicitly or implicitly on slow change, preserving the existing structural balance and encouraging ethnic groups to organise themselves as collective entities that grant at least a suspensive veto right, if not absolute, veto rights to small and conservative groups, and which protect existing leaders so that they can support transethnic welfare at the level of the entire state, beyond the antagonistic aspirations of the very groups they represent. Nevertheless, their costs are as real as their benefits, with the prevention or containment of violence and fragmentation, political stability, and the mitigation of interethnic tensions through compromise being just a few of the improbable realities that have thus become possible, demonstrating that these political arenas can make a decisive difference, bringing a touch of optimism to the dynamics of interethnic relations (Rothschild, 1981).

4.1. Conciliatory policies benefiting dominant groups

About dominant groups, it is relatively common for ruling elites, and especially leaders who lack moderation, to respond to the demands of ethnic minorities with minimalist conciliatory public policies. Of course, these could be ignored altogether if the leaders decide that the dominated groups do not deserve to receive anything at all, an approach that may be accompanied by separatist or assimilationist policies (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). However, more common are conciliatory policies that offer almost nothing but empty promises, either because they are never implemented or because they are revoked at the first opportunity. A telling example of such minimalist conciliatory policies is that of independent Cyprus before the Turkish invasion (1960-1974).

On the one hand, authoritarian regimes tend to be less conciliatory, especially if their support comes almost exclusively from a single dominant ethnic group. The degree of conciliation is higher if the autocracy is based on a coalition of at least two ethnic groups, including a dominated one that asserts its demands, except in situations where these coalitions oppress a third ethnic group in a tripolar system. The most conciliatory authoritarian regimes are those led by an autocrat

who is not part of the dominant ethnic group, or perhaps not even one of the two ethnic groups that form the authoritarian coalition, but rather a third party from a less represented ethnic group, thus allowing for a higher level of impartiality. On the other hand, democratic regimes tend to be more open to the expression of the wishes of dominated groups, and concessions are therefore more common within them, especially if the regime is parliamentary or federal. The least conciliatory democratic regimes are those whose electoral systems favour the domination of the political system by one or, at most, two political parties, both of which may be predominantly composed of members of the dominant ethnic group (Cook, 2003). In contrast, an electoral system that favours proportional representation is often more conciliatory, especially when there is a party representing the voice of each ethnic group (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992). However, even such a political system can only allow minimal concessions if governmental power remains exclusively in the hands of parties composed mainly of members of the dominant ethnic group. The most conciliatory democratic regimes are those in which either the large parties have a multiethnic composition or there are numerous small parliamentary political parties representing ethnic minorities, forcing the large parties of the dominant ethnic group to co-opt them into a government coalition in order to form a parliamentary majority.

Dominant ethnic groups rarely show generosity toward subordinate groups. However, there are also situations in which they perceive conciliatory public policies as more advantageous than separatist or aggressive assimilation policies, recognising the right of the subordinated to remain different instead of being assimilated, without highlighting these differences in order to punish them with segregation. Most of the time, however, the dominant group will seek to grant ethnic minorities only the minimum concessions necessary to create or preserve the national community. For the most part, the dominant group prefers this strategy only when it is clear that neither segregation nor aggressive assimilation is a feasible alternative. The level of equality that dominated groups achieve from the rights granted to them often depends on coercing the dominant group in one way or another. Among the means by which dominant groups can be constrained to

adopt more conciliatory public policies are economic boycotts, riots, protracted civil wars, and (the threat of) foreign military intervention. The minimalism of conciliatory policies begins with fundamental rights, such as those relating to life, marriage, divorce, change of residence, change of employment, and tolerance of the languages or religions of ethnic minorities. These two cultural aspects have been accommodated to some extent by several empires throughout history, including the Roman, British, French, Spanish, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. In terms of linguistic accommodation, minimal concessions may allow the language to be spoken in public while prohibiting its use in the education system, the media, or the state apparatus. A somewhat more generous approach allows its use in the state apparatus at the local level only in regions where the ethnic minority is concentrated.

In the case of religion, minimal accommodation involves simply tolerating minority religions, provided that their practitioners keep their rituals out of public view. An example of this is the Dutch Calvinists in relation to other Protestants and even Roman Catholics. Somewhat more generous in this regard are conciliatory policies that permit at least some degree of public religious expression for certain religious minorities. The Ottoman millet system is considered to be one of the most tolerant in terms of both cultural aspects, since ethnic minorities could both speak their native languages and, especially in the case of Christians and Jews, practice their religions without too much hassle from the dominant Turkish-speaking Muslims, despite the denial of many other rights to the dominated groups. The elimination of injustices and inequalities also reflects the minimalism of conciliatory policies. Although legislating equal opportunities would be sufficient for ethnic minorities with advanced education, since they would often only need this prohibition of formal discrimination in order to be able to fully integrate into society, dominated groups with poorer education may need more than this minimal concession, perhaps even special social integration programs. However, if the dominant ethnic group decides to make certain concessions in this regard, in most cases these will be minimal, the absolute minimum being simply verbal discouragement of discrimination (Cook, 2003), any measures more concrete than this may be

drastically limited in scope and range if some members of the dominant group consider them to be reverse discrimination (Cook, 2003; Stavenhagen, 1996).

When dominated ethnic groups are concentrated in certain areas. The priority is to ensure effective governance or even to appease secessionist aspirations, one of the conciliatory public policies may be to decentralise power in order to grant these groups a greater degree of autonomy (Cook, 2003; Guzina, 2007; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Peleg, 2004; Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992; Stavenhagen, 1996). The dominant ethnic group, however, usually ensures that this policy is minimal, in the sense that it refuses to grant all the concessions desired by locally or regionally concentrated ethnic minorities, with regionalist measures in Spain, France, and Italy serving as examples (Cook, 2003). Aware of the risk of secession that inevitably arises from the decentralisation of power, dominant groups use institutions whose authority exceeds that of autonomous territorial units and maintain key areas, such as defence or the economy, within the competence of central authorities in order to minimise and discourage any potential secessionist tendencies associated with decentralisation (Rothschild, 1981). The latter ceases to be minimal only when concessions increasingly approach the demands of the dominated ethnic groups (Cook, 2003; Guzina, 2007; Peleg, 2004). Furthermore, the attitude of dominant groups toward sharing central power with ethnic minorities, to some extent, may reveal a minimalist attitude toward conciliatory policies, especially when their actions are limited to allocating a few parliamentary seats to the latter (Cook, 2003; Kymlicka & Norman, 2000).

4.2. Conciliatory policies benefiting dominated groups

Of course, dominated groups also have a say in conciliatory public policies. While dominant ethnic groups tend to wait until a crisis is evident before initiating any attempt at conciliation, the leaders of subjugated groups may consider the existing system to be in a chronic state of crisis, demanding concessions even in the absence of an acute crisis, and always seeking maximum benefits for their groups. In some extreme cases, their fundamental goals may go beyond

conciliation, reaching as far as seizing central power or even secession. The bad faith of ethnic minorities, in a more moderate but also more common form, sometimes involves the deliberate exaggeration of each claim in the hope of reaching an agreement as close as possible to their real expectations following negotiations. This approach carries the apparent risk of asking for too much from the outset, to the extent that the dominant group may no longer be interested in reaching an agreement, refusing to enter into negotiations under such conditions and opting to end any ongoing negotiations abruptly. When the gap between the minimum offer of the dominant group and the maximum demands of the dominated group is too broad, it often indicates that the conflicting groups are not even willing to negotiate, demanding overly generous concessions from each other even before the discussions begin. If they do end up talking, the negotiations may lead nowhere, or even if they reach an agreement, it may not be fully implemented. Moreover, even if it were, each side might seize any opportunity to amend or undermine the agreement for its own benefit. For example, Yeltsin seemed willing, as indicated in the agreement signed with the Chechens in 1997, to grant them the right to choose the path of independence starting in 2001. However, the promise was replaced by a second invasion in 1999, while Putin's rise to power in 2000 sealed the cancellation of any agreement, with the Chechens being accused and convicted of organised crime and terrorist attacks carried out on Russian territory.

When it comes to fundamental rights, ethnic minorities sometimes aspire only to obtain the same legal rights enjoyed by all members of the dominant ethnic group. An example of foreign coercion to equalise rights was provided by Napoleon Bonaparte himself, who imposed the emancipation of Jews on the occupied Prussians. Although it was not fully implemented, since Jews still had to convert to Christianity in order to obtain public office, Prussia maintained this reform even after its liberation from French occupation, unlike other German territories that revoked the rights of Jews immediately after Napoleon's defeat (Cook, 2003). The fear of dominant ethnic groups that the dominated will demand more and more concessions may sometimes be justified, since most dominated groups increase their demands when they feel that

these can be obtained either through their own efforts or through an alliance with an external power. Moreover, it may reach the point where minorities can demand not only equal rights, but even rights superior to those enjoyed by members of the dominant ethnic group (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). The struggle of minorities for fundamental rights typically begins at the point where they make no demands whatsoever, not even for their fundamental rights and freedoms. Once the next step has been taken, namely the attainment of minimal rights, they will demand complete equality with the dominant ethnic group. In some instances of excessive zeal, such as Christianity in the Roman Empire or, more recently, European feminism in its third and fourth waves, previously dominated groups will demand, after achieving equality, certain privileges so that they can ultimately claim supremacy, i.e., a monopoly on these rights.

When it comes to eliminating discrimination, dominated groups will demand urgent action on a large scale, with results that remain in effect either permanently or indefinitely (Cook, 2003), or for as long as they deem necessary in order to finally achieve what they consider to be equal opportunities (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981). In the case of ethnically concentrated minorities, when secession is not feasible, they may demand a high degree of autonomy for the regions they inhabit. In some cases of unitary states, this demand may be accompanied by insistence on changing the system of government to a federal or even confederal one (Cook, 2003; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Rothschild, 1981; Stavenhagen, 1996), as was the case with the Turks in Cyprus. As for the division of central power, the dominated ethnic groups will want either power proportional to their percentage of the total population or even absolute equality with the majority group, considering the tyranny of the majority to be a greater threat than minorities receiving disproportionate power. However, they are often satisfied with the first option (Cook, 2003).

Some examples of truly conciliatory policies that continue to endure are those in Belgium (since 1962) (Cook, 2003; Rothschild, 1981; Smootha & Hanf, 1992), those enjoyed by Hungarians in Slovakia (since 1998), Catholics in Northern Ireland (also since 1998), and Albanians in North Macedonia (since 2001) (Cook, 2003; Peleg, 2004).

5. Concluding remarks

The central hypothesis of the research was confirmed with arguments and examples, demonstrating its relevance to the information found in existing literature. The paper built new bridges of knowledge between the general aspects of interethnic public policies and the extent to which they can, both theoretically and practically, help resolve conflicts and calm the moods characteristic of societies traumatised by violence and interethnic tensions. The paper is limited in terms of recommendations for future public policies, since even authors with extensive experience in this field find it difficult to agree on what needs to be done for the long-term well-being of states ravaged by interethnic conflicts. Furthermore, the article is limited, on the one hand, to a critical review of the literature, which is already outdated by the nearly two decades in which the topic of interethnic public policy has not been as attractive to academia as it had been in previous decades, and, on the other hand, to a case study whose depth is predominantly theoretical, strictly at the European level. Thus, further research can focus on studying the new measures proposed for managing the problematic situations faced by many of the multiethnic states around the world.

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The added value that this work brings to the academic field in which it was produced lies precisely in updating a topic that has been overlooked by academia over the last two decades, namely, the importance of public policies, including those concerning the management of interethnic tensions at national and regional levels.

This dimension seems to be much less frequented and, implicitly, studied by academics than others, apparently more striking, despite its particular importance, especially in the context in which we are once again facing numerous conflicts. This highlights, once again, the socio-academic importance of continuing to study this subject, because interethnic tensions seem to be a constant that shows no signs of disappearing from the list of topics for future research anytime soon.

The article has demonstrated, on the one hand, that the success of public policies in defusing interethnic conflicts varies significantly from one type of policy to another, with successes generally being limited and isolated, and, on the other hand, that there are numerous examples of public policies that have failed miserably in their attempt to stop violence or bring about real change for the better in terms of interethnic tensions after the end of a conflict.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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