SEPARATISM AS A BASIS OF INSTABILITY

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In the last decade of the past century, the number of armed conflicts arising on the basis of ethnic separatism sharply increased. As a result, researchers are discussing how to return the parties to such conflicts to peaceful coexistence. Scholars propose many possible solutions, including the division of power among ethnic groups, the reintegration [1] of rebellious ethno-territories, UN intervention to preserve polyethnic [2] states, regional autonomy, or the federalization [3] of the state. However, to this day, there is no consensus on which of these approaches (or their combination) offers the best prospects for resolving conflicts based on ethnic separatism.

Policies of ethnic preference can be typologized into both structural and distributive categories [4]. Nevertheless, these categories, while revealing political opportunities in various conditions, do not fully reflect the impact of such policies on society. For analysis, it is more convenient to use a concept such as the impact of policy on the ethnically divided structure of society, which constitutes the basis of ethnic differentiation and ethnic conflict. Various versions of ethnic preference policies can either facilitate the integration of ethnic groups into a single society or strengthen separatist tendencies. Here we are talking about the assimilationist and multiculturalist variants of such policies.

Assimilationist policy is based on conflict theories grounded in clashing interests and aims to eliminate ethnic competition and prevent attempts at ethnic separatism by incorporating ethnic minorities into the political and cultural space of dominant groups. Particular emphasis is placed on economic preferences, specifically those that assist members of ethnic minorities in integrating into the cultural system of the ethnic majority. This approach is also expressed in creating conditions for ethnic minorities to study in the educational institutions of the dominant ethnic groups.

Subsequently, the state assists representatives of ethnic groups in finding employment in sectors where the ethnic majority holds a dominant position (rarely in leadership roles), and also encourages the integration of dominant groups into the economic system.

Assimilationist policy usually aims at creating cultural homogeneity or social integration as a solution to the problem of ethnic separatism. Such policy strives to resolve ethnic conflicts through the elimination of differences by creating a society based on individual values, where each person should be considered as an individual with equal rights to others. This model was primarily implemented in the concept of the “melting pot”, which was an expression of national policy in the United States.

Multiculturalist policy, conversely, is built on the foundation of legitimizing groups and group rights. This approach considers the country as a community divided along ethnic lines. Here, an ethnic conflict based on a secessionist demand is seen as arising from the political inequality of ethnic groups, which in turn leads to economic inequality. Thus, if ethnic groups achieve a certain degree of political autonomy, this level of inequality may decrease. Multiculturalist policy agrees that groups can remain an inseparable part of a multi-ethnic state while preserving their distinct ethnic identity. Such an approach envisions federalizing the country along ethnic principles or creating other forms of political autonomy for ethnic groups. Additionally, quotas may be introduced for guaranteed proportional political representation of ethnic autonomies in central government bodies. Furthermore, this concept may include providing conditions for the linguistic, religious, and cultural development of autonomies.

Polyethnic states often combine methods of multiculturalist and assimilationist approaches, frequently attempting to remain within the framework of one of them. Also, states often apply various political methods pertaining to different concepts described for different ethnic groups, where the combination of methods varies depending on the circumstances of each specific case. For example, the USA applies a

multiculturalist approach towards the indigenous ethnic groups (Native Americans), while simultaneously applying assimilationist methods towards African Americans. Thus, such application of ethnic preference policy and the variation of methods according to situation and conditions seem quite justified. Here, qualitative negations of quantity are used.

It is worth noting here that even polyethnic states with developed democratic institutions must take preventive measures to prevent the emergence and development of separatist processes. The philosophical categories of a systematic approach and linear analysis. This is because, at the foundation of liberal democracy lies the priority of individual rights and the principle of individualism, which implies diminishing the role of ethnic affiliation and a unified system of values[5]. However, if within the state there exist ethnic groups distinguished by a more rigid form of ethnic identity, striving to preserve it in an unchanged form and reacting very painfully to the homogenization of the state's value system, liberal democracy may be unable to ensure the political representation demanded by such groups within a single state[6]. This, in turn, creates the ground for the emergence of separatist sentiment. Furthermore, in this situation, the existence of territory which the ethnic group itself considers its own and, in its opinion, should be the place for the political self-determination of this ethnos, can become a serious situation.

The aspects of ethnic preference policy described above can be applied as preventive measures to prevent the emergence and development of ethnic separatism. However, as noted above, for a number of reasons, preventing the emergence of this type of conflict is much more difficult. In most cases, a secessionist demand advanced by one of the ethnic groups within a multi-ethnic state leads to a serious escalation of the internal political situation and often to intra-state conflicts, as was the case in Chechnya, or even to wars.

Of course, all the approaches described above do not claim universality, which cannot be an obstacle to their application in different situations. It should be noted here that the problem of developing possible conceptual foundations to reduce the severity of the ethnic separatism problem is considered from the point of view of preserving the integrity of a polyethnic state.

Some Western researchers emphasize that the best policy for stopping conflict is the reintegration on a federal basis, within the framework of the multiculturalism concept, of a multi-ethnic state that has a hotbed of ethnic separatism on its territory[7]. Such an approach envisions developing the process of building a civic identification based on the existing polyethnic state in the future, while simultaneously reducing the influence of ethnic identification. It should be noted here that although this method, due to its ability to engage all the resources of democratic institutions and prevent subsequent military confrontation, is the most acceptable, it is very long-term, because creating a civic nation is a very distant prospect for most polyethnic countries.

Furthermore, there is another crucial factor that requires special attention in resolving conflicts rooted in ethnic separatism. Such conflicts frequently escalate into armed confrontation, largely due to the uncompromising stance of ambitious political elites who deliberately intensify tensions in order to advance their strategic or personal political objectives. In this context, the stabilization of relations among competing elites becomes a central task in conflict management and resolution. The fragmentation of elite groups, rivalry for power, and the instrumentalization of ethnic grievances often transform latent social contradictions into open violence.

Therefore, efforts aimed at moderating elite competition and preventing radicalization within leadership circles acquire particular importance. In certain circumstances, state policies may include attempts to discredit the most radical leaders of separatist movements in the eyes of the population while simultaneously protecting or engaging political actors who hold more moderate and negotiation-oriented

positions. Such a differentiated approach seeks to weaken extremist narratives and create space for dialogue and compromise. However, this strategy demands careful calculation and strategic sensitivity. Ill-conceived informational, propaganda, or military-political actions can produce the opposite effect, unintentionally strengthening the legitimacy, symbolic authority, and popular support of separatist leaders. When state intervention is perceived as unjust, disproportionate, or externally imposed, it may reinforce collective solidarity around radical figures and transform them into symbols of resistance.

A vivid illustration of this dynamic can be observed in the situation in Chechnya in 1994. At that time, the regime of Dzhokhar Dudayev had already experienced a significant decline in support among large segments of the Chechen population. Nevertheless, the poorly prepared and heavy-handed military intervention by the federal authorities dramatically altered public perceptions. Instead of weakening the separatist leadership, the incursion contributed to the construction of an image of national heroes around Dudayev and his inner circle, thereby consolidating resistance and deepening the conflict. This example demonstrates that the success or failure of state policy in managing separatist conflicts depends not only on military capacity but also on political prudence, legitimacy, and the ability to shape public perception. Sustainable conflict resolution requires a balanced combination of institutional reform, inclusive political dialogue, socio-economic development, and carefully calibrated security measures. Without such a comprehensive approach, attempts to suppress separatism may inadvertently intensify instability rather than eliminate its underlying causes.

It is worth noting that most Western researchers, at the current stage, despite the ideas of self-determination being quite popular, are very cautious about recommending a way out of an ethno-political crisis based on secessionist demands, such as the division of the state or the exit of its ethno-territories from a single political space. As

R. Schaeffer noted, "division leads to internecine wars within divided states and between them (there are many examples of this in the last decade of the past century - Yugoslavia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Chechnya) and forces the world's leading states to intervene in regional conflicts. Division becomes not only a failure of reintegration attempts but itself turns into a long-lasting problem. Decades have passed since some countries became ethnically divided, but the scale of conflicts between them has only expanded." Thus, the division of a state and the satisfaction of separatists' demands not only leads to new military clashes and forced displacement of the population but can also generate new conflicts in that very space.

In conclusion, At the current stage, the view that conflicts based on the demand of one of the ethnic groups of a multi-ethnic state to secede and create its own state structure can be successfully resolved by granting the separatist region as much political, economic, and cultural autonomy as possible is becoming increasingly widespread. According to this view, ethnic groups, like states, are primarily concerned about their security and problems of survival within a single state. Such an attitude gives rise to fear, which, in turn, is reinforced by the nationalist rhetoric of other groups (often dominant in the single state) who could be potential opponents in the conflict. If, under such conditions, the matter reaches an armed conflict, stopping it, as a rule, becomes very difficult due to many accompanying subjective factors. For example, the inevitable casualties among the civilian population that occur during armed clashes are perceived very painfully by all parties to the confrontation and intensify their negative attitudes towards each other.

Existential philosophy emphasized that authenticity is linked to inner experience. For Karl Jaspers, existence is revealed in personal responsibility and freedom, especially in "border situations" where one encounters finitude, fear, and choice. However, media presence creates a new form of existence-"constant representation". The modern subject experiences themselves as an object of observation, as a profile, as

a digital image. As a result, the inner dimension of being recedes before the necessity of display. A person begins to exist insofar as they are visible.

Anxiety is becoming another consequence of media exposure. The constant stream of notifications, the expectation of a reaction, and self-comparison with carefully edited images of others create a state of permanent tension. Gilles Deleuze's ideas on the "control society" are appropriate here: the subject is in a constant process of evaluation and self-assessment. Algorithms record activity, the audience reacts, and the individual becomes dependent on digital confirmation of their own significance. Anxiety in this context is not simply an emotional state, but a structural element of a new form of subjectivity.

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