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**The world in the face of separatist challenges.  
Review of the collective work *Ruchy separatystyczne [Separatist Movements]*,  
edited by Maria Marczevska-Rytko and Marcin Pomarański, Lublin 2019**

It is not the first instance when a cohort of political scientists from Lublin, led by Prof. Maria Marczevska-Rytko, has addressed a significant political challenge of the contemporary world in a scholarly manner. Their response takes the form of a published book. They move beyond mere journalistic analyses and commentaries, which can often be cursory and might not delve into the crux of the matter, even if sometimes presented by individuals with a profound understanding of the subject. They aim to delve deeper, scrutinize, and truly comprehend. On this occasion, the Lublin political scientists, collaborating with experts from across Poland, have turned their attention to the issue of separatism. The extensive scope adopted in this work is commendable. It does not merely focus on separatist movements in Europe but encompasses those in Asia, North America, and Africa. Such a comprehensive perspective inevitably brings forth myriad interpretative challenges. Yet, this holistic approach precisely fosters rigorous theoretical analyses and provides clear terminological distinctions regarding separatism. This facilitates a sharp differentiation between separatism and concepts like secessionism, regionalism, and irredentism. As a result, we are presented with a seminal work beneficial not only to political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, ethnologists, and other humanities and social sciences scholars but also to anyone striving to grasp the political transformations unfolding around them. While this work may only address some queries exhaustively, it undoubtedly lays a solid foundation for subsequent investigations into the subject matter.

The composition of the work is cogent and transparent. The adept touch of the editors is evident in their insistence on a consistent structure across contributions. Each entry comprises an introduction, an elaboration of the theme, and a conclusive summary. Initial texts are dedicated to theoretical aspects of separatism. For instance, Kamil Aksiuto delves into the feasibility of articulating a unified liberal theory of the right to secession. Aksiuto's contribution provides a robust, even-handed exploration of secession theories anchored in liberalism, referencing critical standpoints. Preceding this, Maria Marczevska-Rytko and Marcin Pomarański undertake a terminological examination of "separatism" and "separatist



movement”, establishing a foundation for the book’s subsequent chapters. Notably missing in the theoretical portion is a discussion probing the tension between separatism and state sovereignty and the interplay between separatism and nationalism, from which the principle of self-determination emerges. Naturally, the scholars featured in this volume recognize the latter relationship. Marek Żyła, for instance, observes, “The impetus for such dynamics can be attributed, in part, to the rising national awareness of diverse ethnic groups and the widespread endorsement of the doctrine advocating nations’ right to self-determination.”<sup>1</sup> One hopes that the editors will address these pivotal subjects in future publications. Given the broad geographic and chronological scope they have embraced in the current volume, there is certainly no dearth of cases ripe for analysis.

The text mentioned by Żyła underscores the bilingualism of Ukraine as a pivotal factor behind the de facto existence of “two Ukraines,” there is a conspicuous absence of reference to Andrew Wilson’s seminal work, *The Ukrainians*. Having been translated into Polish, this work saw two editions in Poland at the dawn of this century. In alignment with Andrzej Walicki’s perspective, I regard Wilson’s contribution as one of the most balanced and unbiased overviews of Ukrainian affairs. This phenomenon, where an author with limited cultural proximity and links to the subject achieves a level of neutrality often elusive to Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians, is not novel. For instance, are not some of the most insightful books on Polish history, such as Richard M. Watt’s *Bitter Glory* or the writings of Timothy Snyder (cited by Żyła), penned by outsiders? As a tangential observation, it is worth noting that Wilson’s later work, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West?* unfortunately does not attain the same level of impartiality that *The Ukrainians* did. Żyła’s initial proposition, that “the most harrowing and perilous conflicts arise among individuals of diverse ethnicities”, is not intrinsically obvious. Civil wars, inflamed by religious zeal or secular ideologies, have occasionally proven to be more devastating than conflicts between nations. For instance, the American Civil War, pitting the South against the North, witnessed more fatalities than the Franco-Prussian War, not only due to its duration factor. Nevertheless, Żyła’s discourse provides a commendable analysis of the roots of separatist tensions within the country of Ukraine.

The chapters penned by Maria Marczevska-Rytko in the examined volume, including the introductory text, exemplify the high standard of scholarship that we have come to expect from the author. Her exposition on the separatist movements in Tibet is both captivating and enlightening. Similarly, in her discussion on separatist movements within post-colonial India, she revisits a nation she has previously dissected with notable acuity. Marczevska-Rytko’s arguments are not merely rooted in Polish and Anglo-Saxon scholarship but consistently transcend mere recapitulation, an affliction often observed in Polish social sciences and humanities. Her stance is meticulously constructed, offering a fresh perspective to our discourse.

The chapter by Dariusz Góra-Szopinski titled *Regionalism and Siberian Separatism* is equally compelling. The author elucidates both subjects’ enfeebled state and the underlying causes. However, the chapter’s title appears incongruent if, from Góra-Szopinski’s perspective, Siberia is unlikely to be a nexus for burgeoning regionalism or separatism.

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<sup>1</sup> See M. Żyła, *Separatyzm rosyjski i rosyjskojęzyczny na Ukrainie*, in: M. Marczevska-Rytko & M. Pomarański (Eds.), *Ruchy separatystyczne*, Lublin 2019.

The prologue to the chapter bears an essayistic tone rather than an academic one. It lacks clearly defined hypotheses or research queries, instead focusing on the portrayal of Siberia in Polish collective memory, as manifest in monuments erected in Poland. The term “Russian Abyss” – with an unexplained capitalized “Abyss” – stands out in this context, and the narrative’s unidimensional approach is stark. This oversight is especially perplexing given Góra-Szopiński’s acknowledgment of the significant contributions many Poles made to Siberia (as noted in a footnote). Furthermore, his omission of the prosperity some of these individuals achieved is conspicuous. While the premise of constructing a narrative based on contrasts is evident, it comes at the expense of scholarly rigor. Nonetheless, the conclusions drawn in the article remain intriguing and meritorious.

The chapter by Grzegorz Ronek warrants particular attention, offering a comprehensive overview of Scottish politics spanning both the past and present centuries. The text stands out due to its extensive informational content, grounded in literature, and its coherent structure. A comparable perspective can be discerned in Marcin Przech’s exposition on *Uyghur separatism in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China*. Meanwhile, Jacek Skup delves into *The Problem of Separatism in Contemporary Pakistan*. However, one might argue that this piece would benefit from a more expansive source base and a deeper analytical approach.

The contributions in the concluding fifth section, crafted by Marcin Pomarański and Marcin Krawczuk, maintain a high content standard. Notably, the latter’s piece, titled *Faces of Ethnic Separatism in Ethiopia*, merits special consideration.

In summarizing this review, it is essential to underscore that the political science hub in Lublin has furnished Polish readers with an invaluable examination of the pressing issue of separatism. This concern, evident in various global regions both historically and contemporaneously, promises to remain relevant in the coming decades. Indeed, isn’t it the enduring rather than fleeting issues that should captivate the focus of both politicians and scholars? Admittedly, many texts prefer descriptive accounts over innovative analysis or drawing novel, salient conclusions. This malaise might be considered a broader challenge facing Polish social sciences and humanities. Nonetheless, this set of works undoubtedly offers rich insights into nations often overlooked in Polish discourse, thus challenging the overabundance of parochial and introspective mindsets. A meticulous engagement with this work augments one’s understanding of the geopolitical landscape and highlights the profound domestic and international challenges of separatism.