

ABSTRACT

Using a cascade model that builds upon Kuran's dual preference model, and developing an explanation for private identity formation, the dissertation provides a theory of how ethnic hatreds are endogenously produced by ethnic polarization. The theory is then applied to ethnic relations in the former Yugoslavia and Turkey. The dissertation explains how privately held ethnic identities and their public expressions change in response to intrinsic and extrinsic incentives available in a society's institutional environment. Implications for multiculturalism and for ethnic and racial relations in the U.S. and others are also discussed.

Ethnic polarization is the diffusion of a certain image that portrays ethnic identities as mutually exclusive and incompatible with belonging to the same nation. The opposite of the divisive image is called the *compatible image* and defined as portraying ethnic identities as mutually inclusive and compatible with the same nation. The diffusion of the *divisive image* results from the interaction of cognitive and social processes. Ethnic polarization is distinguished from *ethnification*, which entails a rising level of ethnic activity but not necessarily an expansion of the divisive image.

Privately, ethnic activities are undertaken to meet intrinsic needs, mainly the cultivation of a positive self-image. In public, however, ethnic activity is undertaken also to coordinate with other group members in order to obtain economic, social, and political benefits. Because the incentives effective in the private and public realms are different, ethnic polarization can sometimes occur in private only, as people suppress their public support for the divisive image through *downward ethnic preference falsification*.

A cascade model explains under which circumstances private polarization will generate public polarization. The level of the ensuing public polarization can significantly exceed the level of initial private polarization. This will happen insofar as people exaggerate their sympathy for the divisive image through *upward preference falsification*. The existence of downward and upward preference falsification generates the potential for discontinuous changes in public opinion and public discourse. A public discourse that heavily reflected the ideals of brotherhood and unity could quickly turn into one reflecting the divisive image. In that case, outsiders' image of the associated society would also change quickly from a harmonious and homogeneous society to a divided and heterogeneous one. Through feedback effects, the insiders who did not hold a divisive image may also adopt it over time.

Hence, the analysis helps us to remedy a popular misconception that is implicit in many journalistic and political accounts of ethnic conflict in the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East: the impression that these conflicts are inevitable products of ancient hatreds. In fact, most of the accompanying expressions of interethnic hatred are generated by polarization; similarly, the changing public image of these societies that portrays them as if they had always been ethnically divided should be seen as a product of ethnic polarization.

Various factors affect the likelihood and severity of polarization. These include the degree of ethnic preference falsification before polarization, the degree to which information dissemination is monopolized in society, the activities of ethnic entrepreneurs that promote the divisive image, and the number of ethnic groups that serve as social reference groups for their members.

Downward ethnic preference falsification was significant in the former Yugoslavia before the 1980s. Then, in the 1980s, public polarization reversed this trend and led to widespread upward ethnic preference falsification. The activities of ethnic entrepreneurs played a crucial role in the transformations of public opinion and public discourse in favor of the divisive image.

Though some downward falsification appears to exist in Turkey, available evidence suggests that its degree is much lower than in the former Yugoslavia. While one reason is significant assimilation into the national identity among ethnic groups, another may be the relative openness of the political life and the relative advancement of civil society in Turkey, which reduce the need for preference falsification.

The dissertation discusses the incentive structures that encouraged the cultivation of divisive and non-divisive ethnic images in Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. In the latter, state policies did not encourage the abandonment of private ethnic identities. However, public restrictions on ethnic expressions fostered downward preference falsification, which concealed the private importance of the divisive image, especially in rural areas. A cascade of public ethnic polarization in the 1980s, in the triggering of which the Kosovo conflict played a crucial role, led to an exaggeration of ethnic hostilities through upward preference falsification.

Likewise, in Turkey, restrictions on ethnic expression appear to have caused some downward preference falsification. However, unlike in the former Yugoslavia, Turkish nation-building policies nurtured significant changes in private identities. State policies created three main groups among Kurdish Turks. The first group comprises those who chose to assimilate into the Turkish national identity, playing down their ethnic identity. The second group consists of those who privately maintained their ethnic identity but suppressed it in public. The third group includes Kurdish nationalists, who rejected the official definition of the Turkish national identity and tried to change it so as to fit their own vision by using violent or nonviolent means.

The explanation yields several policy implications. Restrictions upon the public expressions of ethnic identities are shown to contribute to subsequent radical polarization, unless the restrictions are backed by long-term policies that reduce downward preference falsification. Comprehensive restrictions on ethnic activity implemented to stem polarization may in fact increase private polarization if they disproportionately affect ethnic activities that promote a compatible image. Cognitive, social and economic incentives that encourage the cultivation of an ethnic image portraying ethnic identities as mutually inclusive and compatible with the same national identity reduce the possibility of ethnic polarization.

Finally, the dissertation shows that ethnic entrepreneurs who overly promote the divisive image in order to prop up their group members' ethnic identity may inadvertently encourage the assimilation of their co-ethnics into the dominant ethnic group in their society. This is because some of the group members may begin to see their ethnic and national identities as substitutes.