

DOI: 10.46340/eppd.2020.7.6.2

**Amiran Khevtsuriani, Doctor of International Relations, Academician**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7739-7232>

**Giorgi Chkhikvishvili, Doctor of Social Sciences**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2080-858X>

*Georgian Technical University, Tbilisi, Georgia*

## SEPARATIST FACTORS IN MODERN EUROPE

Modern society is entering an era characterized by the emergence of new challenges: progressive nationalism, terrorism, religious intolerance, and more and more political separatism. The latter showed its destructive potential at the end of the 20th century during the collapse of a number of states in Asia, Africa and Europe, which existed as a single statehoods for a long time. In the modern world, a number of ethnically heterogeneous states face ethnic challenges that take the form of ethnopolitical conflicts and even internal (separatist) wars. Thus, this phenomenon goes beyond the framework of national and regional security problems and acquires an international character.

**Keywords:** Separatism; Globalization; Liberation; Secession; Ethno-territorial conflict.

The study of the phenomenon of separatism is complicated by the fact that both in science and in practical politics it has a clearly expressed emotional context, since both the subjects of open political struggle and participants in scientific discourse operate with fundamental values that affect the ethnic, cultural, or national identity of large social groups. Therefore, separatism seems to be one of the most difficult problems in the field of political and conflictological studies, since it is associated with a serious threat to the existence of the integrity of the state and its sovereignty.

By factors of separatism, we mean conditions, causes, parameters, indicators that have an impact on the process under study and the result of this process. In other words, a factor is the driving force of a particular process, which determines its nature or individual features.

The factors contributing to the development of ideas of separatism can be different. Among other things, in some cases, problems arising in adjacent spheres can also acquire ethnic overtones, for example, economic, environmental, confessional, moral and other contradictions can cause the movement of separatism<sup>1</sup>.

European separatism is not a new phenomenon; it has existed since the birth of modern European states. The separatists use both legal (for example, the creation of political parties aimed at representation in power structures) and illegal (direct action and terror) methods of political struggle.

The growth of separatist sentiments in almost all countries of foreign Europe has recently been caused by the influx of legal and illegal migrants, which quite reasonably causes an increase in tension in the host society. On the other hand, this is a kind of reaction to the processes of centralization and unification that took place in a number of European countries during several decades of the 20th century under the influence of authoritarian, dictatorial, nationalist regimes. After their fall (mainly as a result of World War II), the opposite movement began to gain strength. Today, the intersection of global and local processes has given rise to a kind of hybrid process called "glocalization"<sup>2</sup>. Projecting this process into the future, one can expect a situation where the inhabitants of Europe will associate themselves not with their country, but with a region or even a city. It should be emphasized that such processes are already visible today<sup>3</sup>.

It should be noted that mainly in Europe socio-economic and ethno-confessional types of separatism prevail, that is, the creation of a sovereign state as the goal of the struggle is replaced by maximum political,

---

<sup>1</sup> Егорова, М. (2009). Малые народы Европы и новые вызовы времени: проблема самоопределения. *Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов: Серия: Политология*, 2, 94-96; Тишков, В. А. (1993). О природе этнического конфликта. *Свободная мысль*, 4, 4-15.

<sup>2</sup> Гидаснс, Э. (2004). *Ускользящий мир: как глобализация меняет нашу жизнь*. Москва: Весь Мир.

<sup>3</sup> Китинг, М. (2003). Новый регионализм в Западной Европе. *Логос. Журнал по философии и прагматике культуры*, 6, 81-86.

economic and national-cultural autonomy within the borders of modern states, and the factors and methods of struggle remain within the political framework.

The factors of separatism are varied. We can typologically group the reasons for separatism:

1. Factor of ethics (ethno-religious). Ethno-religious reasons often lie at the heart of the emergence of separatism. The features of such conflicts are the rapid process of origin and development, the unlimited impact of force and the total mobilization of resources. Such conflicts are also characterized by the active involvement by the subjects of the ethnically related diaspora and close circles of other countries<sup>1</sup>.

In Europe, clear examples of ethno-confessional conflicts are conflicts in Ireland, Scotland, Spain.

Modern Spain is on a par with these examples, since, despite the secularization and active functioning of secular institutions, 90% of citizens consider themselves to be believers. At the same time, the institution of the Catholic Church continues to play an important role in the life of the country. At the same time, the values of Catholicism are increasingly perceived as a common cultural code and are used by nationalist movements as a unifying idea. Thus, the Basque nationalist movement is distinguished by a religious connotation, which was especially striking at the initial stages of its development<sup>2</sup>.

It can be said that the first decade of the 21st century was marked not only by the global economic crisis, but also by the crisis in the sphere of ethno-confessional relations. The policy of building a European multicultural society based on the ideas of ethnic and religious pluralism and tolerance, according to the statements of the leaders of European countries, was not as successful as it seemed at first.

2. The socio-economic factor of separatism means the manifestation of imbalances in the social and economic order on the territory of a single state. At the same time, the growing difference between the most and least developed regions plays a decisive role in the formation of separatist sentiments.

This difference usually manifests itself in the fact that regions inhabited by national or ethnic minorities are usually poorer than others, and this turns them into an internal "colony".

Spain is the exception to this rule. The Basque Country and Catalonia are the most developed regions of the country, which experienced rapid economic development even during the Francoist dictatorship. Only Galicia remained traditionally backward.

3. The political factor. Political reasons also play an important role in the emergence of separatism. Relations between ethnic groups at the local and regional levels, the struggle of ethnic groups for political status within the state, political struggle between ethnic groups, as well as the struggle for political independence.

4. Foreign policy factors. Globalization, democratization, the formation of a new world order, the strengthening of the ethnic factor in world social development and others, have a huge impact on the problems of political separatism.

5. The factor of "historical memory". Here, the Basque Country is a striking example. The desire to secede here is also due to the factor of the historical memory of the Basques. During the reign of the dictator F. Franco, the Basques did not have the opportunity to publish books, newspapers, teach in their native language, call children Basque names, use the Basque flag. Naturally, such a harsh policy of the central authorities in relation to the Basques caused an increase in separatism. After the death of F. Franco and the democratization of the political regime in Spain, the Basque Country acquired the status of autonomy, but the Basque terrorists did not stop their activities. More than 900 people died as a result of terrorist acts carried out by ETA members in the struggle for the illusory "independence" of the autonomy and appeal to the "historical memory".

Another powerful hotbed of Spanish separatism is Catalonia – an autonomous region located in the north-east of the country and having a special culture and national language. Here, historical memory also influences the perception of Madrid as a symbol of authoritarian and centralist power, due to which regional feelings are often exacerbated not so much for ethnic or cultural reasons, but because of the political component.

6. Geographic factor. The development of ideas of separatism can be favored by geographic conditions, and in particular by the uneven development of individual territories of the country as a result of weak integration, problems with infrastructure or engagement. Neighboring larger countries using soft power technology. Compact placement of supporters of secession; is usually a very effective means of political mobilization.

---

<sup>1</sup> Коваль, Т. (2010). *Этноконфессиональные конфликты в Европе и на постсоветском пространстве*. Москва: МЭИ МОР АН, 166.

<sup>2</sup> Глухова, А. В. (ред.) (2010). *Политическая конфликтология перед новыми вызовами*. Воронеж: Воронежский госуниверситет, 87-96.

Often the geographic factor is associated with the economic factor, when the desire of more developed regions to separate from backward ones. Their communities hope that they will live better in a separate state.

7. Language factor. Referring to the experience of European countries, it is worth noting the importance of the language factor. Thus, it is the key one for the Belgian society, where the possible division of Belgium into two parts is a real threat: the southern Walloon (French-speaking) and northern Flemish, whose inhabitants gravitate towards the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>.

The combination of linguistic and political factors can be clearly seen in the example of the Scottish separatist movement in the UK. In the context of the permanent weakening of the unification between England and Scotland, concluded 300 years ago. Linguistic self-determination proved to be a significant factor for the Spanish separatists as well. Thus, the inhabitants of Catalonia throughout their history emphasized their specificity, including linguistic.

8. Demographic factor. It includes a relatively high increase in the population of certain ethnic groups (high demographic dynamics), as well as a lack of living space, overcrowded settlement, uneven distribution of the population in multinational states.

There are a number of reasons for separatism arising from the influence of the demographic factor, for example<sup>2</sup>:

A. as a result of numerous migrations of the population, the boundaries of the settlement of ethnic groups and states have changed;

B. asymmetric nature of the entire ethnic system, when there is a dominant ethnic group that controls power structures and privileged social niches (management, industrial production, etc.), which causes discontent among minorities;

C. modernization and intellectualization of peoples leads to the fact that in prestigious activities there is competition between titular and other ethnic groups: representatives of the titular ethnic groups begin to claim prestigious and privileged positions, including in power;

D. Correlation of social stratification of society and division of labor with ethnic characteristics of the population of a particular region.

Thus, the demographic factor, together with all the others, has a significant impact on the development of separatist sentiments.

9. Sociocultural factor. It implies contradictions associated with differences in traditions, customs, religion, as well as infringement of other values of the ethnos<sup>3</sup>.

10. Geopolitical factor. In the 21st century, in the post-confrontational, postmodern era, separatism acquired a completely different content in comparison with the 19th and 20th centuries. In earlier times, the disintegration of the country's territorial integrity could be exploited by hostile external or internal anti-system forces, which made participation in separatist movements or organizations a rather risky undertaking<sup>4</sup>. However, in the current conditions such a threat as the danger of open external interference is practically absent. Moreover, the world community and European structures do not see sufficient grounds for any of the current separatist formations in Europe to gain international recognition. "The international community supports alternatives to secession in which any injustice can be corrected and prevented in the future. Multilevel forms of government, in which power is distributed between different levels and each level of government carries out certain functions of self-government according to the federal model, is one of these alternatives," the participants in an international project to study regional conflicts in Europe believe. This can be combined with other forms of distribution of powers between different national communities or with guarantees of minority rights.

The factors of separatism are inextricably interconnected with each other. The interaction of factors can "muffle" their overall effect or increase the destructive consequences. From the point of view of regional studies, all factors of separatism are refracted and aggregated in the form of center-peripheral relations.

Many examples of separatism remain little known. Thus, Denmark has a semi-autonomous territory – the Faroe Islands. The Danish government annually allocates subsidies from the state budget in the amount

<sup>1</sup> Попов, А. (2020). Национализм и сепаратизм в единой Европе. *Космополис*. <<http://www.politnauka.org/librarians/nation/popov.php>> (2020, November, 12).

<sup>2</sup> Сакаев, В. Т. (2012). Демографический фактор в этнополитических конфликтах: методологические аспекты анализа. *PolitBook*, 3 <<http://cyberleninka.ru/article/i/demograficheskiy-taktor-v-etnopoliticheskikh-konfliktah-metodologicheskie-aspekty-analiza/>> (2020, November, 12).

<sup>3</sup> Ландабасо Ангуло, А.И., Коновалов, А.М. (2004). *Терроризм и этнополитические конфликты*. Москва: Огни, 1

<sup>4</sup> Мигель, А. (1985). *40 миллионов испанцев 40 лет спустя*. Москва: Прогресс, 341.

of almost \$ 170 million to finance them. It is this circumstance that serves as a deterrent for local representatives of the separatist movement in the issue of holding a referendum on independence, although the separatists tried to do this five years ago.

In Switzerland, there is a separatist movement – the Jura Liberation Front, which has been advocating the declaration of the independence of the canton of Jura from the Confederation for over 30 years.

In Romanian Transylvania, the share of the Hungarian population in the total population is currently over 45%. Note that historically, Transylvania first belonged to Austria-Hungary, in 1919-1939 – to Romania and in 1940-1945 – to Hungary. During the socialist period, N. Ceausescu created the Union for the Revival of Hungarian Transylvania. At the end of March 2007, the organization held territorial autonomy referendums in three Transylvanian counties. Moreover, during the referendums, the Hungarian minority of Transylvania spoke out for independent relations between the region and Budapest and for maximum autonomy from Bucharest<sup>1</sup>.

It follows from the foregoing that the problems of nationalism and separatism can be aggravated by the economic crisis, unemployment, impoverishment of the population, interethnic barriers to communication, negative forms of national self-assertion, open nationalism, ambitions of national leaders, territorial and other reasons.

Thus, summing up the results, we note that humanity encountered the phenomenon of separatism already in the process of the emergence of the first state formations.

Separatism itself is interpreted as a struggle and other (institutional or extra-institutional) activity to isolate a part of the territory in order to create an independent state or obtain a new status of autonomy. Separatism is in conflict with the principle of territorial unity and the integrity of state borders. Therefore, it is a source of protracted and complex interstate and interethnic conflicts.

#### References:

1. Gidasns, E. (2004). *Uskolzayushchiy mir: kak globalizatsiya menyayet nashu zhizn* [An elusive world: how globalization is changing our lives]. Moscow: All the World. [in Russian].
2. Glukhova, A. V. (ed.) (2010). *Politicheskaya konfliktologiya pered novymi vyzovami* [Political conflictology facing new challenges]. Voronezh: Voronezh State University. [in Russian].
3. Egorova, M. (2009). *Malye narody Yevropy i novyye vyzovy vremeni: problema samoopredeleniya* [Small nations of Europe and new challenges of the time: the problem of self-determination]. *Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta druzhby narodov: Seriya: Politologiya* [Bulletin of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia: Series: Political Science], 2, 94-96.
4. Tishkov, V.A. (1993). O prirode etnicheskogo konflikta [On the nature of ethnic conflict]. *Svobodnaya mysl* [Free thought], 4, 4-15. [in Russian].
5. Keating, M. (2003). Novyy regionalizm v Zapadnoy Yevrope. Logos [New regionalism in Western Europe]. *Zhurnal po filosofii i pragmatike kultury* [Logos. Journal of Philosophy and Pragmatics of Culture], 6, 81-86. [in Russian].
6. Koval, T. (2010). *Etnokonfessiona'nyye konfliktyv Yevrope i na postsovetskom prostranstve* [Ethno-confessional conflicts in Europe and the post-Soviet space]. Moscow: MEI MOR AN. [in Russian].
7. Landabaso Angulo, A.I., Konovalov, A.M. (2004). *Terrorizm i etnopoliticheskiye konflikty* [Terrorism and ethnopolitical conflicts]. Moscow: Lights, 1. [in Russian].
8. Miguel, A. (1985). *40 millionov ispantsev 40 let spustya* [40 million Spaniards 40 years later]. Moscow: Progress. [in Russian].
9. Popov, A. (2020). Nationalism and separatism in a united Europe [Natsionalizm i separatgom v yedinoy Yevrope]. *Cosmopolis* [Kosmopolis]. <<http://www.politnauka.org/librars/nation/popov.php>> (2020, November, 12). [in Russian].
10. RIA Novosti (2007). *Ochagi separatizma v stranakh sovremennoy Yevropy* [Hotbeds of separatism in the countries of modern Europe] <[http://www.spain.com.ua/news/separatizm\\_v\\_europe\\_17122007](http://www.spain.com.ua/news/separatizm_v_europe_17122007)> (2020, November, 12). [in Russian].
11. Sakaev, V.T. (2012). *Demograficheskiy faktor v etnopoliticheskikh konfliktakh: metodologicheskiye aspekty analiza* [The demographic factor in ethnopolitical conflicts: methodological aspects of the analysis]. *PolitBook*, 3 <<http://cyberleninka.ru/article/ii/demograficheskiy-taktor-v-etnopoliticheskikh-konfliktah-metodologicheskiye-aspekty-analiza/>> (2020, November, 12). [in Russian].

<sup>1</sup> РИА Новости (2007). Очаги сепаратизма в странах современной Европы <[http://www.spain.com.ua/news/separatizm\\_v\\_europe\\_17122007](http://www.spain.com.ua/news/separatizm_v_europe_17122007)> (2020, November, 12).