

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ROLE OF FEDERALISM IN MANAGING ETHNIC PLURALITY IN MULTINATIONAL STATES IN CONFLICT PREVENTION

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Abstract

The existence of several ethnic, religious and/or linguistic groups whose rights are not acknowledged or are continuously violated leads to tension with unpredictable consequences. If, in some cases, those groups use peaceful means to ensure that their specificities are acknowledged but, in other cases, there is frequent use of force to attain the same goals. This type of conflict occurred in the western Balkans in the 1990s or still take place in regions such as the Caucasus, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria or Myanmar in which the ethnic element, together with the religious issue, are the main causes.

Though it is true that several solutions have been presented to respond to the tensions inherent to ethnic diversity of multinational States, it is also true that the several theoretical practical models have not always met the objectives and, above all, resolved situations of peace, which are often of negative peace. From minority rights to federalism, we may identify principles whose importance and adequacy to contexts may be defined as formal peace. Nevertheless, it remains important to include and frame those elements within specific cases, considering that each case is different and adapting these principles to a specific situation does not prevent them from being inadequate to a situation apparently similar.

It is therefore crucial that considerations are raised on the role a political and administrative organization model such as federalism may play, partly as a complement to the law of minorities as a tool to manage ethnic diversity in States that may be defined as multinational, as well as to prevent ethnic conflicts.

Keywords:

Minority rights; federalism; conflict prevention; ethnic nationalism

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Introduction

As the title indicates, this paper aims to make a general comment on the role of federalism in managing ethnic diversity in multinational States and, thus, in preventing conflicts whose cause is partly or entirely due to ethnic issues associated with nationalism and one or more actors involved. The issue is as complex as its implications in terms of a State's political and administrative organization.

Therefore, an approach to this issue implies not only a presentation of the federal model as a viable solution to prevent ethnic national conflicts but also as an understanding of the difficulties faced by multinational States in managing their ethnic diversity. Therefore, this paper aims firstly to analyze this issue from the point of view of minority rights and their acceptance and application by this type of States and then analyze the federal model, considering the lack of respect for minority rights increases the risk of ethnic conflict in contexts where ethnic tension is smoldering.

This paper does not aim to define the concept of federalism nor to put forth the federal model as the only possible outcome in contexts of ethnic tension. What we aim is to present elements that allow assessing the potential of this model considering its advantages in fostering greater equality among ethnic groups within the same State.

Multinational States and acknowledging internal idiosyncrasies

Considering that the creation of multinational States is a consequence of several elements (historical, economic, cultural, and religious) and their maintenance is a complex task, regardless of the type of State structure (city-State, monarchy, republic, empire or other).

According to Jennifer Jackson Preece,

minorities are no more than ethnic nations that were unable to attain the final objective of ethnic nationalism - independence in relation to its State-nation - whose existence is, therefore, within the political borders of another nation's State; its own existence in an uncomfortable



reminder of the 'belief in national self-determination' in international society [...]. In short, the issue of minorities only arises in the context of State-nations and is the direct result of its anomalies and inconsistencies (1998: 29).

These anomalies that several States have attempted to resolve, mostly after several internal movements have appeared claiming the belonging to these "ethnic nations" or "Stateless nations". In the last decades of the 20th century, some devolving solutions have appeared as responses by States to internal centrifugal tendencies, namely in Europe. The United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Belgium and even France are examples of western democracies that moved in that direction by opting for a political and administrative restructuring to resolve ethnic national and ethnic regional claims. These claims are different in terms of their ability to destabilize that harmony and unity within the national space, as well as in terms of perspective. And because each State has its own issues, the solution must also vary according to each case and local specificities. There is ample literature on ethnic conflict and institutional schemes as regulators of tension between the State and its groups in terms of non-violence and includes several solutions on conflict prevention, management and resolution. Some authors merely make generic reference to existing possibilities, other create endless lists. In short, we may state that conflict resolution and prevention through institutional schemes includes creating mechanisms such as territorial and non-territorial self-government, division of power at local and central levels, cross-border institutions, paradiplomacy or measures promoting human and minorities' rights (Cordell & Wolf, 2010: 87). On furthering these options, William Safran (1994) presents several State policies he defines as being positivist/plural; federalism according to ethnic criteria, quasi-federalism and pseudo-federalism; local and/or regional autonomy; association; functional decentralization; public servant rotation; local autonomy and/or mixed functional decentralization; communal representation; legislative representation guaranteed to major ethnic racial groups; multiple legal and court systems, with different functions; acknowledgment of official or co-official status to several languages and institutionalized multilingualism; affirmative action; distinction between citizenship and nationality; allocation of sponsorships; promotion and subsidization of cultural creations by ethnic minorities. Another solution is adopting policies that promote non-territorial autonomy, also known as personal (or cultural) autonomy, the latter based on the ideas by Otto Bauer and Karl Renner (Bottomore & Goode, 1978), two Austrian Marxist thinkers. However, whatever the State responses are, they all use territorial decentralization (and frequently federalization and pseudo-federalization) as a synthesis of the interests of central and local (regional) powers, thus preventing that the response may become a legal basis for new claims.

Minority rights as a response to the claims of "ethnic nations"

If we limit our analysis to Europe, we may realize that the protection of national minorities is now within the scope of several international organizations (for example: the Council of Europe, the EU, the OSCE, the Council of Baltic Sea States, and the European Central Initiative). The role played by these organizations has been studied by several authors who focus on the issue of the minority rights from different angles



(Pentassuglia, 2004; Hogan-Brun & Wolff, 2003; Thornberry, 2001; Trifunovska, 2001a)¹.

The protection of national minorities is not a recent phenomenon. It has indeed become an internationally acknowledged principle at the end of WWI, when the United States president Woodrow Wilson defined the Fourteen Points and their partial adoption by the winning powers. However, and despite several conventions, such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages or the Tool of the European Central Initiative for the Protection of the Rights of Minorities, where recommendations may be found on the protection of those minorities, these are not fully abode to by the signing States. According to Trifunovska (2001), the Council of Europe defends the idea that individuals belonging to a minority have several rights because of that. Minorities have thus the right to be acknowledged as part of the State they live in, the right to keep and develop their culture; the right to keep their educational, religious and cultural institutions; and the right to participate and be fully fledged subjects of law in decision-making in terms of subjects directly related to them (2001: 146).

Among the several European convention on this issue, the best-known is the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, issued by the Council of Europe in 1995 (COE, 1995). Of the forty-seven Member-States of the Council of Europe, only four have not signed this convention, France being one of these exceptions² as this country does not recognize the existence of minorities in its territory. Noteworthy is also the fact that of all the States that have signed the Framework Convention, only thirty-nine have ratified it³. Another very important document on the protection of minorities, particularly in linguistic terms, is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COE, 1992). In this case, only twenty-five countries have ratified the convention and eight other countries have signed it but not ratified it⁴. Not signing and not ratifying the Charter is due to several issues, from the non-existence of national minorities and, consequently, no regional or minority languages, to internal linguistic policies. It is rather clear that the existence of such a document is not enough to ensure legal rights to minorities, at least in States that did not sign it nor that those (legal) rights are complied with in those States that did sign it. References to the violation of the minority rights or these rights not being acknowledged is frequent, not only in literature but also in the local and national media of several States, as well as in reports by international organizations that focus on the protection of minorities, as is the case of OSCE and its High Commissioner for National Minorities, several research centers⁵ or non-governmental organizations such as *Freedom House*, *Minority Rights Group International* and the *Human Rights Watch*. The Baltic countries (in particular Estonia and Latvia) are frequently faces with the claims of their Russian minorities. The Macedonian minority in Bulgaria was not legally acknowledged by the local authorities. The Polish are still discriminated against by the

¹ See also Rechel (2009); Packer (2005); Philips (2005); Alcock (2000).

² The other exceptions are Andorra, Monaco and Turkey.

³ The countries which did not ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities are Belgium, Greece, Iceland and Luxembourg.

⁴ The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was not ratified by Azerbaijan, France, Iceland, Italy, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Macedonia. Besides these countries, there are fourteen other that did not sign it. That's the case of the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino and Turkey.

⁵ Noteworthy is the ECMI, or *European Centre for Minority Issues*, based in the German city of Flensburg.



Lithuanians despite a common history and peaceful relations between the two communities. Yet, it is not our intention to state that minority rights are constantly violated by these States, nor that these are situations in which ethnic or religious persecution takes place comparable to the progroms in the 1980s. The results of the recent referendum on Russian becoming an official language in Latvia⁶ (more than a quarter of the country's population speaks Russian and a third of the population is of Russian ethnicity) showed that most voters were against the proposal (75%). It appears obvious that submitting minority rights to popular vote frequently leads to their being denied. In the case of Latvia, the result was expected, not only because of the country's recent history and the existence of a Russian minority that is viewed as a consequence of the denationalization policy in Latvia by Soviet authorities, as well as due to suspicions of referendum orchestration by Moscow.

The non-compliance to some of those rights is a reality in some countries but it not necessarily is a recurring and persistent practice. In situations in which minority rights are complied with, even if there are no legal documents on this issue, the non-signatories may argue that respect for local and regional specificities, as well as for national identities, does not require any legal binding. This way, that legal binding would be unnecessary when respect for national minorities is a tradition. Refusal to sign and ratify international conventions (at regional and global levels) is not only due to a set of more or less rooted best practices or the simple non-existence of national minorities in a specific State. Besides international conventions, there are several bilateral agreements so as to correct historical "errors". These are, to a certain extent, part of a reconciliation process, more important even when it is frequently due to international negotiations towards the accession to supra-national institutions or bodies. They are different because they were mostly signed in the 1990s, after the Cold War, and they refer to the issue of national minorities in central and Eastern Europe (Hornburg, 2006; Gál, 1999).

Federalism as a tool for conflict prevention

Though it is true that federalism is not at the basis of minority rights, it is also true that the minority rights may lead to federal regimes. In such cases, federalism arises as a definitive solution, i.e., when peaceful management of local and regional differences resulting from there being ethnic national minorities but via other legal and/or cultural mechanisms.

In former decades, violence and political dissent in the Basque Country, in Corsica and in Northern Ireland, for example, were considered as evidence of failure in State integration. Presently, a certain national

⁶ The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Aleksander Lukashevich expressed Russian authorities' outrage at the result of the referendum. According to him, the rights of Russian speakers were being disrespected by the Latvian State, and the latter would be disrespecting international obligations (<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120219/171400820.html>, último acesso a 14-VII-2013). Latvia is one of the countris which did not sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The country signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1995, though, and ratified it ten years later. The last resolution of the first monitoring cycle, presented by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 30 March 2011 mentions the difficulties citizens belonging to national minorities felt in their relations with the State due to their languages not being acknowledged.



acknowledgment and infra-State autonomy has led to a decrease in violence as a tactical actions. (Williams, 2009: 199).

Based on the theory on the origin of federal States, what reasons may justify the adoption of a federal regime instead of the existence of separate States or secession by parts of a given State? What is at the basis of centripetal or centrifugal federalisms?

Firstly, it is possible to realize that, according to several authors, federations (and in particular multinational federations) are seen as a viable tool in promoting peace and being used as a conflict prevention tool. Many are, therefore, created to respond to fears resulting from the possibility of a conflict. By forming a federation, formerly independent States aim for a sense of power, real or imagined, or, depending on the perspective, a greater power than that held by each individual State. This feeling may be real or imagined but is able to dissuade possible aggressors and/or avoid conflicts among federation members, as was the case of the Iroquois Confederation. Neta C. Crawford argues that,

as a security regime, the Iroquois Federation functioned well in terms of decreasing conflict among its members. Later it was partially successful by allowing the Iroquois nations to adapt to exogenous shocks as a consequence of the arrival of the Europeans - mass epidemic depopulation, disruption of local economy and wars among the Europeans - because it laid the basis for diplomacy and collective security. (1994: 346).

This idea appears in the work of several European thinkers who advocated federalism applied to the Old Continent. Altiero Spinelli and Ernest Rossi's (1941) Ventotene Manifesto, published in 1941 is an example of this; the text was a response to the violence caused by World War II and European authoritarian regimes. John Stuart Mill argues, though, that for a federal regime to become a valid conflict prevention tool, it cannot become more aggressive than each member-State of the federation.

Secondly, the argument according to which there is higher economic efficiency in federations appears as one its positive elements, federations are considered more able to promote economic prosperity. This is highly debatable but a rather attractive argument. Ideas are put forth such as creating a bigger internal market without boundaries⁷ or the that federations can become important global actors, able to influence rules in international trade (which may be the case of some federations but not of all) It is also common that reference be made to binomial trade/prosperity as positive factors of peace, which may be easily found in several peace projects in the modern era. Thirdly, the creation of a federal regime may enhance the development of a regime that protects minorities through creating mechanisms to accommodate them. These may include a limitation of the sovereignty of the federate members through attributing a power of intervention to the federal power in their internal affairs when

⁷ It is not by chance that the unification of Germany was preceded by the elimination of customs rates in the German territories through the creation of Zollverein in 1818 and their development and expansion to most German States.



minority rights have been violated. The validity of this argument depends on the nature of the federal State. If the latter also disrespects minority rights, then the power of intervention it has been assigned is corrupted. Fourthly, federations may make it easier to attain certain objectives of previously independent sovereign States. Transferring some powers and competences to a common body, the federal State, will allow it to coordinate external activities such as foreign policy. This coordination at federal level may become out of control because it requires more coordination in other sectors and, therefore, lead to power centralization. Fifthly, federal entities have more political influence within the federation. In the case of previously independent territories, these obtain advantages through political alliance, such as the previously mentioned coordination. Small State (or former regions and provinces) may acquire greater recognition and power to decide when belonging to a federal State.

On the other hand, we must also understand the reasons for choosing a federal type of regime instead of a unitary State. The reasons presented are also diverse, some similar to those mentioned above. When opposing himself to the unitary and centralizing federal model, Proudhon states that

the federal system tackles the people's effervescence at its roots, along with its ambitions and demagogic enthusiasm: it kills the public square regime, the triumph of speakers and the dissolving of capitals. [...] The federation thus becomes the people's salvation: it saves it from the tyranny of its leaders and from its own insanity by dividing it. (1863: 100-101).

Federalism as a complement to minority rights

As mentioned earlier, unitary States are criticized because of their policies towards minorities in their territory. As these States are a consequence of power centralization and periphery assimilation, one national group dominates the others, the latter being integrated in the national community, which should be encompassing and including all territories under State authority. This double policy led to minorities being denied their rights. Federalism may be a protection against central power by providing them with powers and duties laid down in the constitution. Secondly, and as a result of the previous argument, federal systems may accommodate the so-called "stateless nations", regardless of their claims. Federalism may be a response to a desire for secession or self-determination by those nations, as well as a solution for preserving local identity - culture, language or religion. In the 1980s Stanislaw Ehrlich said that

federal systems opt for territorial decentralization for who holds the power, which sovereignty. Federal institutions are ideologically neutral, their objective being to decentralize power or to protect ethnic identity in their midst. Marxists favor unitary governments, accepting federalism as a means to avoid the dissolution of the State. [...] Secession is usually fought against through force [...] Federalism has a future! (1984: 359).



Thirdly, the federal model allows for greater participation by citizens in public decision-making, either through deliberation or through holding positions in federal entities or within the structure of the federal State. Finally, the federal structure, and in particular the asymmetric federations, may include several ethnic groups in a specific area of a territory and not subject them to the same legal regime as the whole of the territory, thus, protecting them from the "tyranny of the majority" when this is against their interests. This type of unitary regime minimizes repression to a certain extent and is sensitive to the needs of a larger number of citizens.

Though not restricted to multinational States, federalist theories easily develop their proposals in these States so as to prevent conflicts, manage violent ethnic tensions and, ultimately, maintain their territorial integrity. From a political point of view, adopting federalizing measures in contexts of (real or predictable) violence aims to adequately respond to territorial secession, which is viewed by authorities as the violation of a sacred principle: State unity and indivisibility. In some cases, maintaining territorial integrity of a State includes the need to redefine the internal structures of regional and local administration, and establishing highly autonomous regional governments (for example: Scotland in the United Kingdom; Catalonia in Spain). We cannot, however, forget that "different types of society require different types of institutions. Federalism, for example, may be irrelevant for small homogeneous countries but a necessity for bigger and heterogeneous ones" (Reilly, 1998: 137). Redefining administrative structures and sharing power imply dialog and compromise by the parties involved. We may find federalist theories within different ethnic nationalist movements, among which movements usually associated with extreme separatism⁸ Under such circumstances, we may conclude that secession occurs only when, despite everything, these alternatives are deemed insufficient to meet the claims of all parties involved (State, region, political actors, society) and resolve a conflict, regardless of its level of violence. The end of negotiations or their non-conclusion frequently leads to maintaining a state of violence whose consequence may be a unilateral secessionist process. Though the idea of territorial integrity is demystified in these cases, the table of negotiations remain the place where the rules are established whether the new State becomes one of the few independent States.

Reference to the federal model as an effective means to promote and defend differences within a territory is not a novelty. Its apologia has yet increased when political structures in force have not adequately responded to claims that may jeopardize the existence of a State and its territorial integrity. Early introduction of mechanisms on sharing of power may prevent ethnic or identity conflicts from becoming deadly conflicts (Sisk, 1998: 139). Alain-G. Gagnon advocates that

⁸ It is rather usual that different positions and claims exist within some nationalist groups. If independence is frequently presented as the only possible and desirable solution in situations perceived as being of political, economic and cultural injustice towards an ethnic group; those advocating implementation of federalist solutions are an alternative to independence. The cases of Galicia and Brittany are examples of this. Ramón Maiz (1984) divides Galician regionalism between 1886 and 1907 into three ideological trends: liberal, traditional catholic and federal. On Galician nationalism / regionalism, see also Duran (1984). Similarly, the role of federalist thought in Brittany should not be underestimated due to the strong historical role it played in the local nationalist movement (Nicolas, 2001; Barbin, 1937). Interestingly, Basque nationalism also included a federalist current through the *Mouvement Démocrate Basque* that emerged in France in the 1960s (Gurrutxaga, 2005: 78; Izquierdo, 2001: 149-150).



federalism, both in its institutional manifestations and sociological features, is a promising solution for managing coexisting political communities and in affirming the collective activities in States that include one or more nations (2010: 1).

At first sight, the federal model appears to be an almost perfect conflict prevention and management tool. At least as perfect as other political institutional and structural tools created or adapted for that objective. However, it is Utopian to believe in perfection when conflict prevention and management and, ultimately, the individual are the focus. Neither federalism nor other mechanisms are perfect. When analyzing the role played by federalism in India and Pakistan after the independence in terms of managing their ethnic plurality, Katherine Adeney concludes that

though it does not necessarily promote security and ethnic peace, it cannot be accused of increasing conflict, especially when in combination with other mechanisms (2007: 181).

The federal model's ability as a conflict prevention and management tool has, however, made it rather popular, particularly in multinational contexts in which keeping territorial unity has been threatened by secessionist or irredentist claims. The issue of Transnistria has been open since the implosion of the Soviet Union and the independence of Moldova; it is a challenge for which a solution is yet to be found. Several proposals have been put forth to federalize the country so as to resolve the conflict but they have been unsuccessful. (VVAA, 2009; Lowenhardt, 2004). According to Andrey Safonov,

it seems that, in our case, resolution is only possible through federalizing the former Socialist Soviet Republic of Moldavia using confederate elements. Moldova should let behind its unitary approach and Transnistria should give up its claims for full independence as member-State of the United Nations. (2009: 188).

Another example of a conceptual proposal promoting federalism as means of conflict management may be found in the analysis by Bruno Coppitiers on the conflict between Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions in Georgia, and the Moldovan authorities. Coppitiers proposed that Georgia became a federal republic and those regions would enjoy local autonomy (2003). The conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in the summer of 2008 destroyed any chances of internal administrative redefinition, at least in the short run. The proclamation of independence by those two regions, politically, economically and militarily acknowledged and supported by Moscow only aggravated the situation and did not resolve the conflict for good.

However, several examples of failed federations or, in the words of Emilian Kavalski and Magdalena Zolkos (2008: 163), "dead federalisms", evidence the limitations this model has in building a State, and simultaneously shows that federalism is no panacea



for contexts as those previously mentioned. Does this mean that this political model should be abandoned or at least refused as one of the most adequate solution for managing ethnic diversity in States where the situation is potentially explosive? Or does this mean that what is meant by federalism should be restructured depending on specific situations and accept that this may be inadequate though it was a valid response in other circumstances? As conflict management tool, in particular in ethnic conflicts, the federal model has the same objective as other institutional mechanisms, which is conflict resolution.

The objective of conflict resolution is to establish an institutional framework in which the opposing interests of the main parties in conflict [...] may be accommodated in such a way that cooperation and non-violent actions through compromise pose greater benefits than those which may be attained through violent confrontation. (Cordell & Wolff, 2010: 17-18)⁹.

Federalism cannot be in any way viewed as a panacea for all world problems. (Watts, 2003: 17). However, this is a solution which should not be ignored. According to Watts, hybrid systems are being developed which combine federal and unitary elements, as is the case in South Africa and in the European Union (idem, 18). Is that the solution? The variety of existing federalisms and their ability to adapt to different cases may indicate that the federal regime should be accounted for as a model of State organization. If, according to J. Denis and Ian Derbyshire (2000, 19-22), federalism may be historical, cultural, geographic, linguistic, ethnic, artificial or imitative, this characterization is always cumulative. Thus, Belgium is defined as a cultural and linguistic federation by these authors, and Switzerland is a historical a cultural one. Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, is not only a historical and cultural but also an ethnic federation. However, this definition may easily be questioned. Switzerland would be a clear example of an ethnic federation though, unlike other cases, the Swiss federation is not based on an ethnic or linguistic differentiation. The implementation of a federal regime is a paradox. If, as mentioned before, federalism is a response to the traditional, unitary and centralized State-nation, its implementation should also be different. Yet, some issues require clarification. According to Carré Malberg "the federal State seems rather a unitary State in certain things" (1962: 96). This is rather contradictory and the reason lies in the principle of overlapping. Subordination of federal entities to federal power leads to their competences being limited and to legal conflicts between the two levels. It is not uncommon for the federal State to be accused of wanting to take on a role that is beyond its competences and become the omnipresent State. The American case is a rather obvious example of this. Considering it is half way between confederalism and Unitarianism (centralism), federalism is often criticized by advocates of both regimes. Its implementation and maintenance result from the permanent tension between those in favor of a strong federal State and those for as great an autonomy as possible for federal entities. Historically, the need for greater political integration and a strong executive power was responsible for confederate regimes opting for stronger centralization and, thus, for federal regimes.

⁹ Italics in the original.



Going back to the Swiss federal model, we must remember that it derives from a seven-hundred old development which has undergone three distinct stages. When in 1291 the cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden joined in the so-called Uri alliance, renewed in 1315 through the Boden alliance, they could not imagine this would be the beginning of the Swiss Confederation. According to Andreas Wimmer (2002: 233) the Swiss model is characterized by the so-called "linguistic peace" that makes it different from traditional minority protection regimes in that they refuse to make official the minority status of the languages spoken in the country. This means that, despite German being the most spoken language in the Swiss Confederation, French, Italian and Romance do not have a different legal status or is there any linguistic policy to protect and/or promote these languages. Ultimately, these are national Swiss languages as is German. "Politically speaking, Switzerland does not acknowledge minorities" (*idem, ibidem*).

However, and despite the exception of Switzerland, acknowledging policies (or identity policies) are very important. Their importance should be emphasized through analyzing how viable the federal model is in conflict management, prevention or resolution. Considering that federalism is an option for accommodating national minority groups, maintaining them within national limits, it should aim to positively respond to minority claims. Federation can achieve that through two different means, whether should equal sharing of power or through assigning more competences to minorities, namely in terms of their influence in decision-making. Yet, politicization of identity may also lead to new challenges, especially in federal regimes in which there is risk of instability linked to the existence of strong ethnic national feelings by minorities. Maintaining double political loyalty¹⁰, or two political loyalties¹¹, is needed, as is self-governing status, and these may lead to increased instability if subverted by growing local interests despite the common good the federation represents. The federal model may involuntarily be adding to secession rather than fighting it. Acknowledging and institutionalizing different would be undermining a common identification.

Conclusion

Interestingly, federations are often viewed as deviant regimes. As the unitary and centralized post-Westphalian type is considered the ideal State system, federalism may seem *sui generis*. The fact that there are different types of federations is proof of that. Considering there is not one type of federalism, a typical federalism, it appears to suffer from legal schizophrenia for which there is no cure but rather new variations. Each federation is federal in its own way. Noteworthy is also the fact that regimes with federal features, and therefore differentiating themselves from the unitary State, are not a modern innovation. As analyzed here, they are in existence since Antiquity and in several geographic contexts.

This paper aimed at analyzing the main advantages of this model. Yet, it must not be forgotten that federalism is not infallible and must be viewed as one of the many

¹⁰ Double political loyalty means that, though it is one it includes two different loyalties (for ex.: regional and national, national and supranational). These are felt in the same way by the individual and neither is more important than the other.

¹¹ In the case of two political loyalties, two different loyalties are also at stake. However, though they can be simultaneous, they are not necessarily felt in the same way by the individual. Therefore, one loyalty may be considered more important than the other.



solutions possible. We aimed not at presenting an intensive and extensive study of federalism but rather a brief overview of this model as a viable tool in managing ethnic plurality in multinational States as well as in conflict prevention in contexts where ethnic plurality exists.

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