Conceptualizing New Forms of Separatism in Europe

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Abstract

This paper deals with new separatist tendencies in contemporary Europe and compares them with traditional forms of separatism. It classifies and analyses such phenomena as the extreme right “identitarian movement” or the Neo-Nazi strategy of no-go zones in Europe, Islamist struggle for establishing regional “Sharia areas” and caliphates in European cities or socially excluded Roma communities with their own power structures in East Central Europe. Reaction of the traditional separatist movement to this new challenge will be mentioned. Interdependence of various forms of separatism will be mentioned, too. The authors will present an analytical framework of new separatism, including intervening factors (economic crisis, migration, rise of intolerance).

Keywords: Separatism; Irredentism; Autonomism; Extremism; Europe

1. Introduction

Separatism in Europe was traditionally connected mostly with territorial claims of traditional European stateless nations (struggling to create their own state) or with irredentist demands, resulting from a European order that was established as a result of negotiations of powers after civil, continental or world wars.
Separatist movements like the ones in Catalonia, Ireland, Basque and northern Italy derive from a mixture of in-group and out-group processes that get triggered by perception, levelling pressures, an independent common history that is shared and under pressure, ones own minority language and separate culture and the referral to land. It is carried by minority groups that have members who have different social backgrounds. These mainly regional
movements carry the awareness that there exists a nation with land but without recognition as independent political power. Their minority rights are granted by ‘others’ (mainly the majority) that these minorities are highly dependent on, therefore we often find asymmetrical power relations. Traditional forms of separatism are still an important part of European politics (as the example of Scotland shows, for example). However, traditional separatist movements are facing challenges, mostly due to new migration in Europe but also due to new possibilities like juridical processes that EU has opened for them. Some new claims are formulated due to processes where the European order has been re-established and transitory processes have been installed (mostly in post-communist area as a consequence of ethnic conflicts in the 1990s). A part of the representatives of the Roma minority, understood here as a disperse nation without land and without recognition as nation in the most national states of Europe, declares new separatist demands as they face levelling pressures and preparation of or expulsion. Islamist separatism and irredentism are propagated in relation to European territory. European right-wing extreme scene is spreading its own “white” separatist concepts.

The aim of this paper is to identify and describe new forms of separatism in Europe and to conceptualize these forms in the general context of separatism with the goal to outline a framework for analysing these new phenomena.

2. Basic conceptualizing of terms and scope of research

Europe is limited in its geographical borders in this paper (Caucasus is for example in this paper not considered as a part of Europe). As traditional separatism we understand separatism with a historical tradition of territorial, national, ethnic and/or religious separatist struggle on European territory, declared by groups with long-term continuity on the territory. These demands were declared in a similar way in previous European orders (in the sense of border delimitation).

While one-dimensional approaches like Ted Gurrs thesis of relative deprivation or Charles Tillys thesis of frustration do not explain separatist tendencies it is acknowledged widely that separatism has in all cases a history, a diachronic dimension, so that historiographic questions

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1 While migration processes have always faced a challenge to ethnic minorities as the case of Basque and Catalonia shows, the latter examples were faced by inner-spanish migration processes, meaning that a relevant number of the majority within a country settles in a minority region.
get widely debated. Separatism is therefore linked to history and the separatist movements have changing connections towards the mainstream of the minority and the majority.

New separatism is linked to:

1. New demands of traditional nations, ethnics or religious communities as a result of the latest re-ordering European borders (it means as a result of post-communist ethnic conflicts);
2. New separatist demands of traditional minorities from European territory;
3. Separatist demands of racial, national, ethnic or religious communities with no or very limited or long-term interrupted tradition on European territory, which are now rising in Europe as a result of modern migration trends.
4. Separatism of “white Europeans”, respectively traditional majority European nations, ethnic or religious communities in reaction to the existence of new minorities.

To these new trends and consequences also traditional separatist movements are reacting.

In our paper we understand separatism as an umbrella term for various phenomena:

– Secessionism (split of one territory and/or racial, national, ethnic or religion community from one state and creating a new state or states),
- Separatism in strict sense (split of two or more territories and/or racial, ethnic or religion community/ies from the existing states and creating a new state), and
- Irredentism (split of one or more territories and/or racial, ethnic or religion community/ies with minority statute from one or more existing states and its annexation to the existing state, where this community occupies majority position),

including autonomism in all three previous various ways within the existing state (demands to autonomy for a race, nation, ethnic or religious community within the existing state).

Separatism is a dynamic process. For example, secessionist autonomism can be transferred to separatism with demands to create new statehood during the stages of development of some

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5 Autonomy can be carried out by secessionist, separatist (in strict sense) or irredentist way within the existing borders.
ethnic or regionalist movements. One territory can be claimed by more separatist or irredentist movements.

3. Forms of traditional separatism

Traditional Separatism (related to consistent territory with clear borders) demanded by traditional European nations is typical mostly in the post-communist area. In Eastern Europe these new separatist demands are determined by results of ethnic wars after violent dissolutions of former communist federal states. As a Western European example there can be mentioned the North Italian separatism, in which some representatives construct the idea of a “Padanian nation” and others, like the demands of the Catalonian minority in Spain that proves to have a wide social support for its independence efforts.

In the Baltic States and in Ukraine the radical part of representation of Russian minority declares irredentist claims. The goal is re-unification of Russians in one state. As a leading nation within the Soviet Union, many Russians feel badly the loss of this status. The National Bolshevik Party of Russia (NBPR), Russian National Unity (RNE) or the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LPDR) with branches among Russian minority in Estonia or Latvia had such demands, for example. It is a marginal phenomenon today, more powerful were these groupings in the 1990s.

The NBPR declared even the idea of the so called “second Russia”. It was a project with the aim to create national Bolshevik regime on the territory of one neighbouring country with strong Russian minority. This regime should be a propagandist model for the win of political support for the NBPR in Russia. The final goal should be national Bolshevik empowering also in Russia.

A specific case is the issue of Transnistria. Officially it is a part of the Republic of Moldova, however, it is in fact not under control of its government. Real power is held by regime under

7 For example (in the context of traditional separatism in Europe) - the Carpathian Ukraine (currently part of Ukraine), was former claim of Ukrainian irredentists, current its is claimed by Hungarian and Czechoslovak irredentists. Secessionist claims are declared by a part of representatives of Ruthenian minority.
10 Catalonians against Spain – the majority favors its independence. Available from: http://deutsche-wirtschaftsnachrichten.de/2013/06/22/katalanen-gegen-spanien-mehrheit-will-einen-eigenen-staat/ (accessed on 20.08.2013)
Russian protection. The frozen conflict in Moldova is connected also with “traditional” irredentist Romanian demands related to this territory\textsuperscript{13}.

Several separatist struggles are connected with the situation after the Balkan wars. All conflicts in this area have deep historical roots. The goal of separatist, respectively irredentist movement, is to establish own ethnic homogenous “greater states” (“greater Serbia”, “greater Albania”, “greater Macedonia” etc.). Separatist groups, which fought in the border territories for the enlargement of contemporary states or for the establishing new states without historical tradition, are active after the delimitation of new borders. As mentioned above, all these quasi-new separatist movements must be considered as a part of larger traditional irredentist struggle. Liberation Army of Preševo, Medveda and Bujanovac (UÇPMB) in Serbia, recent Serbian separatism in Northern Kosovo\textsuperscript{14} or the separatism of the Republika Srpska Krajina in Croatia (respectively representation of this quasi-state in exile)\textsuperscript{15} can be mentioned as examples.

4. Roma autonomism and separatism

Approximately ten million Roma (or Romani) people live in Europe as a stateless nation (according to some authors as a conglomerate of various sub-ethnics). As Aidan McGary writes: “Roma are a heterogenous minority community with multiple subgroups which impedes efforts to secure representation and articulate interests in the domestic and transnational political context”\textsuperscript{16}.

At the beginning of modern Roma politics in the 1930s, the inspiration from Zionist movement led some Roma leaders to demands to establish their own Roma state in India. However, during the development of Roma political movement this demand was rejected\textsuperscript{17}. In contemporary Europe such demands are connected with anti-Gypsyist propaganda (including racist motto “Roma back to India”) rather than with Roma movement.


\textsuperscript{17} Pečinka, Pavel, Romské strany a politici v Evropě. Brno: Nakladatelství doplněk, 2009, 84.
On the other hand, within the Roma movement claims to “Roma autonomous zones” are being now declared. They are connected with a demanded autonomy of localities with strong Roma population. This claim is not clearly specified, however. Real separation of Roma communities is caused by social exclusion, mostly in East Central European and Balkan countries (so called “Roma ghettos”). Sometimes the chance to the future growth of these localities is connected with the above mentioned autonomous demands. The network of small territories under Roma control can be demanded more strongly in future Europe, mostly in the case of continuous social exclusion of Roma. Roma face in Europe discrimination and social exclusion and hostile attitudes. The highest discrimination rate (in percent) has been found in Czech Republic, by “European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey“, followed by Hungary in 2009. Here, the Roma minority faces severe ethnic tensions that get promoted by racist ideologies.

Europe was in last decades a target area of mass immigration from various parts of the world. Three or more generations of immigrants established in many European countries a population consisting from various nations of non-European origin. The integration of these immigrants is in progress in many cases, however, some communities created their own “parallel societies”.

6. Separatism of “new minorities”?

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Chinese, Vietnamese, Kurdish or other communities sometimes live predominantly separately, up to now without demands to territorial self-government on European territory (sometimes their political representation struggles for traditional separatist demands outside Europe, as the Kurdish PKK or Tamil Tigers).

Territorial separation is connected mostly with social division and with the rise of “poor immigrant suburbia” in many European cities. Such zones are under control of various non-elected authorities, including crime groups (they are sometimes created on ethnic, sometimes on multi-ethnic base). Governments tend to show a lack of interest to integrate them and private organisations, civil initiatives and networks are left to help themselves.\(^\text{22}\) The main claim of these minorities is the urge for integration and recognition as a minority and not separation. Governmental attacks against these communities can be a starter for ethnic riots, as in France in 2005, London in 2011 or Malmö in 2013. These riots are sometimes connected also with Islamist struggle in Europe\(^\text{23}\).

5. Islamic separatism

Muslim communities are growing in Europe, also in the countries where Islam does not traditionally have strong roots (Western Europe, Scandinavia etc.). From traditional Islam areas outside Europe (Middle East, Horn of Africa, Central and East Asia etc.) as well as within Europe (Bosna, Turkey) new immigrants are coming. It is a challenge also to Islamist politics in Western countries.

The claims to own statehood is claimed by radical Muslim politicians. In Germany Metin Kaplan proclaimed himself Kaliph from Cologne and leader of the “Caliph State”. His group gain relatively strong support. However, his main goal was to establish a caliphate in Turkey. In his teaching the idea of Muslim “parallel society” in Western Europe can also be found\(^\text{24}\). This idea can be considered also as a separatist struggle, despite the fact that it is not necessarily connected with territorial claims. Parallel society separates people according to


their religious identity. Territorial claims are declared by Islamists in large urban areas where the Muslim community is granted majority status. The so called “Sharia Zones”, respectively “Sharia Controlled Zones” are claimed, where only the Muslim law should be valid under the governance of Muslim religious authorities. For example, in London the posters on the borders of these self-proclaimed zones declare that smoking, alcohol, music, drugs, prostitution and porn are forbidden. Sharia law in these areas is enforced by Muslim vigilantes.

In the future struggle to create more and more such Sharia zones and their unification to one territory can be expected. In contemporary Europe the number of “no-go zones” for Muslims is growing (not only in the UK, but also in France, Benelux countries, Scandinavia etc.)

This can be connected also with the activities of the Sharia movement, which has been active since the end of last decade in many Western countries. It provisory goal is to establish sharia on national level, then to create new Islamist states and caliphates.

In this context the idea of Jihadist irredentism can be mentioned, as was defined by the International Crisis Group, jihad can be categorized as:
- “Internal jihad (combating nominally Muslim regimes considered impious);
- Irredentist jihad (fighting to redeem land ruled by non-Muslims or under occupation);
- Global jihad (combating the West)."

7. Right-wing extremist separatist concepts

Modern right-wing extremism in Europe started in the 1990s with strong anti-immigrant campaigns, including violent activities against immigrants. Struggle for ethnically homogenous territory was proclaimed in the context of the so called “National Liberated Zones”, which was elaborated in Germany in the 1990s. The power of the right-wing extremist scene should be enforced in such zones and they should be “cleared” from

28 Ibid.
foreigners, political opponents and criminals. The “no-go zones” for foreigners were proclaimed also before the World Soccer Championship in Germany in 200630.

Separation of Central and Eastern European states from “Islamized” Western Europe, probably with a new territorial and governmental form, is demanded by some right-wing extremists from this area. As an example the Czech-Slovak group White Media can be mentioned31.

Current white racist separatist struggle can be characterized also as “Americanization” of European white separatism, because in Northern America concepts to separate people of different race and nation have a long tradition within the extremist scene32. However, in Europe the final goal is to annihilate “non-Europeans” and/or to transfer them from Europe (the concept of European war to 2083 elaborated by right-wing terrorist Anders Breivik is a typical example of this approach)33.

8. New challenges to traditional separatism

Immigration and separatist demands of new minorities pose a challenge to traditional separatist movements. Traditional enemies – central governments, respectively the majority nation or religion, are supplemented or even substituted by the new “invaders” coming to the territory claimed. In previous era such problems were typical on intra-state level, as – for instance – in the 1980s, ETA attacked Castilians coming into the Basque country34.

In recent era some traditional separatist movements propagate strong anti-immigrant statements and they can be categorized as a specific subtype of contemporary extreme right party family, as the Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang) or the above mentioned Northern League (Lega Nord). Also the militant scene in separatist regions is fighting against immigration, as the Bloed, Bodem, Eer en Trouw (Blood, Soil, Honour and Loyalty) in

In Slovakia and Hungary the anti-Roma racism led to cooperation’s between former rivals from the Slovak and Hungarian right-wing extremist scene. The second one is typical of irredentist demands. However, in this cooperation only marginal Hungarian right-wing extremist groupings are engaged, up to now, though anti-Roma racism becomes more and more socially accepted in Hungary.

In Northern Ireland, the loyalists attacked Roma immigrants from Eastern Europe in 2009. The loyalist Combat 18 (branch of neo-Nazi group) was responsible for threatening Roma. In Ulster racially motivated attacks against immigrants from various areas (Roma, East Europeans, Muslims, Chinese etc.) are generally growing. As writes Jake Wallis Simons (a Telegraph features writer): “Sectarian hatred is being overtaken by xenophobic racism in Northern Ireland”.

9. Conclusion

Current separatism in Europe is an important issue with a dynamic development. Traditional forms of separatism are combined with new fringes. The main framework for an analysis can be defined with the help of two main axes. The first is the traditional or new form of entity with its own identity (racial, national, ethnic, religious) on a specific territory in Europe (in the historical and geopolitical context), the second is traditional territorial claim to a homogenous and consistent territory with clear borders at one pole of the axis, the network of flexible or vague defined zones without clear borders at the opposite pole of the axis. This axis can be understood also as a process because the zones can be only the first step for the establishing of large new units or states (Caliphate, Roma state, white racist states etc.).

39 For example, Muslims in Bosnia are a traditional entity, Muslims in Northern Europe a new entity.
Examples for each category are included in the next table.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Clear borders and consistent territory</th>
<th>Vague/flexible borders and inconsistent territory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional entity</td>
<td>Basque separatism, Hungarian irredentism etc.</td>
<td>Roma autonomous zones, White racist “no go zones”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New entity</td>
<td>Islamic caliphates in Western Europe</td>
<td>Sharia controlled zones, immigrant suburbia</td>
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Source: Authors

Social stratification is an important driver for the establishing of new informal (but strong) borders, at least in the case of immigrant suburbia and socially excluded Roma localities with their autonomous demands. Islamist and right-wing extremist “no-go zones” have a dangerous conflict potential. The slogan “Europa of separatisms” can be characteristic for the future development of the “old continent”.