

# National and state interests of Slovaks and Catalans: parallelism between Slovakia and Catalonia in the way to achieve national emancipation

**Martin Švikruha**

**Dalibor Mikuš**

**Matúš Meluš**

Assistant professors at the Department of Public Administration, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (Slovakia)

**ABSTRACT** The integration of European states within the European Union has been one of the basic attributes of political development in Europe since the end of World War II. Despite the ongoing process of this project, we notice a strengthening of separatist efforts within individual states. These trends have been most visible in recent years in Catalonia, which has already taken concrete political steps towards independence. In our contribution we look at the issue of Catalonia from a specific point of view, comparing it to the case of Slovakia. It has a similar historical experience with the accomplishment of emancipatory efforts in the last stage of the 20th century. Slovakia's independence arose from the peaceful division of the original Czecho-Slovak state unit and represents a positive example for other states. Therefore, we decided to compare these two specific cases. In this context, the primary question arises from the extent to which the requirements of Catalonia are justified and whether it is possible to identify a certain parallelism with a set of internal and external factors characteristic of the creation of new states in the 1990s in Europe. Based on interviews with the direct political actors in this process in Slovakia, we have identified three key attributes that we consider to be important prerequisites in the process of fulfilling national interests in the form of a new state. Then, we compare them with the case of Catalonia. The predominant methods used in the article are those of qualitative analysis and comparison.

**KEYWORDS** national emancipation; constitutional system; geopolitical context; Catalonia; Slovakia.

---

Article received on 5/11/2019; approved on 15/04/2021.

This paper was created within the project: KEGA 001UCM-4/2019 – Dynamika premien verejnej správy SR.

## Introduction

Over the past four decades, the European geographic region has been associated with turbulent developments determined by a specific range of social, political and cultural transformations. During this period, new state units have emerged as a result of the self-determination processes of individual nations. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the elimination of communist forces in satellite states at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s became the mainstay of these tendencies in the geopolitical space of the former Eastern Bloc. After the closure of this historical chapter, the ideas of independence are currently prevalent in those European countries in which individual regions, such as Scotland, Flanders and Catalonia, seek recognition of their own national identity.

Recent history in the European region indicates that national consolidation processes are far from complete. Nationalist tendencies are stimulated by the deepening of European integration, the neoliberal form of globalization and the recent global economic crisis in the region.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of ethnic and territorial conflicts in the world, the issue of fulfilling the self-determination of nations is still very much alive and the intensity of discussions dealing with this issue is increasing. There are several active separatist movements within the boundaries of Europe whose self-determination efforts, if successful, would greatly affect its geographical form. Catalonia is one of the regions where these tendencies are most visible. In this context, there is a primary question identifying a certain parallelism with a set of internal and external factors characteristic of the creation of new states in the 1990s in Europe. On this basis, we deal with the specific case of the Slovak self-determination process which resulted in the creation of an independent Slovak Republic. Therefore, we compare the identified key attributes of this process to the Catalonia case.

Our methodological procedure is based on the interconnection of the theoretical and definitive determination of attributes related to the issue of the right of nations to self-determination and the practical level of selected cases. Using the method of historical analysis, we thoroughly examined the internal and external context of Slovakia's emancipation process during the

---

1. Marušiak, "Stredná Európa a problematika", 14.

twentieth century. Based on structured interviews with the direct political actors in the Slovak self-determination process, we have identified three key attributes that can be considered decisive for the creation of any state after a twenty-five-year experience. The research involved the former Chairman of the Slovak Parliament F. Mikloško (1990-1992), the Prime Minister of the Slovak Government J. Čarnogurský (1991-1992) and V. Mečiar who served as Prime Minister of Slovakia three times (1990-1991, 1992-1994, 1994-1998). He proved to be a decisive political player in the self-determination process. We make a detailed analysis of the historical experience of Slovakia, on the basis of which we have defined specific attributes. In the final part we compare them with the situation of Catalonia. We chose the following attributes: the geopolitical context, the nature of the constitutional framework of the state vis-à-vis the possibility of separating its integral subnational levels, and the distribution of forces in relation to the centre and the subnational level demanding to strengthen its position within the state.

## 1. A theoretical reflection on the right of nations to self-determination

The principle of national self-determination in its broadest sense expresses the right of nations to decide on their cultural, social or political development. It is clear from the positivist approaches to the perception of this principle that it is a key prerequisite for the increase in cooperation between individual nations. This leads to a growth in welfare from a global perspective. On the other hand, failure to respect the principle of self-determination and the rejection of the right to national freedom and sovereignty may result in international tensions. According to J. Marušiak, the right of nations to self-determination can be interpreted as a natural right which is not addressed to the individual, but to the collective. It is referred to as the third-generation human right which foreshadows its cross-border scope. He claims that if these rights should be exercised, it is desirable to introduce the mechanisms necessary for their application. In this context, we also deal with the term national emancipation. According to M. Hroch, this is a process in which the community is aware of its own peculiarities and it leads to an effort to implement administration by its own authorities.<sup>2</sup> At the same time,

---

2. Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 84.

A. Gellner distinguishes two levels of national emancipation — cultural and political. The symbiosis of these two approaches leads to the creation of one's own political representation, which formulates its political agenda. On the other hand, the author does not consider the creation of a nation-state to be the primary goal of a nation, as they can be fulfilled even within compound states.<sup>3</sup> Political scientist M. Guibernau refers to the term “emancipatory nationalism”. In her opinion, it is a democratic type of nationalism manifested in nations that do not feel at the same time recognized and represented by the administrative unit they live in.<sup>4</sup> E. Hobsbawm emphasizes the problematic grasp of terms such as “nation”, “language”, or “ethnicity”.<sup>5</sup> Based on these views national emancipation can take several forms, while it is not necessary to create an independent state.

After World War II the question of nations' right to self-determination became a major subject of discussion at an international level. This is reinforced by the fact that the aforementioned right has played an important role in the genesis of today's international system based on the territorial integrity of states and the inviolability of borders. The principle was most markedly applied during the 20th century in the process of decolonization. As a result, great colonial empires broke up and many Asian and African states were created (e.g. Bangladesh, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, etc.). In contrast, in the period after World War II, in the area of Central and Eastern Europe we see the dismissive expose of communities to realize this right. This was especially typical for ethnic groups that became part of the Soviet Union, even though they had their own statehood before World War II (e.g. Baltic nations). F.L. Kirgis points out that the issue of self-determination of nations can also be inversely related to the extinction of states, not just the creation. This principle can also be fulfilled in the case of the unification of two or more states (for example Germany in 1990).<sup>6</sup> The principle of self-determination of nations in positivist perception is present both in international space and in the post-colonial period when this right was applied after 1989 not only in Central and Eastern Europe in the former post-Soviet republics, states of former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. New states (e.g.

---

3. Gellner, *Nacionalismus*, 15.

4. Guibernau, *The nation-state and nationalism*, 372.

5. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 6.

6. Kirgis, “The Degrees of Self-Determination”, 92.

Eritrea, East Timor or South Sudan) were created and became full-fledged actors in international affairs. We can have no doubts about the legitimacy of their establishment and acceptance by other states. E. Gellner states that the principle of the right to self-determination has been shaped in many stages in Europe.<sup>7</sup> It took place after World War I, immediately before World War II, partly in the second half of the 20th century during the liberalization of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and again in connection with the collapse of post-communist multinational federations.<sup>8</sup> S. Rokkan presents a complex model of nation states in Western Europe. By referring to economic, territorial and cultural variables he contributed to the acceleration of the formation of nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the context of the formation of national-states he pays special attention to the peculiarities of nationalism.<sup>9</sup>

The issue of the right of nations to self-determination fundamentally deals not only with the existence and non-existence of the state, but also with its relations towards other states, as this interferes with its sovereignty. M. Moore deals with the concept of self-determination consisting of the equality of different national identities. The nation's right to political self-determination should be equal to the defensible right that all nations have. In this context, this right arose naturally from the existence of the nation. Moreover, it is not based on past injustice or current discrimination.<sup>10</sup> He argues that international law is full of contradictions and is ethically unconvincing; that political practice based on this territorial concept of self-determination has failed to establish adequate rules and mechanisms to resolve the national conflict; and that the philosophical foundations of the territorial concept are also problematic. The term "self-determination of peoples" is traditionally used in the international field.<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, this principle supports the idea that each nation has the right to its own nation state. On the other hand, it comes into direct conflict with another principle that promotes the territorial integrity of existing states. In secessionist struggles one principle has to give way to the other. Where a secessionist movement finds that its people

---

7. Gellner, *Nacionalismus*, 18

8. Vomlela, "Organizational strategy of the League of the Communists of Serbia", 53.

9. Bartolini, "Stein Rokkan e Derek W. Urwin, Economy, Territory, Identity".

10. Moore, "On National Self-determination", 900.

11. Brilmayer, "Secession and Self-Determination", 177

do not currently have their own nation state, the first principle would force the rebuilding of existing territorial boundaries. In practice, it would violate the territorial integrity of the existing state. On the contrary, if territorial integrity has priority, then the claims of minority groups within an existing state fall into the background. There is an argument that they have the right to claim independence for themselves. J. Sorens deals with the analysis of risk factors of secessionism at a regional level. He reveals that secessionism involves unique factors that are not common in other types of ethnic conflict. In addition to “identity”, variables such as regional language and history of independence, there are other variables involved. According to J. Sorens, lack of irredentist potential, relative prosperity, geographical disunity, population, and multi-party political systems explain secessionary power. These factors generally serve as activators of ethnic identity rather than a substitute for them, although there are important cases of non-ethnic secessionism.<sup>12</sup>

M. Moore also analyses the criticisms most often related to the principle of national self-determination. In particular, he discusses the problem that the idea of self-determination is vague in the sense that it does not tell us who the people entitled to self-determination are or what the jurisdictional unit to which they are entitled is. In some cases, nations should be able to exercise their right to self-determination by separation. However, for various reasons, this may not be practical or appropriate. Therefore, it is more desirable to look for ways to achieve equal recognition of different national identities in situations where separation is neither a desirable nor a practical option. He provides arguments that take into consideration opposing positions developed in the relevant discussions. He seeks to balance support for minority nationalism by accepting the political significance of a strong concept of common citizenship. He adds that there is a need for common political language and identity and for a certain common framework in which different people can meet and discuss their common characteristics and recognize each other as fellow citizens.<sup>13</sup>

From the point of view of this article the approach of German historian F. Meinecke, which is analysed by Czech historian M. Hroch, is also interesting. The latter notes that the former recognises two different aspects of the

---

12. Sorens, “The Cross-Sectional Determinants”, 304-305.

13. Moore, *The Ethics of Nationalism*, 47.

existence of the state — depending on whether the nation existed as a real state entity or derived its identity from a common language and culture. The term ‘Staatsnation’ refers to a de facto existing state unit defined by national borders and a functioning government. “Kulturnation”, on the other hand, represents a nation existing in the form it would idealistically achieve based on linguistic, cultural and historical relations.<sup>14</sup> The Kurds share a common cultural identity, but as a nation they are located in the territory of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. With about 20 million adherents, they are the largest ethnic group with separatist tendencies not occupying their own state. At the same time, the former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia, where several culturally different population groups existed in the territory of one rule of law, serves as an opposite example.

From a semantic point of view, the term “nation” is very often confused with terms such as “state” or “country”. The state is a political unit characterized by a well-defined territory, a relatively constant population group and a system of ruling institutions. This contrasts with the nation, which is determined primarily by ethnic factors.<sup>15</sup> It is true that nations may have their roots in ethnic groups, but the specific characteristic that distinguishes a nation from ethnicity is the above-mentioned confidence in the right to territorial control of the area belonging to that nation.<sup>16</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm also draws attention to the problematic definition and ambiguity of categories such as a nation, ethnic group or state.<sup>17</sup> Despite the differences in the perception and interpretation of the concept of nation, most definitions tend to involve the existence of certain objective features such as territory, language, faith and common origin. These are complemented by a subjective component in the form of awareness of belonging to the nation and a sense of patriotism.<sup>18</sup> A central characteristic of nations also appears to be the belief that nationals have the right to territorial control over their respective territories, which sets the nation apart from other collective bodies. Several of them are bound by shared culture, values and symbols (religious groups, ethnic groups, etc.), while nations are moreover unified in order to control the territory they

---

14. Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 36.

15. Meinecke, “Obecně o národu”, 42.

16. Krejčí, *Mezinárodní politika*, 104.

17. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 93.

18. Krejčí, *Mezinárodní politika*, 33-34.

believe they own. The main interest of the nation is to preserve its own existence, specific signs of ethnic society and not to be under the political, psychological and cultural pressure of another superior nation.

## 2. Specific case of Slovakia in the process of gaining independence

From the point of view of the Slovak nation's self-determination in the form of achieving independent statehood, relations with the Czechs played a key role. This interaction was marked by the analogous genesis of a national emancipation process, the search for its own statehood, the defence of its own existence against attacks by larger ethnic groups or territorial, cultural and linguistic affinity. Because of their kinship based on commonalities and because of self-preservation, both nations were in mutual need, which resulted in shared support and assistance. It was sealed by the creation of a common state at the beginning of the twentieth century. After the end of the First World War, it took several decades for these two nations to live together in the First Republic, which was interrupted by the Second World War. After that, this common functioning of Slovaks and Czechs in the second common republic was renewed. After 1918, coexistence within one state ended twice with mutual separation and finally with the emergence of independent nation-states.

The establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state was not a sudden, one-off process, but the cause of long-term social, cultural and political development of both nations with a significant contribution of exogenous influences. The completion of the Czechs' and Slovaks' independence was the result of several factors.

The first major factor is nationalism and the associated dissolution of the European powers. Ben-Israel considers nationalism to be a revolutionary and democratic doctrine, promoting in Europe the idea that ancient communities must be transformed into free nations.<sup>19</sup> According to M. Waldenberg, nationalism represents the process of creating a nation, a national movement, a form of national consciousness, the idea of a nation state and an effort

---

19. Ben-Israel, "Nacionalismus v historické perspektivě", 299.



to implement it, a system of relations between nations indicating a certain attitude towards one's own nation and other nations.<sup>20</sup> These attributes determining nationalism can be observed in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, where there was the interference of Prussian, Austrian and Hungarian nationalism. M. Svatuška adds Slovak as well as Czech nationalism. These were perceived as defensive, aimed at protecting their own ethnic group. The Austrian and Hungarian nationalist movements, on the other hand, were perceived as offensive, with the aim of ensuring more rights for their own ethnic group than others.<sup>21</sup> The progressiveness of nationalism was significantly influenced by the fact that at the end of the 19th century, most of the population was under the hegemony of European powers. The result of the revolutionary nationalist tendencies was the First World War, the end of which saw the emergence of several new states in Central and Eastern Europe. Nationalism is a version of legitimization of the right to political control, sometimes even dominance, which at some point gained in importance. This fact is pointed out by A. Heywood, who states that nationalism is a phenomenon that has played a significant role in the transformation of history in many parts of the world for several years.<sup>22</sup> And this was also true in the case of Czechoslovakia.

The second important factor can be considered the diplomatic activity of compatriots abroad. It helped to unite two nations on the path to completing the independence process. More intense and coherent relations and their Slavic origin, in spite of certain differences, meant both nations had similar traits in terms of mentality, character, behaviour and traditions, and therefore Czechs and Slovaks had the feeling of being fraternal nations.<sup>23</sup> Despite a similar ideological conception, more significant cooperation between the leading political representatives took place only during the First World War. As a result of the intensifying persecution by Hungarian and Austrian officials of opposing views in the monarchy, the centre of national liberation efforts of both nations shifted abroad. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was particularly active in this way. At the beginning of the First World War in 1914, he was the first to present a proposal for a possible common state with the

---

20. Waldenberg, "Terminologie", 420-421.

21. Svatuška, "Vzťahy medzi Slovákmi a Čechmi", 3.

22. Heywood, *Politické ideologie*, 155.

23. Mlynárik, "História česko-slovenských vzťahov", 27-28.

Czechs to the British government. After no response was pronounced, he turned his attention to another country — France.<sup>24</sup> Among the Slovak representatives, the most significant initiative was developed by Milan Rastislav Štefánik, who achieved success in promoting Slovak interests abroad from the position of French army general. He realized that if Slovaks had progressed in the state struggle on their own, it would have been difficult for them to succeed, so he willingly began to cooperate with the Czech side. “We must stand on the principle of absolute unity in order for the Western powers to see an inseparable national unity in us”.<sup>25</sup> The activity was also presented by compatriots in the United States of America, who variously supported the creation of a common state union. This fact demonstrates the agreement of 25 October 1915, also known as the Cleveland Agreement, where Czechs and Slovaks agreed on what the future state should look like.<sup>26</sup> This agreement influenced the further development of the struggle for Slovakia’s independence. Its most important idea was to draw attention to the application of the national freedom principle and the right to self-determination for Slovaks as well.<sup>27</sup> It was one of the first documents where American Slovaks and Czechs proclaimed a common approach in resolving state issues. In this context, the Slovak historian Dušan Kováč points out that “the significance of the Cleveland Agreement is primarily in the fact that it has created a basis for close Slovak-Czech cooperation. Thanks to it, the Slovak resistance movement in the USA was also oriented towards the Czech-Slovak direction”.<sup>28</sup>

No less important, the third factor was the activity of domestic politicians. Vavro Šrobár was one of the most active Slovak politicians on our political scene, and at the end of the war he presented his views on joining the common state with the Czechs. A similar position was taken in 1918 by the leader of the Slovak National Party, Andrej Hlinka, who was critical of the state organization and the position of Slovaks therein. “We are in favour of the Czech-Slovak orientation. The thousand-year marriage with Hungarians failed. We have to break up”.<sup>29</sup>

---

24. Martinický, “T. G. Masaryk a oslobodenie Slovenska”, 42-43.

25. Štefanovič, *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti*, 32.

26. Měchýř, *Slovensko v Československu*, 11.

27. Štefanovič, *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti*, 33.

28. Kováč, “Česko-slovenské vzťahy”, 37.

29. Štefanovič, *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti*, 35.

From our point of view, the fourth and equally important factor for the implementation of changes in the state and political organization of the Czech and Slovak nations was the cooperation of Slovak and Czech political representation and the operating of several political and opinion trends within it. M. Svatuška states that due to the fact that there were probably still residual effects from the period of Štúr's linguistic and ethnic separation, the representatives of individual political trends in Slovakia and the Czech Republic cooperated with each other, even though they were only close in a minimal way. On both sides, there was a pro-Russian trend of opinion, whose representatives saw Russia as a key support in ensuring ethnic independence. Furthermore, there was a social-democratic trend promoting the federalization of the monarchy. The cooperation of the Slovak and Czech political elites was mainly implemented by a group of young Slovak intellectuals associated around the magazine *Hlas a Prúdy*, whose ideological leader was T. G. Masaryk and which brought together representatives such as V. Šrobár and M. R. Štefánik. On its initiative, the Czechoslovak Unity Association was formed, the main purpose of which was to build Czech-Slovak reciprocity. It had a significant benefit in terms of further cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

With the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the state organization of Slovakia gradually changed. The intention of independence remained unfulfilled, as instead of a common state with Hungarians, the Slovaks constituted a common state with the Czechs — with a different vision of the future. The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic of 29 February 1920 established the definitive organization of Slovak statehood and guaranteed the preformed statehood on the principle of a unified Czech-Slovak nation. In the new state, the Slovak language was applied and the boundaries that defined the territory of Slovakia were determined and defined internationally. N. Nedelsky states that although the trend of Czechoslovakism took over in the sense of unification in the new state, in Slovakia it was not taken as the idea of a future merger into one nation. In contrast, from the Czech point of view, Czechoslovakism was perceived as an idea of the future unity of the Czech and Slovak nations with common rules for a unified Czechoslovak language.<sup>31</sup> The Czech side perceived Czechoslovakia largely as a unitary state, in which Czech citizens had no problem accepting a new Czechoslovak identity. In

---

30. Svatuška, "Vztahy medzi Slovákmi a Čechmi", 5-6.

31. Nedelsky, *Defining the Sovereign Community*, 68-69.

Slovakia, the common state was construed as a combination of two different units. Czech politicians assumed that the Slovaks were simply a branch of the same nation, whether Czech or Czechoslovak.<sup>32</sup> The Slovaks were not so united in this regard. Some of them accepted the existence of the Czechoslovak nation, others insisted on an independent nation and political autonomy.<sup>33</sup> The new state provided political benefits for both Czechs and Slovaks. The creation of Czechoslovakia strengthened the Czechs in the demographic struggle with a large German minority, and the Slovaks finally managed to escape from submission under the assimilated Hungarian government.<sup>34</sup>

Twenty years of a common interwar republic created tensions between Czechs and Slovaks. The centralization intentions were demonstrated in the field of the state name and language and also in the sphere of the constitutional formation of the territorial organization and state institutions in Slovakia. The reorganization of the state administration took place; it was provided and directed centrally from Prague.<sup>35</sup> The Czech elites did not consider Slovak complaints as urgent. Their postponement of the Slovak question can be explained by their immediate interest in the German “problem”.<sup>36</sup> The present autonomist tendencies were fully demonstrated in 1938, when substantial changes took place in the constitutional order of Slovakia. To better understand the context of the situation that arose in Czechoslovakia, it is necessary to emphasize that in this period, a wave of nationalism engulfed Europe.<sup>37</sup> It is gradually conquered by Adolf Hitler, on whom the fate of the Slovak nation soon depended. In this context, R. Shepherd adds that the situation in the field of Slovak nation self-determination efforts was changed by the Munich Agreement, when Czechoslovakia had to cede a third of its territory to the German Empire by a decision of foreign powers.<sup>38</sup> In this situation, a key role was played by the Žilina Manifesto, also known as the Manifesto of the Slovak Nation, in which Slovak political representatives (mostly from the People’s Party of Andrej Hlinka) demanded the autonomy

---

32. Bakke, *Doomed to Failure?*

33. Krejčí, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92*, 10.

34. Basta, and Bustikova, “Concession and Secession”, 473.

35. Měchýř, *Slovensko v Československu*, 37.

36. Křen, *Konfliktní společnost*.

37. Juza, *Nacionalizmus a pokus*, 59.

38. Shepherd, *A class divided*.

of Slovakia and, in the spirit of self-determination law, the creation of an independent Slovak government.<sup>39</sup> With this step, Slovakia actually began to function as an autonomous component of the common state. According to M. Štefanovič, the first session of the Slovak Parliament can be described as the beginning of the building of Slovak statehood, because Slovakia had acquired the status of an independent entity with its own state autonomy and not only regional rights as it had until then.<sup>40</sup> Czechoslovakia ceased to exist as a state for a certain period, as an independent Slovak Republic and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were established as a result of external influences, under the auspices of the German Empire. This war period had profound consequences for national relations in Czechoslovakia. C. S. Leff states that it provided Slovaks the first experience of self-government and strengthened their sense of independent national identity.<sup>41</sup> In the period of existence of the Slovak independent state, state-law elements were not organically developed on the basis of domestic legitimate political struggles, but were to a greater extent the result of external intervention.

Towards the end of the war, Slovak politicians realized that the only solution for the future of the Slovak nation was the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia, which under this name recognized the victorious powers as its ally. Several factors had a fundamental influence on the further process of forming the statehood of the Slovak nation in the period after the Second World War. The first was the Communists' cooperation with the Democrats. They created the Slovak National Council and adopted the Christmas agreement, where they agreed on the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>42</sup> The Slovak National Uprising also subscribed to the idea of restoring the Czechoslovak Republic. Another important factor in the process of negotiating the future of both nations in a common state was represented by political representatives from abroad. These were mainly representatives of the Moscow emigration and also the officially recognized Czechoslovak government in exile in London, represented by Edvard Beneš. He was not in favour of the existence of an independent Slovak nation but held the opinion that there should only be a Czechoslovak nation. He also advocated the restora-

---

39. Štefanovič, *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti*, 42.

40. *Ibidem*.

41. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, 90.

42. Měchýř, *Slovensko v Československu*, 36.

tion of Czechoslovakia in pre-Munich form, which concerned the borders and a centralist-oriented political system with a regional establishment. Although the exiled representatives of both nations had different views on the future common state organization, they gradually reached a common position, which was presented in the Košice Government Programme.<sup>43</sup> This document acknowledged the self-determination of the independent Slovak nation and presented the future state arrangement in the spirit of equality. He guaranteed the principles of the Pittsburgh Agreement and the Act on the Autonomy of the Slovak Land from November 1938.<sup>44</sup>

From the end of Second World War until the end of the 1960s, Czechoslovakia was a highly centralized state.<sup>45</sup> The situation when Slovaks were to acquire full statehood and relations between Czechs and Slovaks were to be formed on the principle of equality lasted only until the parliamentary elections in 1946. Three Prague agreements gradually transferred power to the central government in Prague and weakened the efforts of top officials of the Slovak nation. After February 1948 and the communist takeover, any agreements and law provisions became invalid, and the virtual liquidation of all independent Slovak institutions or a significant reduction in their powers occurred.<sup>46</sup> Slovakia's autonomy had been reduced to an administrative dimension.<sup>47</sup> In 1960, a new constitution was adopted, which completely limited the powers of the already dysfunctional Slovak political bodies.<sup>48</sup> This step intensified the Slovaks' aversion to Prague centralism.

An important factor in the process of the self-determination efforts of the Slovak nation was the increase in social and economic level. This fact is pointed out in paper by the political scientist Kusý, who stated: "On these foundations, in the 1960s, the process of homogenizing Slovaks into a modern nation is taking place and their national self-confidence is also growing. During this period, Slovaks are truly aware of themselves as a modern nation on a national scale. Joint performance for specific national values, not only his-

---

43. Kováč, *Dejiny Slovenska*, 248.

44. Měchýř, *Slovensko v Československu*, 37.

45. Basta, and Bustikova, "Concession and Secession", 474.

46. Kováč, *Dejiny Slovenska*, 253.

47. Taborsky, *Slovakia Under Communist Rule*.

48. Štefanovič, *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti*, 52.

torical and cultural, but also economic, natural, civilizational in the broadest sense of the word, their search and confirmation in consciousness comes with the mass national movement”.<sup>49</sup> Another important factor was the person of Alexander Dubček, who was associated with a period in Czechoslovak history called the Prague Spring. The main motto of this was the demand for “socialism with a human face”.<sup>50</sup> The Slovaks sought a federation on an equal basis, and the reformists from the Czech side were more concerned with the democratization of society. These two processes were initially closely intertwined and interdependent.<sup>51</sup>

The Slovak request to organize Czechoslovak relations on the basis of a federation was adopted by the Parliament in October 1968 by approving Constitutional Act no. 143/68 on the Czechoslovak Federation.<sup>52</sup> However, it was not the federation as it had long been prepared by both sides, but a modified proposal in accordance with socialist principles, which was amended by the Moscow Communist leadership. On 1 January 1969, the Slovak Socialist Republic and the Czech Socialist Republic were established with their own national councils and governments. Together they formed the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic with a joint president, the federal government and the Federal National Assembly.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting that neither in the previous period within the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic nor in the discussion of the state status of Slovakia in this period, none of the participants tried to make Slovakia independent, to become a sovereign state in international relations. On the contrary, the need for a common state was justified in the adoption of the Federation Act. The Constitutional Act on the Czechoslovak Federation stated that “voluntary federal union is an appropriate expression of the right to self-determination and equality, but also the best guarantee for our full internal national development and for the protection of our national identity and sovereignty.”<sup>54</sup> Over time, it can be stated that the demands of Slovaks for an equal arrangement of relations with Czechs were resolved by the federation only formally. In the long run, this could not go unanswered.

---

49. Kusý, *Eseje*, 166.

50. Houda, and Rataj, *Československo v proměnách komunistického režimu*, 177.

51. Šútovec, *Semióza ako politikum alebo*, 43-44.

52. Štefanovič, *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti*.

53. Mannová, *Krátke dejiny Slovenska*, 276.

54. Zákon č. 143/1968 Zb.



The later development of the constitutional question in Czechoslovakia was influenced by the revolutionary events of November 1989, which led to the fact that political and systemic change would soon occur. It took place gradually in Czechoslovakia, as a result of which we can speak of a gradualist regime change.<sup>55</sup> The aim of the Velvet Revolution was to transform a totalitarian state into a democratic one, through the restoration of parliamentarism. After the breakdown of the totalitarian regime, several issues that had not been resolved for a long time came to the forefront. One of them was the position of Slovakia in Czechoslovak relations. At the beginning of the revolution, the representatives of the two nations were united, but with the fall of communist power, society began to divide according to natural interests and different views on the state organization emerged.<sup>56</sup> Attempts to create a new Czechoslovak nation had no chance of success and the growing conflict reflected the full depth of the historically conditioned problem.<sup>57</sup> The question of the future constitutional order of Czechoslovakia was shaped by several lines of conflict, which predetermined the resulting disintegration of the federation. The problem with the Czechoslovak state was that during the entire existence of the common state, it was not possible to correct the erroneous steps that took place during the formation of the First Republic. The main rift in Czechoslovak relations was the founding of Czechoslovakia on the political fiction of the Czechoslovak nation. There was not a strong enough feeling of reciprocity and Slovaks never fully identified with this idea. They felt undervalued and threatened by the dominant Czechs in cultural identity.<sup>58</sup> Political development after the 1992 parliamentary elections, as well as different perceptions of the economic impact of the state division, also contributed to the dissolution of the common state. Slovak politicians, with the support of their voters, demanded broader autonomy for their republic, partly in order to protect the people of Slovakia from the most adverse consequences of liberal economic reforms and the intention to “seize and divide the state” themselves.<sup>59</sup> The new Slovak government, which was created after the aforementioned parliamentary elections, undertook in a programme statement to call a referendum on the organization of relations

---

55. Barbieri, “Czechoslovakia’s Movement Toward a New Constitution”, 102.

56. Young, *The breakup of Czechoslovakia*, 30.

57. Draper, “The End of Czechoslovakia”, 23.

58. *Ibidem*, 24-25.

59. Basta, and Bustikova, “Concession and Secession”, 485.



with the Czech Republic.<sup>60</sup> It follows that the only constitutional and at the same time legitimate path from the point of view of the right to self-determination of nations was to hold a referendum. Likewise, the solution of the future state arrangement issue in the form of a referendum was included in the newly adopted Constitution of the Slovak Republic as the only possible way of withdrawing from the state union or creating a new state union.<sup>61</sup> Despite these guarantees, the division of the common state was carried out without a referendum — only by agreement of the victorious political parties in the federal authorities. The decision of the top state representatives of both nations to divide Czechoslovakia cannot be considered fully legitimate due to the failure to hold a referendum. On the other hand, the constitutionality of this decision is strengthened by the fact that it was approved in both chambers of the federal parliament by the three-fifths majority necessary for the adoption of a constitutional law.<sup>62</sup>

In the next part of the paper, we will focus on the case of Catalonia and its specifics in the process of seeking independence.

### 3. The case of Catalonia and its specifics

The issue of Catalonia in terms of secessionist efforts needs to be seen in a wider range of factors. It is primarily based on the specifics of the historical development of this area, which determined the creation of a special identity. M. Guibernau points to the classical paradigm that the dual identity of Catalans leads to separative tendencies, which are completed by political and social aspects at a particular time.<sup>63</sup> In this context, it is essential to define the historical basis on which the arguments of the current political actors promoting the Catalan secession are based. According to the authors Kraus and Vergés Gifra, the beginnings of Catalan national identity date back to the 9th century, when the county of Barcelona was formed on the periphery of the Frankish Empire as the core of future Catalonia. Although it was formally subject to the neighbouring hegemon, on a practical level it had its

---

60. Olson, "Dissolution of the State", 302.

61. Greguška, and Mihálik, "Czechoslovak Federation in Comparative Perspective", 14.

62. Vodička, *Koaliční ujednání*.

63. Guibernau, *Catalan nationalism*, 16.

own administrative system. Since the 12th century, it has been part of the Aragon Crown, which included a large area of the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>64</sup> Spain was de facto created by the process of merging Aragon with Castile in the 15th and 16th centuries. Despite this, Catalonia has maintained its autonomous position with its own system of government. The weakening of the Catalan position is linked to the War of the Spanish Succession, after which it lost the peculiarities of an autonomous administrative unit. In practice, this led to the enforcement of the centralist concept of state management from Madrid. However, there are still disputes over whether the Catalans are an independent nation with the right to their own statehood.

If we look at the period of the 20th century, in the case of Catalonia we can identify a dynamic development. According to Cuadras-Morató, a characteristic element is the achievement of the greatest possible degree of autonomy from the central government.<sup>65</sup> However, it was determined by the applied political establishment. While in democratic conditions this concept has been fulfilled to some extent, in the case of the authoritarian regimes of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) and Franco (1939-1975), the self-governing mechanisms of Catalonia were severely disrupted. The promoted centralization negated any expressions of an autonomous nature.<sup>66</sup> M. Guibernau emphasizes that the concept of Spanish homogeneity has been consistently promoted, especially during the Franco period, when any presentation of Catalan symbols was banned. In practice, this meant the complete negation of the Catalan language in official communication or the use of Catalan flags. The long-time tradition of celebrating the Catalan National Day, known as the Diada, was forcefully suppressed every year. This ultimately strengthened the Catalans sense of identity.<sup>67</sup>

The change came after Franco's death in 1975, when space for the application of democratic procedures was re-established. The authors J. M. Colomer, A. Barrio, B. N. Field and Teruel understand the strengthening of the individual regions' position as a key issue in the transition process, coupled with extensive public debate. Predominantly conservative political forces saw the

---

64. Kraus, and Vergés Gifra, *The Catalan Process*, 12.

65. Cuadras-Morató, *et al.*, *A New Independent State in Europe?*, 49.

66. Mir, "The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries", 141.

67. Guibernau, *Catalan nationalism*, 41-44.

autonomy of the regions as a threat to the integrity and stability of Spain. On the other hand, the representatives of Catalonia and the Basque Country, primarily, became active in demanding the fulfilment of elements for a democratic and self-government system. The return of former Generalitat of Catalonia President Josep Tarradellas from many years exile in France became a symbol of the Catalans' efforts. In 1977, the autonomous bodies were restored in order to ensure self-governing decision-making as much as possible. However, the central government in Madrid approached this point of transition very cautiously, fearing possible risks.<sup>68</sup> According to Tzagkas, the autonomy granted to Catalonia was a pilot project in an effort to test the distribution of power between the centre and relevant administrative units. The choice of Catalonia was based on the fact that, compared to the Basque Country, there were no significant separatist tendencies.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, there were no militant organizations threatening the unity of the state. According to M. Guibernau, the government was only demonstrating the emerging trend of democratization of society while endeavouring to retain the largest possible package of competencies within the central management.<sup>70</sup> From the point of view of defining specific powers, we consider the adoption of the new Constitution to be crucial. It has practically paved the way for regional autonomy.

Extensive public discussion between the representatives of the centre and regions led to the adoption of a compromise solution, in which the principle of autonomous governance of the regions was constitutionally defined, meaning the disintegration of the centralized structure. In this context, it should be added that the division of power and the assigned competence framework have not been defined universally. The Constitution declares "power in the hands of the Spanish people" and in Section VIII, Chapter 3 it speaks of "the formation of the autonomous communities as the result of efforts by existing provinces to exercise the right to autonomy", which in practice meant the establishment of 17 regions. An extension of autonomy was to be determined on the basis of the "principio dispositivo" principle. In practice, this meant that each autonomous region had the right to request its scope of competences from the central government through an

---

68. Barrio, and Field. "The push for independence", 713.

69. Tzagkas, "The Internal Conflict in Spain", 60.

70. Guibernau, *Catalan nationalism*, 64-66.

“Autonomous Statute”.<sup>71</sup> The final form of autonomy was thus the result of a negotiation process between the regions and state. According to Colomer, we cannot denote this system as federalism, because the primary condition of an even distribution of power to individual units is not met (as we can see e.g. in the case of Germany or Austria). The presumption of disproportionality was also based on the fact that in some of the declared regions the historical character of the defined territorial unit was absent.<sup>72</sup> In these cases, the central power expected the minimization of the scope of transferred competences and a longer time interval for the adoption of autonomous status.

The case of Catalonia as a region with a special historical experience and its own administrative mechanism in the various stages of development has led to the promotion of broader autonomy. The results of a referendum on the Constitution have already demonstrated that the changes made in the state have the high support of Catalans. With a participation of 67.91% in this region, 95.15% were in favour of a new constitutional establishment, which exceeded the average support throughout Spain. In practice, this was the first region to reach an agreement with the central government in Madrid and adopt autonomous status in 1979.<sup>73</sup> Despite this, it was the result of difficult negotiations, as there was no concrete experience from another region. According to Cuadras-Morató this statement can be based on the fact that President Josep Tarradellas described the negotiations more as a dictate of central power than an agreement between partners.<sup>74</sup> In the subsequent referendum, 91.91% voted in favour, with a turnout of 59.3%. On the basis of its autonomous status, Catalonia had the right to use its official symbols. The Catalan language had the status of a second official language. At the same time, a system of self-governing bodies of the autonomous region was guaranteed — consisting of president, government and unicameral parliament.<sup>75</sup> This model was set on the asymmetric redistribution of competences between the authorities at the central state level and the region concerned. The process of regional devolution took place within Spain until 1983, during which

---

71. The Spanish Constitution.

72. Colomer, “The venturous bid for the independence”, 952.

73. Guibernau, *Catalan nationalism*, 73-75.

74. Cuadras-Morató, *et al.*, *A New Independent State in Europe?*, 49.

75. The 1979 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia.

other autonomous statutes were gradually adopted. M. Guibernau views this process positively, emphasizing that Spain has been able to make the transition from a hypercentralized unit to a decentralized state in a relatively short period of time, built on strongly consolidated regions. In this context, he sees Spain's similarity to the administrative models of Italy and France.<sup>76</sup>

Following the adoption of autonomous status in Catalonia, citizens were able to elect their representatives to the regional authorities through the democratic elections of 1980. *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) won with 27.8% and its leader Jordi Pujol became president. In a more comprehensive assessment, this party has been the dominant actor for more than three decades, as it remained in power continuously until 2003.<sup>77</sup> This period is characterized by the stability of relations between Catalonia and the central government in Madrid, based on cooperation with national political actors. According to A. Barrio and B. N. Field, the characteristic element was obtaining certain concessions for the region in terms of its status. On the other hand, the region did not push for changes in the autonomous status within a moderate political setting.<sup>78</sup>

However, this issue became dominant in the 2003 regional elections, which ultimately led to political change. The victory of the coalition "primer tripartit" consisting of the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (PSC), *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) and *Iniciativa per Catalunya - Verds* (ICV) meant the definition of autonomous reform as a key point of Catalan Government. The demands were formulated through the charismatic new President Pasqual Maragall, who served as mayor of Barcelona. This officially happened in 2004, when the regional parliament initiated a change in statute. It enabled Catalan officials to enter into difficult negotiations with central government.<sup>79</sup> The primary premise of agreement was the fact that the Socialists also managed to win the national parliamentary elections, which opened the way for negotiations. Firstly, PSC was a regional organization of the national party, thus ensuring a system of natural ties. At the same time, the centralist *Partido Popular* (PP), which has long been opposed to

---

76. Guibernau, *Catalan nationalism*, 78.

77. Cetrà, and Harvey, "Explaining accommodation and resistance", 11-12.

78. Barrio, and Field, "The push for independence", 713.

79. Barrio, *et al.*, "Spain steals from us!", 999.

any strengthening of regional powers, was negated at the central level. According to Colomer, PP officials perceived the imbalance between the centre and regions as an element of Spain's destabilization. As a result, they tried to block decision-making in national legislation.<sup>80</sup> The reform of autonomous status required a specific approval procedure in the Spanish Parliament and a subsequent referendum in Catalonia.

In the preamble itself, the term "Catalan nation" was already established, which PP considered as an unacceptable term. At the same time, the sole representative of the Catalan people was declared the Catalan Parliament elected in democratic elections. The Catalan language has gained priority in use in schools, offices and media. Strengthened competences have also been enforced in the field of migration policy — Catalan authorities gained the right to decide on work permits.<sup>81</sup> According to authors Muñoz and Tormos (2015), the primary factor of change was of an economic nature, as the political representation of Catalonia considered the setting of transactions in the region-centre relationship to be discriminatory. While at the beginning of the 20th century the ratio of Catalonia to Spain's GDP was 10.5%, in 2006 this indicator reached 15.3%. Strengthening fiscal autonomy was another point of autonomous status.<sup>82</sup> The agreement of Catalan President Pasqual Maragall with the Prime Minister of Spain, José L. Zapatero, ensured the permeability of this proposal in the national parliament. The ratio of 189 to 154 votes and successful referendum in Catalonia put the autonomous proposal into practice. The result met with conflicting reactions on the political scene. On the one hand, Prime Minister Zapatero highlighted the level of democracy in Spain and on the other hand, the leader of the strongest opposition party, Mariano Rajoy, described this move as an act of disintegration of the constitutional order.<sup>83</sup> As a result of this, members of PP have filed an initiative to the Spanish Constitutional Court to point out the unconstitutionality of this move. The formulation of Catalans as a nation was in conflict with the official constitution, which declared them the status of nationality. As the lawyer López Tena stated, the statute is proof of the victory of Catalanism. He underlined the term "nation", which recognizes

---

80. Colomer, "The venturesome bid for the independence", 952.

81. The 2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia.

82. Muñoz, and Tormos, "Economic expectations and support for secession in Catalonia", 331.

83. Barrio, *et al.*, "Spain steals from us!", 1003.

their right to self-determination. Qualitatively, this is a significant change compared to the previous autonomous status.

In 2010, however, the whole process was affected by the decision of Constitutional Court, which annulled 14 articles of the autonomous statute and declared them unconstitutional. According to Colomer, this decision was reflected in the strengthening of separative efforts. Activation of citizens has led to mass protests involving more than 500 municipalities.<sup>84</sup> There has also been a significant shift in the issue of promoting independence. Before the Constitutional Court's decision, only 20% of Catalans supported independence, in 2012 this percentage grew to 48.5%. In addition to the aforementioned facts, Keating and Wilson mention the economic crisis that erupted in 2008. In connection with this, central government increased its power by adopting national measures.<sup>85</sup> This reduced the importance of the regional level. According to I. Serrano, a key impulse was the replacement of the socialist PSOE by PP at the head of the state. Its centralist policy towards the regions naturally strengthened elements of possible Catalan separation.<sup>86</sup>

A. Barrio and B. N. Field (2018) emphasize the radicalization of Catalan political parties. In the 2010 regional elections, CiU led by Artur Mas, returned to power. An important agenda item is the announcement of a referendum on independence. In 2013, the Declaration on the Sovereignty and Right to Decide of the People of Catalonia was approved, but in the same year, the Constitutional Court declared this type of legal norm unconstitutional. Despite this fact, the government's actions led to the announcement of a referendum a year later. However, it was not binding. Although 80.91% were in favour of Catalonia's independence, the turnout was less than 40%.

Colomer defines the 2015 regional elections as an attempt to transform voting into a referendum on independence. Relying on this, pro-independent forces united and a pre-election coalition called Junts pel Sí (JxSí) was formed, led by C. Puigdemont. Nevertheless, this grouping failed to gain a majority in parliament (with 39.6% of votes). To achieve it, the coalition

---

84. Colomer, "The venturous bid for the independence", 961-962.

85. Keating, and Wilson, "Renegotiating the state of autonomies", 544.

86. Serrano, "Just a matter of identity?", 533.



had to rely on the smaller political entity the *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (CUP).<sup>87</sup> A. Barrio and B. N. Field identify it as a radical left formation for an independent Catalonia. On the basis of this constellation, the government led by President Puigdemont proceeded to hold a referendum even under the conditions of the unconstitutionality of this procedure.<sup>88</sup> Representatives of the central power, led by PP, pointed out the contradiction with the Constitution in the sense that the vote should take place throughout Spain. The Catalan Government's argument was Scotland's political practice in 2014, during which the UK central government allowed a similar referendum. Cetrà and Harvey compared these two cases. They clearly explained why the Spanish Government opposed this conduct. In the case of the United Kingdom, the central government wanted to strengthen the legitimacy of its power, because opinion polls showed that only around 30% of citizens supported Scottish independence. Conversely, in the case of Catalonia, this percentage increased significantly after 2010 with raising concerns about the final outcome. The Spanish Government could not afford to take risks in such circumstances.<sup>89</sup>

Following the official declaration of a referendum by Catalan parliament on 1 October 2017, the Constitutional Court declared this step unconstitutional. According to authors A. Barrio, O. Barbera and J. Rodriguez-Teruel, this action can be considered the culmination of the evolution process of Catalan politics' direction from traditional, pragmatic and regionalist discourse to populist. At the same time, they indicate a deepening conflict between the interests of political power and the community as a whole.<sup>90</sup> The referendum took place on time, and was accompanied by central government intervention in some polling stations. Statistically, 43% of eligible voters took part, with 92% voting in favour. Catalan President C. Puigdemont saw the result as a confirmation of the government's legitimacy to declare independence. He attributed lower participation to persecution by central government. Accordingly, on 27 October, the Catalan Parliament proceeded to the independence vote, which was adopted by 70 members out of a total 135.<sup>91</sup>

---

87. Colomer, "The venturous bid for the independence", 955.

88. Barrio, and Field, "The push for independence", 714.

89. Cetrà, and Harvey, "Explaining accommodation and resistance", 9-10.

90. Barrio, *et al.*, "Spain steals from us!", 1004.

91. *Ibidem*, 1005.



The central government's response was to activate Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution by a majority decision of the Senate. On this basis, the national legislature decided on a temporary suspension of the performance of individual regional institutions and the assumption of power in regions.<sup>92</sup> A. Barrio and B. N. Field declare the correctness of this step. There was a violation of the basic article of the Constitution on a united Spanish nation and the integrity of the state territory.<sup>93</sup> The state committed itself to holding new regional elections within two months. At the same time, arrest warrants were issued against the main representatives of the Catalan government for committing treason. In this context, most of them decided to emigrate (including President C. Puigdemont). Before the referendum, Cuadros Morató pointed out that the position of an independent Catalonia would be a problematic element for the European Union. This presumption was fulfilled, because the European Community was not willing to accept the recognition of a new state within an EU Member State.

An important point in the case of Catalonia were the regional elections held on 21 December 2017. Although the pro-Spanish — party Ciudadanos (C's) won, political parties supporting the independence process regained a majority in Catalan Parliament. C. Puigdemont, as the main actor in this bloc, did not directly participate in the campaign — as his return from exile would be associated with persecution. The formation of a new government was not completed until several months later, on 17 May 2018. Quim Torra, as a close associate of the former president, gained the confidence of Catalan parliament on the second attempt with a ratio of 66:65 votes.<sup>94</sup> In the first round, an absolute majority was needed. As A. Barrio and B. N. Field point out, his policy is based on reducing political tensions by exposing the mistakes of both sides. He unequivocally acknowledged the mistakes of Catalan representation in the process of declaring independence. On the other hand, they rejected the persecution of key officials by the central authorities.<sup>95</sup> The appointment of Quim Torra as President meant the abolition of the state of emergency under the constitution. The Catalan administration has once again been handed over to Catalan authorities. The activation of Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution was negated. Torra

---

92. The Spanish Constitution.

93. Cuadras-Morató, *et al.*, *A New Independent State in Europe?*, 38.

94. Rodríguez-Teruel, and Barrio, "Going National", 596.

95. Barrio, and Field, "The push for independence", 714.

sees Catalonia's independence as the result of a dialogue between Madrid and Barcelona in the longer term. This scenario was also supported by the national parliamentary elections in 2019, which brought PSOE to power under the leadership of P. Sánchez.

#### **4. Comparison of selected attributes of the self-determination process in the cases of Slovakia and Catalonia**

The completion of the self-determination process of individual nations in European region has generally been associated with several problematic elements, but cannot be universally defined within a certain timeframe. Each nation has undergone its own specific development, complemented by a specific set of internal and external factors on its way to its own statehood. Based on interviews with three direct political actors in the process of creating an independent Slovak Republic, we defined three main attributes from a wide range of aspects. According to the politicians addressed, the combination of the three was a determinant of the successful completion of the whole emancipation process.

First of all, there was the geopolitical context of the new state authorities' existence that had been shaped by political and social changes in the Central European region. The dissolution of communist regimes was reflected within unstable empires such as the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia. This led to a strengthening of nationalist tendencies. The beginning of the 1990s is associated with the emergence of new cases as a result of the elimination of the centralist effects personified by communist forces. Secondly, there was the constitutional framework of the original state unit (Czecho-Slovak Republic), which allowed a possible division of the applied model. Legislation directly regulated the whole process; it was necessary to exclude elements of constitutional problems and stalemate. Finally, it was the distribution of political forces that became a prerequisite for the emergence of a new state. The symmetrical model in the relationship of the Czech and Slovak territorial units predetermined the equal position also for political parties as the decisive actors in any changes. On the other hand, it was not possible to create central executive bodies without the mutual cooperation of political representatives of the Czech and Slovak parts of the common state.

We set the three primary prerequisites for the creation of a new state, based on the specific conditions of Slovakia, in the context of present-day Catalonia. In this way, we have linked elements of a particular historical experience with the current crisis situation in Spain. Especially in Catalonia, the separatist tendencies are most pronounced in the European area and the current situation can be regarded as a stalemate. The successful referendum at the end of September 2017 and the subsequent unilateral declaration of independence by the Catalan Parliament met with a harsh response from the Spanish Government. As we have already described above, the Catalans, as well as the Slovaks, fulfil the individual attributes of the nation, which are based on different approaches of theoreticians. In our approach, we sought a parallel between Slovakia and Catalonia by defining three primary prerequisites for the emergence of a new state in terms of geopolitical context, constitutional possibilities for completing emancipatory efforts and the distribution of political forces. These were identified as key elements based on interviews with four major actors in the process of creating an independent state in Slovakia.

#### 4.1. The geopolitical context for creating a new state

The creation of an independent state is determined by the favourable adjustment of external factors within the wider geopolitical environment. This element has clearly proved to be relevant in the case of the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic. The whole process was linked to the political and social transformations in Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, which were related to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc with the hegemony of communist forces. The year 1989 meant not only the launch of democratization processes in society, but also the possibility of opening the question of its status in the common state. Although the federal model created during the “Prague Spring” period in 1968 was applied in the official legislative definition, in practical terms the central government controlled by the Communist Party had a dominant position. The mechanism of the power division between federal and republic authorities remained a failure in fulfilling the wishes of the Slovak side.<sup>96</sup> The new representatives of power, who emerged from democratic elections, wanted to reorganize the standard system first. This strategy initially prevailed among the decisive political

---

96. Vojáček, and Schelle, *Slovenské právni dějiny*, 432.

forces in Slovakia. A shift to the concept of independence occurred after the failure of negotiations.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, the parliamentary elections in 1992 can be defined in terms of starting the process of creating an independent Slovak Republic by taking real steps. The fact is that at the beginning of 1993 it became a reality.<sup>98</sup>

The pace of change was strongly supported by geopolitical development in the European area. In 1991-1992, twelve new states were established as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Nationally heterogeneous state units have clearly shown that without a firm grasp of power by the Communist government, it is not possible to keep individual nations together. The major world powers thus understood the emergence of new states to be an accompanying phenomenon of the democratization of individual societies.<sup>99</sup> However, the deterrent case was the process of Yugoslavia's disintegration, which was transformed into a civil war between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians. The definition of new states and their territories led to bloody disputes. Based on this case, maintaining peace has become another criterion in the powers' view of creating new state units.<sup>100</sup> However, the division of Czechoslovakia posed no threat — the internal borders of the two republics were to a decisive extent also the national border. Rather, we see the potential for tensions to persist in a common state and fail to resolve emerging problems. The most important states of Europe and the world recognized the Slovak Republic as an independent state without any complicated procedures.<sup>101</sup>

According to the former Prime Minister V. Mečiar “It was a historic opportunity for us to make a historic decision. And we were not afraid to do it! Our case should serve as an example of how to gain independence in a peaceful way”. Slovakia took advantage of the historic chance of an advantageous geopolitical development in the space of Central and Eastern Europe for the creation of a new state.<sup>102</sup> These words are also confirmed by J. Čarnogurský,

---

97. Rychlík, *Rozdělení Česko-Slovenska*, 410.

98. Olson, “Dissolution of the State”, 309.

99. Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 512.

100. Heydemann, and Vodička, *From Eastern Bloc to European Union*, 218.

101. Vojáček, and Schelle, *Slovenské právní dějiny*, 413.

102. Tudoroiu, *et al.*, “Ultra-Nationalism and Geopolitical Exceptionalism”, 10.

who, as the leader of the opposition, did not vote in the legislative bodies for laws aimed at creating an independent Slovakia. But as time goes by, the process becomes clear: “Slovakia has used its stellar moment when Europe was moving. Perhaps in two or three years, this step would not be possible”. At that time, he was leader and chairman of the political party Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and they promoted the independence of Slovakia only in the longer term. The accession to the European Union after 2000 was supposed to be the moment when Slovakia would be able to become independent. An interesting outcome of the interviews is that even the other opposition politician, F. Mikloško from the same party, supported the process of independence at a given time. According to him, it would be more problematic in terms of geopolitical setup at a later stage.

Given the present case of Catalonia and its efforts to become independent in terms of the geopolitical setup for the emergence of a new state, the current conditions are significantly different from the early 1990s. First of all, there is the important factor of the European Union of which Spain is a member. The current policy of the European Community is directed towards the integration of individual parts of Europe. Conversely, the strengthening of the decentralization element is advocated within the member states. The issue of the position of regions and autonomous parts should thus be addressed within the Community. Any attempt at separatism in the member states is generally assessed as negative by the European Union. It undermines the pursuit of deeper integration and the integrity of the Community.<sup>103</sup> Resistance to separatist tendencies at the level of the European Union institutions intensified particularly after the referendum in Great Britain in June 2016, in which 51.89 percent of voters decided to leave the EU.<sup>104</sup> The British made use of Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which deals with withdrawal from the Community and became part of the European mechanism only after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. The entire Brexit process was carried out in accordance with Article 218 (3) of the Treaty on EU.<sup>105</sup> In practical terms, this means lengthy negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom on the establishment of relations which ultimately weaken the European integration concept. The lengthiness of the

---

103. Cetrà, and Harvey, “Explaining accommodation and resistance”, 7.

104. The Electoral Commission – European Union Referendum Result.

105. The Treaty of Lisbon, 2007.

whole process is also evidenced by the fact that the issue has still not been completed. Despite the agreements between the two sides, the stalemate has passed to the British Parliament. Former Prime Minister T. May was not able to get majority support for the final agreement. It is the “frozen” Brexit factor that is a brake on the functioning of the European Union. This is reflected in the Community’s conservative approach to the case of Catalonia. The integrity of the European Union is currently a decisive shaping element negating any separation efforts.

In contrast to this type of act, which is regulated by the Community Treaties, the new independent states formed within the original member states of the European Union could not automatically continue as part of an integration group.<sup>106</sup> European Union legislation does not specifically provide for such an option, they would remain outside this area. In this context, a good example is the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, in which European Community leaders have unequivocally pointed out the process of Scotland’s lengthy integrating accession in the case of a positive result.<sup>107</sup>

Despite this, the aforementioned aspect did not prove to be crucial in the vote of citizens in Catalonia in a referendum on a similar topic held at the end of September 2017. However, the response of the representatives of the European Union was clear. They opposed separatist ambitions entailing a new wave of problems for the Community and its further weakening.<sup>108</sup> Compared to the case of Slovakia applying the geopolitical factor, in the early 1990s the dominant element in European states’ policy was maintaining peace in the region and promoting the right of nations to self-determination after half a century of domination by communist forces. There is now another dominant factor — maintaining the integrity of the European Union.<sup>109</sup> The specificity of the 1990s in terms of setting the geopolitical conditions can also be demonstrated in statistical data. While in this period 14 new state units were established in the European area, after 2000 only three new states emerged;<sup>110</sup> in particular, Montenegro and Serbia in 2006, but this was the result of mutual

---

106. Cetrà, and Harvey, “Explaining accommodation and resistance”, 9.

107. Avery, *Could an independent Scotland join the European Union?*, 2-3.

108. European Commission – Statement on the events in Catalonia, 3.

109. Alman, *Ústavné právo Európskej únie*, 11.

110. UN Member States – Chronology.

agreements. The emergence of these states can be construed as the aftermath of the disintegration processes in the 1990s.<sup>111</sup> The case of Kosovo in terms of independence in 2008 is very specific. It divides the member states of the European Union even now. Slovakia, together with Spain, does not recognize the statehood of this territory, but this is due to different reasons. In the case of Spain, it is precisely due to the influence of the separatist tendencies of the Catalanian region. However, if we summarize the outputs from this section, the geopolitical setup as a prerequisite for the emergence of a new statehood in Europe is diametrically different if we compare the case of Slovakia and Catalonia. The integrity of the European Union is currently a shaping element in negating any separation efforts.

#### **4.2. The constitutional system in the context of the creation of a new state unit**

The Constitution defines in each state the basic framework of the elements applied in the organization of relations in the system of state units. At the same time, it clearly defines how power is shared between the various levels of government or territorial units. The constitution also defines the vertical arrangement of the state and which model is used in asserting the interests of specific territorial or national groups.<sup>112</sup> In this context, it may include the procedures for a typical process of changing the individual territorial units' status. In the case of Slovakia, the direct actors of the independence process attach key importance to the fact that the constitutional framework of Czecho-Slovakia had a clearly defined possibility of withdrawing its parts from the common state. It is precisely this point that represents the basis of independence in a relatively short period of time following the implementation of the concept at the level of Slovak political representation in 1992. However, this was based on the overall setting of the former state model and specific historical development.

As we have already seen, Czecho-Slovakia had acted as a federation since 1969; a unitary state has been transformed. Adoption of Act No. 143/1968 Coll. was not the result of purposeful activity of the Slovak representation for

---

111. Greenberg, *After the Revolution*, 204.

112. Mandelker, *et al.*, *State and Local Government*, 324.



recognizing Slovakia as an independent state-forming territorial unit, but a formal adjustment at the time of the political crisis caused by the suppression of democratic efforts in the communist establishment of Czecho-Slovakia.<sup>113</sup> A new model created a double system of authorities — federal and republic. However, this change was not intended to have a significant impact on real policy, everything was still decided by the Central Communist Party, which had a guaranteed leadership in the state under Article 4 of the Constitution. The power-sharing system applied a complicated mechanism in which a two-chambered Federal Assembly performed at the federal level. In the creation of the House of People, the principle based on the population was chosen. The Czech side was represented by a two to one ratio. In contrast, the second chamber (House of Nations) applied the parity principle of both nations' representation. The vote was supposed to be just "pro-forma" and the constitutional law included a ban on majorization. Each draft law had to obtain a majority in both chambers and at the same time a majority of Czech and Slovak deputies in the House of Nations.<sup>114</sup> In addition, republican legislation was in place at national level. The complexity of the mechanism did not affect the functioning of the system during a socialist establishment with one political party at the head of the state, but it proved to be totally inoperable after political and social changes in 1989.

The democratization of society and the restoration of pluralism were reflected in the diversity of political streams represented within the legislative bodies and it was expressed in the impassability of laws.<sup>115</sup> However, procedures for cases of crisis situations of this type were also included in the Constitution. A more moderate form was defined in Article 41 — "Adoption and amendment of the Federal Constitution or the Constitutional Law of the Federal Assembly requires the consent of a three-fifths majority of all representatives, as well as the three-fifths majority of all representatives in the House of Nations elected in the Czech Republic and the same number of representatives elected in Slovakia".<sup>116</sup> A problem was the lack of political consensus to make any changes. In addition, the Constitution also envisaged a referendum in addressing fundamental issues (e.g. when one unit

---

113. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*, 394.

114. Constitutional Law No. 143/1968 Coll. on the Czechoslovak Federation.

115. Bardovič, "Development of Social-Democratic Ideas", 101.

116. Constitutional Law No. 143/1968 Coll. on the Czechoslovak Federation.



withdraws from the common state). “In a referendum, the citizens of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic may decide on a fundamental question concerning the form of the constitutional arrangement of the state. The proposal of the Czech Republic or the Slovak Republic to withdraw from the common state is approved/rejected only by referendum”.<sup>117</sup> However, a referendum on this issue was never held. There was a difficulty with public opinion in both parts of Czecho-Slovakia. While in 1990, shortly after the Velvet Revolution only 5% of respondents in the Czech Republic and almost 10% of respondents in Slovakia considered the division of the ČSFR to be the right solution, by the end of 1992 the number of Czechs wishing to become independent increased. Opinion polls showed that about 42% of the respondents would vote in favor of the division and 35% of respondents voted against it. If a referendum were to be held in Slovakia, only 29% of citizens would support this step.<sup>118</sup>

The Constitution did not define a federal arrangement as a static model within which the powers are divided between territorial units, but also had a reverse mechanism to withdraw one part of the common state. Although the referendum did not take place and the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia was the result of an agreement of the winning political parties in both parts of the federation, the whole process was constitutional. By the constitutional law, the Federal Assembly decided to dissolve itself. With this, the entire level of federal administration ceased to exist.

In the case of Catalonia, the issue is first of all to be based on the applied model of the Spanish state organization, which is characterized as a unitary decentralized state.<sup>119</sup> On this point, we see a fundamental difference — Catalonia is not a constitutional element, although its position has several federal features. To some extent, a compromise system was created between unitarism and federalism. The Constitution, adopted in 1978, was intended to cope definitively with the authoritarian regime led by Franco, which was applied until his death in 1975. Almost all political streams at central and regional level were involved in the preparation of the new Constitution. Regional representatives, including the Catalans, demanded the broadest

---

117. Constitutional Law No. 143/1968 Coll. on the Czechoslovak Federation.

118. Rychlík, *Rozdělení Česko-Slovenska*, 408.

119. The Spanish Constitution.

possible decision-making power within their autonomous position as compensation for the long-term enforcement of a strong centralization model without implementing any rights of historic regions.<sup>120</sup>

The representation of several political streams and the pursuit of the achievement the interests of all parties were reflected in the creation of a hybrid state organization system. The Constitution, on the one hand, enshrines the “indivisible unity of the Spanish nation”, and on the other hand, recognizes the “right to autonomy for the nationalities and regions that constitute it and guarantees them solidarity with each other”. Articles 148 and 149 define the powers of the state and regions.<sup>121</sup> The Constitution also provides a specific system for the redistribution of competences. Each of the 17 regions must request the management of selected competences in a document referred to as an autonomous status. It is decisive in defining the basic framework.<sup>122</sup> In this regard, we observe a contrast with the case of Slovakia — the Constitution clearly defined the nature of the model as federal and redistributed competences. In addition, another element is different. While the relationship between central authorities and territorial-border authorities in Slovakia was symmetrical, the relationship between the Catalan authorities and the central government is an asymmetric model. On the basis of the Catalan Autonomous Statute approved by the citizens of this territorial unit in 1979, the regional administrative authority, known as the historic “Generalitat”, was restored. It consists of a unicameral parliament in the position of legislative authority, government and presidency.<sup>123</sup> However, the interests of the central government manifested themselves in the Constitution by defining constitutional blocks against separatist efforts. One of them was an article under which “the central government has the exclusive right to decide on a referendum” in relation to the whole territory of Spain.<sup>124</sup> At this point, we again see the contrast with the case of Slovakia. The importance of the article was shown in the recent referendum on independence held in September 2017, when the Spanish government considered it unconstitutional under this provision.

---

120. Foltýn, “Decentralizace”, 84-85.

121. The Spanish Constitution.

122. Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 1979.

123. Griffiths, *et al.*, “Between the sword and the wall”, 51.

124. The Constitution of Spain, 1978.

Another block is Article 155, which authorizes the central government to restrict the autonomous position of the region if it is acting contrary to the interests of Spain or is not governed by the Constitution. The approval of the Senate is a requirement.<sup>125</sup> For the first time in history, Spain activated this article in October 2017, when the central government responded to the declaration of independence of Catalonia. In this case again we see a difference from the case of Slovakia. Our constitutional system does not include the procedure of independence of individual territorial units. On the contrary, the integrity of Spain is the primary variable of the system. Despite the declaration of independence, the process is currently in a deadlock. Indeed, the constitutional mechanism underpins the maintenance of Spanish integrity. In this context, we consider it unlikely for an independent Catalonia to be created in the short term. The “checks and balances” system was set up optimally for cases of separatism.

#### **4.3. The party system structure in the context of the diversification of political forces as a prerequisite for the creation of a new state unit**

The distribution of political forces is a decisive attribute in enforcing any changes in the structure and governance of the state. Based on this fact, actors of the Slovak independence process clearly stated in the interviews that the political representations of both parts based on the setting up of the party system in the internal state mechanism were crucial in achieving the concept of independence. Until 1989, there was no pluralist system of political parties in Czecho-Slovakia, the state power being concentrated in the hands of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). Its status was guaranteed by constitutional Article 4, which defined it as the dominant political power representing all citizens of the state.<sup>126</sup> The legally defined federal model of the two republics forming a common state unit could not be transformed into real politics because the Communist Party acted as a centralizing element. Within its internal structure, there was the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS). However, it acted only as a subsystem of the nationwide party trans-

---

125. Elias, and Mees, “Between accommodation and secession”, 136.

126. Constitutional Law No. 143/1968 Coll. on the Czechoslovak Federation.

ferred to the territory of Slovakia. In executing its power, it had to respect the decisions of the central authorities.<sup>127</sup>

The political and social changes in 1989 were reflected in a new set-up of the party system. Removing the leadership of the Communist Party meant restoring the plurality of political parties, whose operation reflected the setting of the internal organization state model. Based on the existence of two territorial units with their special administrative bodies, political parties were formed on a republic-wide basis, on which they primarily focused.<sup>128</sup> The competence at the federal nationwide level was thus secondary and derived from the republic level. Ultimately, this was expressed in the absence of nationwide political parties. This has proven problematic in terms of federal government formation. This element was also based on the autonomous powers of the revolutionary movements in 1989 against communist forces. While on the Czech side the democratization process was governed by the Civic Forum (OF), in Slovakia it was the Public Against Violence (VPN) movement. A system consisting of two separate party systems was created and it was reflected in the setting up of the electoral system in the 1990 and 1992 parliamentary elections.<sup>129</sup>

The primary objective of political parties was to succeed the national level of the republics, while the federal level was of a secondary nature. Representatives of the victorious political parties on the Czech and Slovak side of the federation became equal partners. It was not possible to create a common government without mutual cooperation. In this context, we can also look at the process of Slovak independence. The constitutional and practical equivalence of both political representations has become a key factor in the enforcement of the interests of the Slovak side. The symmetrical model of the internal arrangement was a system of checks and balances, because without the cooperation of both representations it was not possible to achieve the functionality of national authorities.<sup>130</sup> Thus, despite its stronger position based on a double population, the Czech side

---

127. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*, 344-347.

128. Leška, "Hlavné etapy formovania", 79.

129. Mikuš, *Pohľady politických*, 5-8.

130. Machyniak, and Brix, "Political aspects as a determinant of public administration functioning", 229.

could not ignore the interests of the Slovak national team and was exposed to the need to seek compromises.

If we compare this element to the party system in Catalonia, we see considerable differences. Catalonia, as one of the Spanish regions, has its specific system of political parties. Within it, the competence of regional and national political groupings applies. Looking retrospectively at development since the first regional elections in 1980, a dominant position until 2003 has been usurped by the *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) regional political party, enforcing the primary interests of Catalonia.<sup>131</sup> In addition, *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) is an important political force of a regional nature. In the last two regional elections in 2015 and 2017, the *Junts per Catalunya* (JuntsxCat) and *Junts pel Sí* (JxSí) election coalitions were formed, bringing together the regional independence forces.<sup>132</sup> On the other hand, there are national political parties. They have established their regional branches for the given territory. In practice, they enforce national policies in the territory of Catalonia. These are mainly the two most important political parties in the long run — *Partido Popular* (PP) and *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) creating regional structures.<sup>133</sup> Despite these facts, according to M. Strmiska, “the Catalan party sphere clearly fulfils the conditions of the regional party system, even though only regional parties and branches of national parties operate here”.<sup>134</sup> Compared to the conditions of the former Czecho-Slovakia, the mechanism shows elements of an asymmetric model, where regional political parties do not represent an equal partner of the nationwide ones. In the case of Catalonia, this attribute is highlighted by the fact that it represents just one of the 17 regions. Against this background, regional political parties cannot in any way limit the functionality of the Spanish authorities. They act in a subordinate position, which represents a significant obstacle to enforcing the autonomy of the territory.

Diversity can also be seen in the profile of political parties in terms of highlighting this concept. In the former Czecho-Slovakia, talks about the division of the federation were led by the representation of the winning political

---

131. Elias, and Mees, “Between accommodation and secession”, 142-144.

132. Colomer, “The venturous bid for the independence”, 951-956.

133. *Ibidem*, 952.

134. Strmiska, *Regionální strany, stranické systémy a teritoriálně-politický pluralismus*, 47.

entity HZDS headed by V. Mečiar. In the decisive 1992 parliamentary elections, it did not exclusively pursue the strategy of autonomy in the election programme. In the case of the current Catalan party scene, most political parties have a directly defined requirement of independence. Separatist efforts of the Catalan parties intensified especially after 2010 in response to the Constitutional Court's decision. It did not recognize 14 points of the reformed autonomous status of Catalonia adopted in 2006.<sup>135</sup> Most Catalan parties have moved from a policy of empowering the region to a policy of separatism. The last regional elections in 2015 and 2017 clearly demonstrated this trend. The two political blocs profiled on the basis of the attitude to the independence of Catalonia confronted each other.<sup>136</sup> Unlike the long-term development of election results, none of the branches of national political parties proved to be the decisive actor, but a purely regional Citizens party, which in 2017 was able to obtain the highest percentage of election preferences at 25.4 percent. In both cases, the majority of the 135-member regional parliament was gained by the supporters of Catalonia independence.<sup>137</sup> This was reflected in the Declaration of Independence on 28 October 2017 and it led to a destabilization of the whole administrative mechanism in the asymmetrical system. Central power has used its constitutional capacity to block the process. On this basis, we can judge the actions of the Catalan politicians as irresponsible. They had to be clearly aware of the consequences of this step, based on the constitutional setup. As we have already pointed out, in the case of Catalonia, the regional government is in a subordinate position to the central sphere. This is the primary difference from the mechanisms in Czecho-Slovakia within the constitutional definition.

## Conclusion

The self-determination process of nations and the creation of independent states can clearly be seen as an important determinant of the European region in the last four decades. Based on this, we chose two particular cases — Slovakia and Catalonia. We have compared the historical experience of independence with the current efforts of the Catalans on the Iberian Pen-

---

135. Dvořák, “Španělské regionální politické”, 72.

136. Martí, and Cetrà, “The 2015 Catalan election”, 114.

137. Barrio, *et al.*, “Spain steals from us!”, 1005.

insula. Methodologically, we have divided our research into several logically interconnected parts, which has helped us achieve our primary goal. Based on the historical analysis of Slovakia's self-determination process and structured interviews with the direct political actors of the completion of this process, we have identified three key attributes, which proved to be the determinative factors of Slovakia's declaration of independence. The analysis and verification of the aforementioned attributes in the case of Catalonia showed significant differences in comparison with Slovakia. We have determined the geopolitical context as the first attribute of the new state establishment. In the case of Slovakia, external factors proved to be the positive impulse towards self-determination. The whole process was in accordance with the disintegration of the Eastern bloc and the elimination of communist parties in this geopolitical region. We have identified the European Union as the key party in the process of formation of a new state. Its attitude in these cases is contradictory. While the European Union supported the emancipatory efforts of the nations in the 1990s, considering this process to be a consequence of the communist regime, in the case of Catalonia this step is considered to be a destabilizing element in the European region. We emphasized the fact that the legislative delimitation of the European Union does not show any support towards this legal act. The constitutional framework was considered to be the second attribute in the creation of an independent state by direct political actors. In the case of Czecho-Slovakia, the former constitution allowed decomposition of a compound state through a referendum. However, the Spanish Constitution excludes such a solution. This is based on the applied models themselves, showing two different types in constitutional form. Czecho-Slovakia was defined as a federated unit, based on two territorial units. In the case of Spain and Catalonia, this situation is not defined - Catalonia acts as an autonomous region of a unitary state. A symmetrical and asymmetrical model are opposing each other in this situation. Elements of these models are transferred to all levels of decision-making and governance. This was directly demonstrated in the evaluation of the last attribute of the formation of the independent state. Regarding the evaluation of the third attribute, the symmetrical model in the relation to the Czech and Slovak territorial units predetermined the equal position of the political parties as decision-makers in any changes. On the other hand, it was not possible to create central executive bodies without the mutual cooperation of political representatives from both parties (Czech and Slovak) within the common state. Such a mechanism of checks and balances does not exist in Catalonia. Based on the model of asymmetry, Catalan political representatives do not



have the ability to block the proper functioning of central authorities and thereby use this kind of political pressure to enforce their demands.

## References

- Alman, Tomáš. *Ústavné právo Európskej únie*. Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2018.
- Avery, Graham. *Could an independent Scotland join the European Union?* Brussels: European policy centre (2014): 4.
- Bakke, Elisabeth. *Doomed to failure?: The Czechoslovak nation project and the Slovak autonomist reaction, 1918-38*. Dissertations / Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, 1999.
- Barbieri, Roberta. "Czechoslovakia's Movement Toward a New Constitution: the Challenge of Establishing a Democratic, Multinational State". *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law* 13, no. 1 (1992): 94-124.
- Bardovič, Jakub. "Development of Social-Democratic Ideas in Slovakia after 1989". *The Quality of Democracy in the New Political Era: Proceedings of the 4th Academos Conference 2017*. Bologna: Filodiritto, 2017, 99-104.
- Barrio, Astrid, and Bonnie N. Field. "The push for independence in Catalonia". *Nature Human Behaviour* 2 (2018): 713-715.
- Barrio, Astrid, Oscar Barbera, and Juan Rodriguez-Teruel. "Spain steals from us! The populist drift of Catalan regionalism". *Comparative European Politics* 16 (2018): 993-1011.
- Bartolini, Stefano. "Stein Rokkan e Derek W. Urwin, Economy, Territory, Identity - Politics of Western European Peripheries". *Italian Political Science Review* 14, no. 3 (1983): 210.
- Basta, Karlo, and Lenka Bustikova. "Concession and Secession: Constitutional Bargaining Failure in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia". *Swiss Political Science Review* 22, no. 4 (2016).
- Ben-Israel, Hedva. "Nacionalismus v historické perspektivě". In: Miroslav Hroch, ed. *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003.
- Brilmayer, Lea. "Secession and Self-Determination: A Territorial Interpretation". *Yale Journal of International Law* 16, no. 7 (1991): 177-202.
- Brown, Archie. *The Rise and Fall of Communism*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009.
- Cetrà, Daniel, and Malcolm Harvey. "Explaining accommodation and resistance to demands for independence referendums in the UK and Spain". *Nations and Nationalism* 25 (2018): 1-23.
- Colomer, Josep M. "The venturous bid for the independence of Catalonia". *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (2017): 950-967.
- Constitutional Law No. 121/1920 Coll. which establishes the constitutional charter of the Czechoslovak Republic. 1920. <https://www.usoud.cz/en/constitutional-court-of-the-czechoslovak-republic-and-its-fortunes-in-years-1920-1948/>.

- Constitutional Law No. 143/1968 Coll. on the Czechoslovak Federation. 1968. [https://www.usoud.cz/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ustavni\\_soud\\_www/History/Constitutional\\_act\\_1948.pdf](https://www.usoud.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/ustavni_soud_www/History/Constitutional_act_1948.pdf).
- Cuadras-Morató, Xavier, et al. *Catalonia: A New Independent State in Europe? A debate on secession within the European Union*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Draper, Theodore. "The End of Czechoslovakia". *The New York Review Books XL 3* (1993): 20-26.
- Dvořák, Pavel. "Španělské regionální politické strany a jejich postoje ke státu autonomii". *Politologická Revue 20*, no. 2 (2014): 63-92.
- Elias, Anwen, and Ludger Mess. "Between accommodation and secession: Explaining the shifting territorial goals of nationalist parties in the Basque Country and Catalonia". *Revista d'Estudis Autònoms i Federals 25* (2017): 129-165.
- European Commission - Statement on the events in Catalonia. 2017. [https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-17-3626\\_en.pdf](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-3626_en.pdf).
- Foltýn, Tomáš. "Decentralizace. Příklad Itálie a Španělska". *Víceúrovňové vládnutí v Evropě: zkušenosti, problémy a výzvy*. Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav, 2007, 81-90.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nacionalismus*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2003.
- Greenberg, Jessica. *After the revolution: youth, democracy, and the politics of disappointment in Serbia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Greguška, Michal, and Jaroslav Mihálik. "Czechoslovak Federation in Comparative Perspective: Steps for Heterogeneous Societies". *European Journal of Transformation Studies 4*, no. 1 (2016): 5-25.
- Griffiths, Ryan D., et al. "Between the Sword and the Wall: Spain's limited options for Catalan secessionism". *Nations and nationalism 21*, no. 1 (2015): 43-61.
- Guibernau, Montserrat. *Catalan nationalism: Francoism, transition and democracy*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- . *The nation-state and nationalism in the twentieth century*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Heydemann, Günther, and Karel Vodička, eds. *From Eastern Bloc to European Union: Comparative Processes of Transformation since 1990*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014.
- Heywood, Andrew. *Politické ideologie*. Praha: Eurolex Bohemia, 2005.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and nationalism since 1870. Programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Holton, Robert J. *Globalization and the Nation State*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Houda, Přemysl, and Jan Rataj. *Československo v proměnách komunistického režimu*. 2010.
- Hroch, Miroslav. *Národy nejsou dílem náhody: příčiny a předpoklady utváření moderních evropských národů*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), 2009.
- Juza, Peter. *Nacionalizmus a pokus o národno-emancipačné snaženia v Česko-Slovensku*. Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav Právnické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, 1994, 58-63.

- Kirgis, Frederic L. "The Degrees of Self-Determination in the United Nations Era". *The American Journal of International Law* 88, no. 2 (1994): 304-310.
- Kováč, Dušan. "Česko-slovenské vzťahy v prvom zahraničnom odboji". In: Stanislava Kučerová. *Idea Československa a Střední Európa*. Brno: Doplněk, 1994.
- . *Dejiny Slovenska*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1998.
- Kraus, Peter A., and Joan Vergés-Gifra. *The Catalan Process: Sovereignty, Self-Determination and Democracy in the 21st Century*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis de l'Autogovern, 2017.
- Keating, Michael, and Alex Wilson. "Renegotiating the state of autonomies: statute reform and multi-level politics in Spain". *West European Politics* 32, no. 3 (2009): 536-558.
- Krejčí, Jaroslav, and Pavel Machonin. *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change*. St. Antony's Series, 1996.
- Krejčí, Oscar. *Mezinárodní politika*. Ekopress, 2014.
- Křen, Jan. *Konfliktní společenství - Češi a Němci 1780 – 1918*. Praha, 2013.
- Kusý, Miroslav. *Eseje*. Bratislava: Archa, 1991.
- Laluha, Ivan. *K charakteristike jednej programovej vízie. (Návrh referátu pre XIV. zjazd KSSČ – 9. september 1968)*. In: Londák, Miroslav, and Sikora, Stanislav, et al. *Rok 1968 a jeho miesto v našich dejinách*. Bratislava: Veda, 2009.
- Leff, Carol Skalnik. *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987*. Princeton Legacy Library.
- Leška, Dušan. "Hlavné etapy formovania systému politických strán na Slovensku". *Sociológia* 45, no. 1. (2013): 71-88.
- Machyniak, Ján, and Richard Brix. "Political aspects as a determinant of public administration functioning - the case of Slovak Republic after 1989". *SGEM 2015: 2nd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts*. Bulgaria: Sofia, STEF92 Technology Ltd., 2015, 227-232.
- Mandelker, Daniel E., et. al. *State and local government in a federal system*. New York: Lexisnexis, 2014.
- Mannová, Elena. *Krátke dejiny Slovenska*. Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2003.
- Martí, David, and Daniel Cetrà. "The 2015 Catalan election: a de facto referendum on independence?" *Regional & Federal Studies* 26, no. 1 (2016): 107-119.
- Marušiak, Juraj. *Slovensko a Maďarsko – spojenectvo s historickou záťažou*. *Studia Politica Slovaca* 8, n. 2 (2015): 41-54.
- Marušiak, Juraj. "Stredná Európa a problematika práva národov na sebaurčenie". In: Juraj Marušiak, Ivan Halász, and Mateusz Gniazdowski. *(Dez)integračná sila stredo európskeho nacionalizmu*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2015.
- Martinický, Pavol. "T. G. Masaryk a oslobodenie Slovenska". In: Stanislava Kučerová. *Idea Československa a Střední Európa*. Brno: Doplněk, 1994.
- Meinecke, Friedrich. *Obecně o národu, národním státu a světoobčanství*. Praha: Slon, 2004.
- Měchyř, Ján. *Slovensko v Československu. Slovensko – České vzťahy 1918 – 1991. Dokumenty, názory, komentáre*. Praha: Práca, 1991.

- Mikuš, Dalibor. *Pohľady politických strán na verejnú správu*. Trnava: Fakulta sociálnych vied, 2018.
- Mir, Conxita. "The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries". *Catalan Historical Review* 1 (2007): 133-147.
- Moore, Margaret. *The Etics of Nacionalism*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . "On National Self-determination". *Political Studies*, XLV (1997): 900-913.
- Mlynárik, Ján. "História česko-slovenských vzťahov". In: Karel Vodička. *Dělení Československa. Deset let poté...* Praha: Volvox Globator, 2003.
- Muñoz, Jordi, and Raul Tormos. "Economic expectations and support for secession in Catalonia: Between causality and rationalization". *European Political Science Review* 7, no. 2 (2014): 315-341.
- Nedelsky, Nadya. *Defining the Sovereign Community: The Czech and Slovak Republics. Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.
- Olson, David B. "Dissolution of the State: Political Parties and the 1992 Election in Czechoslovakia". *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 26, no. 3 (1993): 301-314.
- Rodriguez-Teruel, Juan, and Astrid Barrio. "Going National: Ciudadanos from Catalonia to Spain". *South European Society and Politics* 21, no. 4. (2015): 587-607.
- Rychlík, Jan. *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*. Praha: Vyšehrad, 2015.
- . *Rozdělení česko-slovenska 1989-1992*. Praha: Vyšehrad, 2012.
- Serrano, Ivan. "Just a matter of identity? Support for independence in Catalonia". *Regional and federal studies* 23 (2013): 523-545.
- Sorens, Jason. "The Cross-Sectional Determinants of Secessionism in Advanced Democracies". *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 304-326.
- Shepherd, Robert. *A class divided: appeasement and the road to Munich, 1938*. UK: Macmillan, 1988.
- Stein, Eric. *Česko – Slovensko. Konflikt, roztržka, rozpad*. Praha: Academia, 2000.
- Strmiska, Maxmilián. *Regionální strany, stranické systémy a teritoriálně-politický pluralismus. Pojetí a typologie evropských regionálních stran a regionálních stranických soustav*. Brno: AP, 2005.
- Svatuška, Martin. "Vztahy medzi Slovákmi a Čechmi v období prvej Československej republiky (1918-1938)". *Slovenská politologická revue* 1-2 (2007): 1-30.
- Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 2006. <https://www.parlament.cat/document/cataleg/150259.pdf>.
- Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 1979. <http://web.gencat.cat/en/generalitat/estatut/estatut1979>.
- Štefanovič, Milan. *Zrod slovenskej štátnosti a zánik Česko-slovenskej federácie*. Bratislava: IRIS, 1999.
- Šútovec, Milan. *Semioza ako politikum alebo "pomlčková vojna"*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1999.
- Taborsky, Edward. *Slovakia Under Communist Rule: 'Democratic centralism' versus national autonomy*.
- The Electoral Commission – EU Referendum Result. 2016. <https://www.electoral-commission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/elections-and-referendums/>

- past-elections-and-referendums/eu-referendum/electorate-and-count-information.
- The Spanish constitution. 1978. [http://www.congreso.es/portal/page/portal/Congreso/Congreso/Hist\\_Normas/Norm/const\\_espa\\_texto\\_ingles\\_o.pdf](http://www.congreso.es/portal/page/portal/Congreso/Congreso/Hist_Normas/Norm/const_espa_texto_ingles_o.pdf).
- The Treaty of Lisbon. 2007. <https://eurlex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=cel-ex:12007L/TXT>.
- Tzagkas, Christos Anastasios. "The Internal Conflict in Spain: The case of Catalonia". *International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, no. 8 (2018): 58-63.
- Tudoroiu, Theodor, Peter Horváth, and Marek Hrušovský. "Ultra-Nationalism and Geopolitical Exceptionalism in Mečiar's Slovakia". *Problems of Post-Communism* 56, no. 4 (2009): 3-14.
- UN Member States – Chronology, 2018. <http://www.un.org/en/member-states/index.html>.
- Vodička. *Koaliční ujednání: Rozdělíme stát! Volby '92 a jejich důsledky pro československou státnost*.
- Vodička, Karel, and Ladislav Cabada. *Politický systém České republiky. Historie a současnost*. Praha: Portál, 2003.
- Vojáček, Ladislav, and Karel Schelle. *Slovenské právní dějiny*. Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk, 2014.
- Vomlela, Lukáš. "Organizational strategy of the League of the Communists of Serbia. Part I". *Central European Papers* 1, no. 1 (2013): 52-64.
- Waldenberg, Marek. "Terminologie. Národ, národnostní menšiny, národní otázky, národní ideologie". In: Miroslav Hroch, ed. *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003.
- Young, Robert. *The breakup of Czechoslovakia*. Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1994.