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Secção I

Investigação Científica*

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The impact of externally instigated separatism on the political stability and territorial integrity of countries

O impacto do separatismo instigado externamente na estabilidade política e na integridade territorial dos países

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ABSTRACT: This study seeks to define the core concept of externally instigated separatism (EIS) and identify mechanisms to prevent and mitigate its adverse consequences. The research methodology is based on structural, logical and systemic analysis methods. The global system of law and order enshrines peoples' right to self-determination, guaranteed by states and the international community. Externally instigated separatism is a mechanism of direct aggression employed by states aiming to annex new territories. It represents a stage in hybrid warfare, characterized by the exogenous influence of actors supported by one state operating within another's territory. The greatest threat of externally instigated separatism is seen in the level of integration of such actors into the socio-political environment of the state. This means increased opportunities for these actors to subvert the security environment of the state through direct incitement to separatist movements. That is why timely identification of manifestations of externally instigated separatism is critical to stabilizing the situation inside the country and preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The article proves the need to develop a state strategy for counteracting externally instigated separatism.

KEYWORDS: externally instigated separatism; hybrid warfare; exogenous influence; separatist movements.

RESUMO: O estudo visa definir a essência do separatismo instigado externamente para encontrar mecanismos para preveni-lo e neutralizar suas consequências negativas. A metodologia de pesquisa é baseada em métodos de análise estrutural, lógica e sistêmica. O sistema global de lei e ordem consagra o direito dos povos à autodeterminação, garantido pelos estados e pela comunidade internacional. O fenômeno do separatismo instigado externamente é um método de agressão direta por um estado interessado em anexar novos territórios; é uma forma de guerra híbrida, um conceito completo da influência exógena de atores totalmente apoiados por um estado operando no território de outro estado. A maior ameaça do separatismo instigado externamente é vista no nível de integração de tais atores no ambiente sociopolítico do estado. Isso significa maiores oportunidades para esses atores subverterem o ambiente de segurança do estado por meio de incitação direta a movimentos separatistas. É por

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isso que a identificação oportuna de manifestações de separatismo instigado externamente é crítica para estabilizar a situação dentro do país e preservar sua soberania e integridade territorial. O artigo prova a necessidade de desenvolver uma estratégia estatal para combater o separatismo instigado externamente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: separatismo instigado externamente; guerra híbrida; influência exógena; matriz de ameaça; movimentos separatistas.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of externally instigated separatism (EIS) has emerged as a formidable threat to the sovereignty and stability of modern nation-states. Unlike traditional separatist movements that arise from domestic socio-political, ethnic, or cultural tensions, EIS is deliberately orchestrated by external actors to destabilize a targeted state. This strategy is a covert tool of hybrid warfare, which is employed to undermine territorial integrity, create internal division, and facilitate broader geopolitical objectives. The complexity of EIS lies in its ability to exploit existing societal fault lines while masking its origins under the guise of self-determination and regional autonomy. EIS is particularly evident in the post-Soviet geopolitical space, where authoritarian regimes have systematically employed it as part of their expansionist agendas. Russia, in particular, has been instrumental in developing and deploying EIS as a technology of aggression. Its application in countries such as Moldova, Sakartvelo, and Ukraine demonstrates how external actors can embed themselves within the socio-political fabric of a state, fostering separatist movements that serve as precursors to direct intervention or territorial annexation. The significance of EIS extends beyond the affected regions, posing a challenge to the broader international legal and political order. The right to self-determination, enshrined in international law, has been weaponized in this context, raising urgent questions about the limits of this principle when manipulated for aggressive purposes. Understanding EIS is, therefore, not only a matter of national security but also a critical issue for global stability and the rule of law.

This article addresses these challenges by offering a comprehensive analysis of EIS as a distinct and dangerous phenomenon. The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To define the essence and unique characteristics of EIS, distinguishing it from conventional separatist movements.

2. To examine specific cases of EIS in Moldova, Sakartvelo, and Ukraine, identifying patterns and mechanisms of its implementation.

3. To propose actionable strategies for early detection, prevention, and counteraction of EIS, emphasizing the importance of coordinated international efforts and robust state policies.

To achieve these objectives, the study is structured as follows:

1. **Conceptual Framework** – The essence and defining features of EIS are outlined, distinguishing it from other forms of separatism driven by internal dynamics.

2. **Case Analysis** – Detailed examination of EIS manifestations in Moldova, Sakartvelo, and Ukraine, highlighting the mechanisms and tools used by external actors to foster separatist movements.

3. **Strategies for Counteraction** – Practical recommendations for the early detection, prevention, and mitigation of EIS are proposed, aimed at empowering states to safeguard their sovereignty against such hybrid threats.

This structured approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of EIS, its evolution as a geopolitical tool, and the practical measures required to counter its adverse effects. The research methodology integrates structural, logical, and systemic analysis to provide a nuanced understanding of EIS. By exploring its origins, manifestations, and consequences, the study highlights the urgency of developing effective mechanisms to combat this form of aggression. At its core, this article aims to contribute to the global discourse on hybrid warfare and offer practical insights for policymakers, security experts, and scholars seeking to safeguard national sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected and contested world.

2. Literature review

EIS is a relatively new phenomenon in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. For much of its emergence, the scientific community has primarily focused on its systemic components particularly the methods through which Russia implements its aggressive policies against neighboring states. For example, Hicks et al.⁵ point out that Russia seeks to gain domestic political

⁵ HICKS, Kathleen, SAMP, Lisa, OLIKER, Olga *et al.* *Recalibrating U.S. strategy toward Russia: A new time for choosing* [online]. Washington: CSIS, 2017 [viewed 25 September 2024]. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23269>

benefits through external escapades abroad. Russia is testing its coercive instruments against other countries that are not limited to the rule of law and pose a direct threat to global security. However, they are mainly regional⁶. Matsaberidze⁷ examines the evolution of post-Soviet security in Sakartvelo and Ukraine, contextualizing it within Russia's foreign policy towards its neighboring states. The researcher concludes that Russia is trying to legitimize its influence on the territory of these countries artificially, using separatist movements⁸. Nhemachena et al.⁹, studying Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, conclude that Russia's policy towards its neighbors has global negative consequences. Researchers underscore the contrived nature of Russia's methods for expanding its influence, including orchestrated referendums¹⁰. In turn, Boichak and Jackson¹¹ consider the problem of the impact of Russian propaganda on some areas of Ukraine, further instigating more destructive processes. Allison¹² examines some elements of separatist propaganda more profoundly, trying to combine them into a single concept. However, the researcher draws the wrong conclusion that Russia's actions in Ukraine manifest "realpolitik" aimed at forcing changes in the European territorial order, especially in the neighboring countries. In his opinion, Russia uses "color revolutions" to influence various states in the broader international system as a policy tool rather than a stage of hybrid warfare¹³.

Much more thorough are the studies by Lysianskyi and Mamontova¹⁴ and Primush et al.¹⁵ on the technology of separatism. Investigating the political

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ MATSABERIDZE, David. Russia vs. EU/US through Georgia and Ukraine. *Connections* [online], 2015, vol. 14, n. 2, pp. 77-86. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26326399>

⁸ *Idem.*

⁹ NHEMACHENA, Artwell, RWODZI, Aaron, MAWERE, Munyaradzi. *The Russia-Ukraine war from an African perspective*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8784618>

¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹ BOICHAK, Olga, JACKSON, Sam. From national identity to state legitimacy. *Media, War & Conflict*, 2020, vol. 13, n. 3, pp. 258-279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352198291>

¹² ALLISON, Roy. Russia and the post-2014 international legal order. *International Affairs* [online], 2017, vol. 93, n. 3, pp. 519-543. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48569646>

¹³ *Idem.*

¹⁴ LYSIANSKYI, P. L., MAMONTOVA, E. V. The inspired separatism in Ukraine as a political phenomenon and scientific category. *Actual Problems of Politics*, 2022, vol. 70, pp. 49-57. <https://doi.org/10.32782/app.v70.2022.8>

¹⁵ PRIMUSH, Roman, CHMYR, Yaroslav, KRAVTSOV, Maxym et al. Information wars: Historical and comparative analysis, specifics and factors of actualization in the modern world. In: RADCHENKO, Oleksandr, KOVACH, Valirrii, SEMENETS-ORLOVA, Inna et al. (eds.). *National Security Drivers of Ukraine. Contributions to Political Science*. Cham: Springer, 2023, pp. 259-272. ISBN 978-3-031-33724-6. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33724-6_15

processes in Ukraine related to regional separatism, the scientists conclude that their primary source, which led to the loss of control by Ukraine over the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 2014, is outside the country¹⁶. This allows to determine that external political forces instigate separatism in Ukraine, and its source should be sought in the decision-making centres of the countries concerned¹⁷. Indeed, the political and legal nature of EIS differs significantly from the classical term that describes the phenomenon of separatism as such. Thus, Doyle¹⁸ defines separatism as “the defence of cultural, ethnic, tribal, religious, racial, governmental or gender separation from a larger group”. Andriiash¹⁹ argues that separatism is the policy and practice of secession, separating a part of a state’s territory (secession) to create a new sovereign state. Tsebenko²⁰ assumes that separatism is a state disintegration that arises due to dissatisfaction of a particular part of society with the general political course of the country. Kuzio²¹, analysing the processes in Ukraine in 2014-2017, demonstrates the diversity of Russia's approaches to the activation of artificial separatist sentiments, which the aggressor country is trying to present as a quasi-historical concept of the development of “Novorossia” as a potential state formation. Deen and Zweers²² carefully studied separatist movements on the example of Gagauzia as an autonomous territorial entity in the Republic of Moldova. The desire of the Gagauz (a Turkic ethnic group) for political self-determination stems from the fear of extinction, as the Gagauz have never

¹⁶ LYSIANSKYI, P. L., MAMONTOVA, E. V. The inspired separatism in Ukraine as a political phenomenon and scientific category. *op. cit.*

¹⁷ PRIMUSH, Roman, CHMYR, Yaroslav, KRAVTSOV, Maxym et al. Information wars: Historical and comparative analysis, specifics and factors of actualization in the modern world. In: RADCHENKO, Oleksandr, KOVACH, Valirrii, SEMENETS-ORLOVA, Inna et al. (Eds.). *National Security Drivers of Ukraine. Contributions to Political Science*. Cham: Springer, 2023, pp. 259-272. ISBN 978-3-031-33724-6. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33724-6_15

¹⁸ DOYLE, Don. *Secession as an international phenomenon* [online]. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020 [viewed 25 September 2024]. Available from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2311/nana.13257>

¹⁹ ANDRIIASH, V. Secession in the modern world: Risks and threats for Ukraine. *Democratic Governance* [online], 2013, vol. 11. Available from: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/DeVr_2013_11_8

²⁰ TSEBENKO, O. O. Ideological foundations of separatism. *Actual Problems of International Relations* [online], 2011, vol. 99, n 2, pp. 90-104. Available from: [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/apmv_2011_99\(2\)_15](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/apmv_2011_99(2)_15)

²¹ KUZIO, Taras. Russian stereotypes and myths of Ukraine and Ukrainians and why Novorossiya failed. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2019, vol. 52, n 4, pp. 297-309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2019.10.007>

²² DEEN, Bob, ZWEERS, Wouter. *Walking the tightrope towards the EU: Moldova's vulnerabilities amid war in Ukraine* [online]. Den Haag: The Clingendael Institute, 2022 [viewed 25 September 2024]. Available from: <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/walking-the-tightrope-towards-the-eu.pdf>

had their statehood.²³ These processes found support from Russia's political leadership. Still, after the Moldovan government declared a course towards European integration, the leaders of Gagauzia refused any external support, realising that it was more economically advantageous to exist as part of a future EU country. In this context, externally instigated separatism has not been successful. In turn, Khansarifard *et al.*²⁴, studying EIS, rely on the historical experience of the South Caucasus. The researchers have developed a theory of ethnic negotiations that makes it possible to assess the risks of separatism based on the relations between ethnic groups, the centre and patron states, as well as the impact of ethnic negotiation instruments on exogenous factors of influence.²⁵

Maslova and Muntyan²⁶ study the different kinds of separatism in the modern world, not distinguishing EIS as its separate type. Pavliatenko²⁷, Lau²⁸ and De Waal²⁹ explore the ethno-national dimensions of separatist sentiments in Ukraine. Their research primarily focuses on resolving ethnic, religious, and social conflicts as strategies to mitigate separatist movements. The international

²³ *Idem.*

²⁴ KHANSARIFARD, Fahimed, BASIRI, Mohammad Ali, YAZDANI, Enayatollah. Ethnic bargaining and separatism in the South Caucasus Region. *Central Asia and The Caucasus Journal* [online], 2019, vol. 24, n 102, pp. 60-97. Available from: http://ca.ipisjournals.ir/article_32884.html?lang=en; KAPLINA, Oksana, TUMANYANTS, Anush, KRYTSKA, Iryna. Standards for ensuring the legality of covert activities in criminal proceedings through the prism of European Court of human rights. *Revista Jurídica Portucalense*, 2023, n 34, pp. 217-236. [https://doi.org/10.34625/issn.2183-2705\(34\)2023.ic-11](https://doi.org/10.34625/issn.2183-2705(34)2023.ic-11)

²⁵ KHANSARIFARD, Fahimed, BASIRI, Mohammad Ali, YAZDANI, Enayatollah. Ethnic bargaining and separatism in the South Caucasus Region. *Central Asia and The Caucasus Journal* [online], 2019, vol. 24, n 102, pp. 60-97. Available from: http://ca.ipisjournals.ir/article_32884.html?lang=en

²⁶ MASLOVA, N. M., MUNTYAN, P. P. Separatism in the modern world: Source, causes and regional varieties. *Materials of the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference: "Strategies of Innovative Development of Natural Sciences: Experience, Problems and Prospects"*. Kropyvnytskyi: Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State University, 2018, pp. 212-216. Available from: <https://cusu.edu.ua/ua/konferen-2018-2019-arhiv/strategii-innovatsiinohorozvytku-pryrodnych-ykh-dystsyplin-dosvid-problemy-ta-perspektyvy/sektsiia-4/7675-separatyzm-u-suchasnomu-sviti-sut-prychyny-ta-rehionalni-riznovydy>

²⁷ PAVLIATENKO, O. V. Conditions and factors of the spread of separatist sentiments in Ukraine: The ethno-national aspect. *Bulletin of NTUU "KPI". Politology. Sociology. Law* [online], 2017, vol. 1/2, n 33/34, pp. 65-69. Available from: <http://www.socio-journal.kpi.kiev.ua/archive/2017/1-2/12.pdf>

²⁸ LAU, B. *The geopolitics of climate and security in the Indo-Pacific* [online]. Barton: The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2022. Available from: https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2022-02/Climate%20and%20security%20in%20the%20Indo-Pacific_0.pdf?VersionId=gP0ZziQQiSLU1ymakusX2a9NrL2R6Jf

²⁹ DE WAAL, Thomas. *Uncertain ground: Engaging with Europe's de facto states and breakaway territories* [online]. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018 [viewed 25 September 2024]. Available from: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/deWaal_UncertainGround_final.pdf

experience of combating separatism is the subject of research in the works by Reznikova et al.³⁰.

Curran³¹ concludes that any separatism threatens the state's national security and, therefore, needs to be addressed through domestic political means. Lewis³² claims that manifestations of separatism in the post-Soviet space are probably a means for the authoritarian leadership of the Russian Federation to spread its influence on neighboring countries. However, scientists are very cautious with conclusions about the extent of the negative impact of the Russian Federation on the intensification of separatist movements and Russia's further destructive direct aggression against sovereign states³³.

Similar careful conclusions without conceptualising EIS are drawn by Hosaka³⁴ and Laruelle³⁵. Moreover, researchers study Russia's current experience using separatist movements as political technologies to expand its influence on neighbouring states. Blakkisrud³⁶, on the contrary, tries to define more clearly the aggressiveness of Russia's foreign policy towards the post-Soviet countries. He thinks that the ethnic element is artificially replaced by a social one, which is asserted in the propaganda of the so-called concept of the "Russian world" and the unification under this phenomenon of those who consider themselves involved in such a socio-political and ethno-religious phenomenon³⁷.

An interesting view on the problem of separatist movements inspired by the Russian Federation in Donbas is provided by Voronovici³⁸, who points to the historical background of "interstate movements" in Donbas, artificially created by

³⁰ REZNIKOVA, O. O., MISIURA, A. O., DROMOV, S. V. et al. *International experience in combating separatism: Conclusions for Ukraine: Analytical report* [online]. Kyiv: National Institute Strategic Studies, 2016. Available from https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2017-01/Separatism_druk-8a53a.pdf

³¹ CURRAN, Vivian. The foreign sovereign immunities act's evolving genocide exception. *UCLA Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs* [online], 2019, vol. 23, n 1, pp. 46-75. Available from: https://scholarship.law.pitt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1047&context=fac_articles

³² LEWIS, David. *Russia's new authoritarianism: Putin and the politics of order*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474454766.001.0001>

³³ *Idem*.

³⁴ HOSAKA, Sanshiro. Welcome to Surkov's theater: Russian political technology in the Donbas war. *Nationalities Papers*, 2019, vol. 47, n 5, pp. 750-773. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.70>

³⁵ LARUELLE, Marlene. The three colors of Novorossiia, or the Russian nationalist mythmaking of the Ukrainian crisis. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2015, vol. 32, n 1, pp. 55-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2015.1023004>

³⁶ BLAKKISRUD, Helge. 'Russkii' as the new 'Rossiiskii'? Nation-building in Russia after 1991. *Nationalities Papers*, 2023, vol. 51, n 1, pp. 64-79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.11>

³⁷ *Idem*.

³⁸ VORONOVICI, Alexandr. Internationalist separatism and the political use of "Historical Statehood" in the Unrecognized Republics of Transnistria and Donbass. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 2020, vol. 67, n 3, pp. 288-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2019.1594918>

Russia in the last years of the USSR, whose population opposed the withdrawal of Soviet Ukraine from the USSR, demanded the preservation of the latter in a reformed form, and the granting of autonomy to Donbas. This thesis was also investigated in the works of Khomenko³⁹ when studying the mechanisms of transformation of the “Donetsk bridgehead” by Russia’s political leadership during the «Orange Revolution» (refers to a series of protests and political events that took place in Ukraine from late November 2004 to January 2005; symbolized a push for democracy, transparency, and resistance to authoritarian influence) into a testing ground for the strategy of anti-Ukrainian discourse. Instead, Sakwa⁴⁰ concluded that it is the separatist movements in Donbas, supported (the researcher deliberately avoids the term “instigated”) by Russia, that is an element of Russia's geopolitical struggle with the EU for spheres of influence. Shandra and Seely⁴¹ studied the phenomenon of separatism in the example of the events in Ukraine in 2014-2015. They came to a clear conclusion that it is an element of modern hybrid warfare waged against democratic countries by authoritarian regimes. Madoian⁴² points out that separatism is often manifested through political support from an external actor. Such support creates preconditions not for the full-fledged independent existence of the newly created state, but for its further mandatory integration into the state actor that instigates separatist movements.

Voronovici⁴³ directly concludes that the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 was partly encouraged by historical references and claims that it was a “logical” (from Russia’s point of view) step in defence of separatist states, artificially created on the territory of Ukraine.

³⁹ KHOMENKO, O. I. The Kremlin's "Donetsk bridgehead" during the Orange Revolution as a testing ground for the strategy of anti-Ukrainian discourse. *Ukrainian Studies* [online], 2018, vol. 3, pp. 82-100. Available from: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Ukr_2018_3_7

⁴⁰ SAKWA, Richard. External actors in EU-Russia relations: Between norms and space. *Avoiding a New 'Cold War': The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis* [online], 2016, vol. 1, pp. 86-92. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep45145.18>

⁴¹ SHANDRA, Alya, SEELY, Robert The Kremlin’s phantom of separatism and chaos in Ukraine. *The Surkov leaks: The inner workings of Russia’s hybrid war in Ukraine*. London: Royal United Services Institute For Defence and Security Studies, 2019, pp. 35-52. DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.23314.58569](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.23314.58569)

⁴² MADOIAN, Karen. Devil in the detail: Local versus regional approaches to peace in Donbas. *EU Institute for Security Studies* [online], 2020. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/64097932/Local_versus_regional_approaches_to_peace_in_Donbas

⁴³ VORONOVICI, Alexandr. Separatism and the uses of the past: Politics of history in the self-proclaimed Republics of Donbas. *Cultures of History Forum*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.25626/0147>

However, none of those mentioned above researchers speaks about separatism as a technology used by Russia against Ukraine. The most fundamental in this context is the conclusion drawn by Lysianskyi⁴⁴ that the consequences of armed separatist conflicts were the emergence of geopolitical entities independent of their home countries, i.e. quasi-states that manifest their own goals and interests. Their further support by Russia, in particular, reveals the corresponding technology of EIS, which has been implemented over the years and is a stage of hybrid warfare that precedes direct armed aggression⁴⁵.

3. Methods and materials

The research methodology is designed to uncover the mechanisms by which separatist foreign policies negatively impact a nation's socio-economic and socio-political conditions. In addition, it is essential to understand the essence of such influence of exogenous factors supporting separatist movements and to find opportunities to counteract them at the level of political, ethnocultural or other instruments within the state.

The sample in this study includes examples of EIS in the post-Soviet countries Moldova, Sakartvelo, and Ukraine.

Given its complex nature, the study of separatism adopts a systematic approach, encompassing elements from various types of separatist movements. The study also considers separatism as a technology, a means of aggression by one state against another through the influence of supported actors. Consequently, this study adopts a top-down analytical approach:

1. The first step is to identify the ultimate actor interested in separatist manifestations.
2. The second stage is to study the mechanisms, methods, and tools of an actor's influence on separatist movements.
3. The third stage is to identify potential opportunities for countering and preventing manifestations of separatism.

Once manifested as quasi-state formations, EIS operates beyond the scope of national legislation's regulatory influence. This means that the state has the right to use legal coercion to overcome or suppress separatist movements. This

⁴⁴ LYSIANSKYI, P. L., MAMONTOVA, E. V. The inspired separatism in Ukraine as a political phenomenon and scientific category. *Actual Problems of Politics*, 2022, vol. 70, pp. 49-57. <https://doi.org/10.32782/app.v70.2022.8>

⁴⁵ *Idem*.

will be the basis for analysing the practices of Russia's influence on separatist movements in the post-Soviet space (Table 1).

Table 1 – Modern manifestations of externally instigated separatism in the post-Soviet space

Country	Separatist formations	The mechanism of external instigation	An actor interested in manifestations of separatism
Moldova	Transnistrian Moldavian Republic	ideological, military, financial and logistical support for a quasi-independent state	russia (the desire to restore the colonial heritage of the ussr)
	Administrative-territorial unit of Gagauzia	Iran's ideological, financial and logistical support to the government of the autonomy in exile	russia, through the activities of the “Gagauz Halk Birlili”
Sakartvelo	Abkhazia South Ossetia	ideological, military, financial and logistical support after the collapse of the USSR	russia (the desire to restore the colonial heritage of the ussr)
Ukraine	Luhansk People's Republic	“Rossotrudnichestvo”, “Donbass Rus”, “Donetsk Republic”, “Union of the Revolutionary Born”	russia seeks to annex the territory of Ukraine
	Donetsk People's Republic	“Rossotrudnichestvo”, “Vigilant Movement”, “Young Guard”	
	Odesa People's Republic	“Rossotrudnichestvo”, Russian centres, the Party of Regions, regional elites	
	Bessarabian People's Republic	“Rossotrudnichestvo”, “The National Council of Bessarabia”, regional elites	

Unlike in Moldova and Sakartvelo, EIS in Ukraine was spread through agents of influence integrated by Russia into the socio-political space of Ukraine, who conducted explicit anti-Ukrainian activities. Therefore, the study of EIS in Ukraine is of particular importance in the context of Russia's anti-Ukrainian policy, which is revealed through the activities of the relevant actors. This activity instigates separatist movements, searching for the “necessary” and most acceptable justification in terms of further prospects of international recognition (ethnic facts, cultural diversity, religious confrontation, etc.).

4. Results

EIS has evolved into a distinct and independent technology, forming a critical stage of hybrid warfare aimed at annexing sovereign territory.

In the post-Soviet space, Russia has used separatist movements to spread its geopolitical influence since the collapse of the USSR. Separate manifestations of separatism inspired and supported by Russia occurred in Moldova, Sakartvelo

and Ukraine. For example, in 1990, the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic was artificially created based on an artificial separatist movement that had no ethnic, cultural, religious or other classical factors except for direct influence on the territory of Transnistria by the Russian Federation. Later, through the “Gagauz Halk Birlii” activities, Russia tried to repeat the separatist scenario, but in another part of Moldova, based on the ethnic difference of the Gaguz.

Russia has made incredible progress in implementing the EIS technology in Sakartvelo territory. Although during the war on Abkhazia in 1992-1993, Russia, participating on the side of Abkhazia, did not pay enough attention to the political justification of its interests, in 2008, during the Russian-Georgian war, the technology of EIS became more complete.

In Ukraine, EIS technology reached its most developed form, demonstrating its effectiveness in achieving tactical goals such as territorial occupation.

The primary aim of separatism is often to obscure the instigating country's true intentions toward third states. Separatist processes are often driven by external factors, with the intermediate goal of political destabilization and the ultimate objective of territorial annexation.

In the case of Ukraine, such processes instigated by Russia took place from 1991-1992 in specific territories of the Odesa, Zakarpattia, and Chernivtsi regions.

Later, EIS intensified during the political crisis of 2004. However, at that time it had the character of ethnopolitical separatism. The political crisis itself was supported by external actors acting in the interests of the Russian Federation. For example, during the campaign, the Party of Regions used propaganda products of Russian political technologists, which aimed to form the idea of oppression of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, violation of their rights, etc. This resulted in a Russian-supported congress of deputies of all levels focused on the Russian-speaking electorate and Russia as a foreign policy partner, which took place in November 2008 in Sievierodonetsk, Luhansk region.

However, its results were canceled by the political resolution of the crisis, resulting in the third round of the presidential election. But one way or another, the idea of the so-called “Russian world” as an ethnocultural and socio-political basis for further manifestations of EIS began to take shape at that stage. Already in 2013, Russia again began intensifying the political crisis in Ukraine with the movements. Ultimately, this led to the formation of the so-called «LPR» and

«DPR» and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 to support them and hold referendums, including in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The "LPR" (Luhansk People's Republic) and "DPR" (Donetsk People's Republic) are self-proclaimed quasi-state entities in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. These entities were established in 2014 with support from the Russian Federation during the conflict that followed Ukraine's 2014 Revolution of Dignity and Russia's annexation of Crimea. They are internationally unrecognized and are considered by Ukraine and most of the international community as instruments of Russian hybrid warfare, aimed at undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Taking advantage of the political destabilization and military escalation, in 2015, Russia started actively implementing new separatist projects in Ukraine: "Odesa People's Republic" (OPR) and "Bessarabian People's Republic" (BPR). Their implementation technology was identical to that of the creation of the LPR and DPR. Still, society and the political leadership reacted in advance to the risks of new artificial quasi-state formations on Ukraine's territory.

It should be emphasized that the emergence of the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" and attempts to create the "OPR" and "BPR" were preceded by activities instigated by the political leadership of Russia and integrated into the socio-political space of Ukraine. Thus, there are several stages in the implementation of the technology of EIS by the Russian Federation:

Firstly, the Russian Federation supported and funded some civil society organizations, including "Donbas Rus", "Donetsk Republic", "Union of the Revolutionary Born", "We Are the Russian Community", "We Are the Russian Community", "Vigilant Movement", "Young Guard", etc. Their activities were aimed at forming ethnic, cultural, and religious ideologies that were opposed to the values of the Ukrainian state.

Secondly, since 2007, the so-called "Russian centers" have been spreading on the territory of Ukraine, which were executive partners of the Russian state fund "Russian World". Their activities aimed to coordinate projects supported by the Russian Federation, which involved the general population of Ukraine and created an extensive agent network.

Thirdly, the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots, Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation ("Rossotrudnichestvo") has been active in Ukraine. In reality, it is a structure

through which the Russian special services spread their influence on the political leadership of Ukraine and among regional elites who supported Russia. The purpose of this influence was to diversify sources of support for future separatist movements in Ukraine.

Thus, Russia, through its structures and agents of influence who instigated separatist movements, indirectly participated in almost every separatist process in the post-Soviet space. However, while, for example, in Moldova and Sakartvelo, Russia limited itself to the creation of quasi-state entities, in the case of Ukraine, EIS gained its integrity, which led to the direct annexation of part of its territory through the Russian invasion, which was positioned as the protection of “fraternal republics”.

Moreover, the fact that the center of decision-making and influence on separatist movements in Ukraine is located outside of Ukraine did not create significant obstacles to their effective implementation. This prompts an evaluation of the effectiveness of state models in countering EIS as a stage of hybrid warfare. The example of Russia’s influence in Ukraine underscores the sophistication of this technology.

This phenomenon is an absolute novelty as a destabilizing factor in the state's security environment and a technology of hybrid aggression that must be countered at early detection and leveling stages.

The analysis of EIS in the post-Soviet space has demonstrated specific trends and peculiarities of its emergence and course:

Firstly, the concept of EIS as a technology of expansion was developed in Russia, namely in the “GRU” (The Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation) and the fifth Directorate of the FSB (The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation), since the 2000s. Gradually, this technology was “tested” by the military and political leadership of Russia in some countries, in particular in Sakartvelo and Moldova, but it was most widely used and improved in Ukraine;

Secondly, EIS is always aimed at destabilizing the political situation in the country and laying the groundwork for further aggression and seizure of either part of the territory or the entire state;

Thirdly, the political basis of EIS in the early stages of its formation is always made up of organizations, movements, and forces oriented towards another state's social dimension, social values, and historical common past. At the same

time, such movements do not openly proclaim separation from one state and accession to another. However, they advocate creating a single cultural, ethnic, or religious environment. Later, the development of EIS led to the idea of restoring “historical justice”, which is the final manifestation of one state’s actions against another to seize its territories. The most striking examples here are Ukraine (Donbas⁴⁶) and Sakartvelo (Abkhazia and South Ossetia);

Fourthly, EIS is a stage of hybrid warfare, as this technology involves forming a system of “legal” or “historical” preconditions for the protection of separatist movements up to their military support and invasion of the territory of an independent state. The mechanism of such action is represented in the following formula: spreading influence on internal political processes in the state by orientating a part of its population towards artificial ideas of separatism → forming the idea of separatist movements → implementing this idea through quasi-legal procedures of the plebiscite, referendum → declaring independence of a part of the territory → sending a request for assistance to the country whose actors implemented the technology of EIS → armed support or direct aggression and annexation of a part of the territory. This formula was implemented in Ukraine most clearly and in its whole dimension;

Fifthly, the EIS includes some aspects of ethno-political, religious, ethno-cultural, and other types of separatism. Still, it is activated and supported by the exogenous influence of actors acting in the interests of a particular state. At the same time, ethnic, cultural, religious, political, linguistic, and other determinants act as factors of strengthening or channeling separatist movements with the constant creation of artificial dissatisfaction on the part of separatist entities with the policy of the central government of the state. In other words, the further the technology of EIS is implemented, the fewer tools the political leadership of the

⁴⁶ MAIA, Catherine, CORCELLE, Marie. Annexions russes de territoires ukrainiens: Un air de déjà-vu. *The Conversation* [online], 2022. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/89179508/Catherine_MAIA_Marie_CORCELLE_Annexions_russes_de_territoires_ukrainiens_un_air_de_d%C3%A9j%C3%A0_vu_The_Conversation_24_10_2022?nav_from=8f63cdf0-015c-476b-a52c-9fb5dcebb3a3; MAIA, Catherine, GBÉNOU, André-Marie. Annexions russes de territoires ukrainiens: Lorsque l’Assemblée générale condamne ce que le Conseil de sécurité est empêché de condamner. *Le Club des juristes* [online], 2022. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/89685298/Catherine_MAIA_Andr%C3%A9_Marie_GB%C3%89NOU_Annexions_russes_de_territoires_ukrainiens_lorsque_l'Assembl%C3%A9e_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9rale_condamne_ce_que_le_Conseil_de_s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9_est_emp%C3%A4ch%C3%A9_de_condamner_Le_Club_des_juristes_31_10_2022&nav_from=371a1bb4-6629-45af-a0fa-28278eab569c&rw_pos=undefined

state has to peacefully overcome the consequences of this phenomenon, which means that more severe force scenarios have to be used;

Sixthly, EIS is constantly inspired by actors embedded in the state's socio-political processes on whose territory this technology is implemented. Such actors can act either in the form of civil society institutions or through direct diplomatic missions of the state in whose interests the technology of EIS is implemented, or through programs and projects of interstate cultural, scientific, and economic exchange, or even through religious organizations. Without the legitimate status of such actors and centers of influence, separatist activities immediately become illegal, which allows security agencies to implement measures to stop them quickly. On the other hand, even the visibility of the legitimacy of the processes of the relevant actors' activities significantly complicates the response of law enforcement and state security agencies to the relevant manifestations of separatist violent extremism.

Thus, EIS is a form of realization by one country of its regional geopolitical ambitions through artificially creating destabilizing movements on the territory of other states, which are presented by propaganda and information support as a separatist movement to exercise the right to self-determination.

5. Discussion

The right of people to self-determination is enshrined in international law and serves as a cornerstone of the global system of civil rights. Key international legal standards that articulate this principle include the United Nations Charter (1945), which reaffirms the equal rights of peoples and their right to determine their political status, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), alongside the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966). These covenants provide a legal framework that protects the aspirations of peoples for independence and the exercise of their rights without external interference. However, externally instigated separatism (EIS) represents a perversion of these principles, using the guise of self-determination to pursue the geopolitical interests of external actors. EIS, as a stage of hybrid warfare, manipulates these international norms by fabricating movements that appear to align with self-determination but are, in reality, tools of aggression and territorial annexation. Counteracting EIS is a critical priority for political leadership to safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity. However,

Lysianskyi's recent identification of EIS as a distinct phenomenon highlights ongoing challenges in both theoretical and practical responses to separatist movements in the post-Soviet space.

Most American and European researchers analyzing the events in Ukraine since 2014 indirectly acknowledge the artificial nature of separatist movements, often noting their support from Russia without explicitly conceptualizing it as externally instigating separatism⁴⁷. Some scholars consider only the ethno-political aspect of the separatist manifestations in Ukraine in 2014-2023⁴⁸. For example, Allison⁴⁹ notes that Russia's support for separatist movements within the concept of the "Russian world" is an instrument of geopolitical struggle, and the movements themselves have an ethnic component. Some researchers see only the political aspect of the separatist movements in Donbas in 2014-2015, justifying this by the creation of quasi-state entities⁵⁰. Interestingly, some

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⁴⁸ DOYLE, Don. *Secession as an international phenomenon* [online]. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020 [viewed 25 September 2024]. Available from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2311/nana.13257>; MADOIAN, Karen. Devil in the detail: Local versus regional approaches to peace in Donbas. *EU Institute for Security Studies* [online], 2020. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/64097932/Local_versus_regional_approaches_to_peace_in_Donbas;

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⁴⁹ ALLISON, Roy. Russia and the post-2014 international legal order. *International Affairs* [online], 2017, vol. 93, n 3, pp. 519-543. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48569646>

⁵⁰ BLAKKISRUD, Helge. 'Russkii' as the new 'Rossiiskii'? Nation-building in Russia after 1991. *Nationalities Papers*, 2023, vol. 51, n 1, pp. 64-79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.11>; HICKS, Kathleen, SAMP, Lisa, OLIKER, Olga et al. *Recalibrating U.S. strategy toward Russia: A new*

American and European scholars are bold in identifying separatist movements in Ukraine as an element of hybrid warfare⁵¹.

Western researchers have extensively examined Russian support for separatist movements in Ukraine, Moldova, and Sakartvelo. Most conclude that such support primarily serves Russia's broader geopolitical ambitions⁵².

Most Ukrainian researchers do not consolidate the entire set of factors of exogenous influence from Russia on separatist movements in Ukraine into a single, complete concept of EIS.

For example, Kuzio⁵³ focuses on studying the historical preconditions of Russia's increased influence on some areas of Ukraine and the effectiveness of such influence. However, such effectiveness is due to the destructive permanent influence of external actors, groups and agents of influence of the Russian Federation, which are integrated into the socio-political space of Ukraine. That is, the processes of separatism in Ukraine instigated by Russia were created and spread through external influence to destabilise the political situation in Ukraine and further establish Russia's political control in the regions of Ukraine. The result

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⁵¹ JONSSON, Oscar. The evolution of Russian hybrid warfare: EU/NATO. *Center for European Policy Analysis Research Series*, 2021, vol. 1/28/21, pp. 1-62; KAUNERT, Christian. EU Eastern partnership, hybrid warfare and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *EUCRIM: The European Criminal Law Associations' Forum*, 2022, vol. 2, pp. 158-164. <https://doi.org/10.30709/eucrim-2022-011>

⁵² BUZIASHVILI, E., GITASHVILI, G., KHIDASHELI, T. Russian and Chinese influences in Georgia: 2021 update. *European Values Center for Security Policy Research*, 2021, vol.1, n 22, pp. 1-30; DEEN, Bob, ZWEERS, Wouter. *Walking the tightrope towards the EU: Moldova's vulnerabilities amid war in Ukraine* [online]. Den Haag: The Clingendael Institute, 2022 [viewed 25 September 2024]. Available from: <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/walking-the-tightrope-towards-the-eu.pdf>;

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⁵³ KUZIO, Taras. Russian stereotypes and myths of Ukraine and Ukrainians and why Novorossiia failed. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2019, vol. 52, n 4, pp. 297-309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2019.10.007>

of such processes, as evidenced by historical realities, is annexing a part of Ukraine's territory.

Ukrainian researchers Andriiash⁵⁴, Kosilova⁵⁵, Pavliatenko⁵⁶, and Khomenko⁵⁷ also investigated the ethnopolitical nature of separatist movements in Ukraine. For example, Tsebenko⁵⁸ focuses on the ideological component of separatism. However, the scholar concludes that the ideological background is artificial, being formed not based on historical processes, but as a reaction of representatives of separatist movements to the policy of the central government towards the territory and residents of Donbas⁵⁹.

On the other hand, researchers such as Voronovici⁶⁰, Maslova and Muntyan⁶¹, Shynkaruk⁶², and Yurchenko⁶³ do conclude that influence on the intensification of separatist movements in Donbas in 2014-201 was external, but this conclusion is limited to direct forms of interference by Russia at the stage of the formation of quasi-state entities. However, the fact that each type of separatism - political, economic, legal, religious, ethnic, national, or religious - can be subject to an external factor that changes the nature of the development of separatism and becomes the first cause of separatism in a particular region of

⁵⁴ ANDRIIASH, V. Secession in the modern world: Risks and threats for Ukraine. *Democratic Governance* [online], 2013, vol. 11. Available from: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/DeVr_2013_11_8

⁵⁵ KOSILOVA, O. Separatism in Ukraine: Prerequisites, reasons, methods of countermeasures and legal regulation of countermeasures. *Constitutional and Legal Academic Studies*, 2017, vol. 4, pp. 19-27.

⁵⁶ PAVLIATENKO, O. V. Conditions and factors of the spread of separatist sentiments in Ukraine: The ethno-national aspect. *Bulletin of NTUU "KPI". Politology. Sociology. Law* [online], 2017, vol. 1/2, n 33/34, pp. 65-69. Available from: <http://www.socio-journal.kpi.kiev.ua/archive/2017/1-2/12.pdf>

⁵⁷ KHOMENKO, O. I. The Kremlin's "Donetsk bridgehead" during the Orange Revolution as a testing ground for the strategy of anti-Ukrainian discourse. *Ukrainian Studies* [online], 2018, vol. 3, pp. 82-100. Available from: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Ukr_2018_3_7

⁵⁸ TSEBENKO, O. O. Ideological foundations of separatism. *Actual Problems of International Relations* [online]. 2011, vol. 99, n 2, pp. 90-104. Available from: [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/apmv_2011_99\(2\)_15](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/apmv_2011_99(2)_15)

⁵⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁰ VORONOVICI, Alexandr. Separatism and the uses of the past: Politics of history in the self-proclaimed Republics of Donbas. *Cultures of History Forum*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.25626/0147>

⁶¹ MASLOVA, N. M., MUNTJAN, P. P. Separatism in the modern world: Source, causes and regional varieties. *Materials of the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference: "Strategies of Innovative Development of Natural Sciences: Experience, Problems and Prospects"*. Kropyvnytskiy: Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State University, 2018, pp. 212-216. Available from: <https://cusu.edu.ua/ua/konferen-2018-2019-arhiv/strategii-innovatsiinoho-rozvytku-pryrodnych-ykh-dystyplin-dosvid-problemy-ta-perspektyvy/sektsiia-4/7675-separatyzm-u-suchasnomu-sviti-sut-prychyny-ta-rehionalni-riznovydy>

⁶² SHYNKARUK, K. Ukraine – Russia: Scenarios for the development of relations until 2020. *Compass 2020: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Research Series*, 2020, pp. 1-14.

⁶³ YURCHENKO, Yuliya. *Ukraine and the empire of capital: From marketisation to armed conflict*. London: Pluto Press, 2018.

a specific country remains unaddressed by the scientific community. Instead, Lysianskyi⁶⁴, in his research, comes to a clear conclusion about the external nature of separatist movements in Ukraine instigated by Russia. Thus, the scientist substantiates the phenomenon of separatism as a technology of undermining the territorial integrity of a sovereign state and, in particular, as a stage of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine to annex the latter's territories.

Such a conclusion requires the political leadership of Ukraine to develop a model for countering such manifestations and combatting their negative consequences, as well as to develop a set of state policies to respond to separatist violent extremism. For example, Maiboroda⁶⁵ speaks of the need not only for political decisions but also for consolidation of Ukrainian society in the context of Russian aggression, formation of means of countering the EIS and specific cases of influence of actors acting in favour of Russia⁶⁶. Unfortunately, the issue of countering EIS is still at the research stage, as the recent identification of this phenomenon as a technology of aggression by the Russian Federation requires further investigation.

6. Conclusion

The relevance of the problem of EIS for Ukraine has acquired civilizational significance. This phenomenon has become a driving and destructive component of modern processes in Ukraine. The intensification of separatist movements instigated by Russia, further escalation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine up to the direct invasion and temporary occupation of Ukrainian territories by Russian troops – all this became possible due to the active use of the EIS by the enemy. Although similar demonstrations took place in the post-Soviet space on the part of the Russian Federation in such countries as Moldova (TMR and Gagauzia); and Sakartvelo (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), it is in Ukraine that the separatism has reached a level of conceptualization that has turned it into one of the stages of the hybrid war on the part of the Russian Federation. As a modern

⁶⁴ LYSIANSKYI, P. L., MAMONTOVA, E. V. The inspired separatism in Ukraine as a political phenomenon and scientific category. *Actual Problems of Politics*, 2022, vol. 70, pp. 49-57. <https://doi.org/10.32782/app.v70.2022.8>

⁶⁵ MAIBORODA, O. Consolidation of Ukrainian society in the conditions of Russian aggression: The problem of finding optimal political solutions. *Scientific Notes of the Institute of Political and Ethnonational Studies named after I. F. Curacao of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*, 2018, vol. 5-6, pp. 138-157.

⁶⁶ *Idem*.

socio-political phenomenon, the EIS is of exogenous origin, supported and stimulated by third states (actors), characterized by regional manifestations, and aimed at political destabilization of the state in which it is implemented. EIS lacks a historical foundation or civilizational development narrative. Its manifestations are often regional, relying on artificially constructed ties—ethnic, social, or religious—with the state inspiring separatism. Thus, the political basis of the EIS is the idea of ethnic and social unity of social groups with the corresponding space of the aggressor state. Separatism is a stage of hybrid warfare, and therefore, its spread requires an appropriate international response by recognizing such actions by the country that inspires it with aggression.

The scientific value of the results obtained is that the problem of EIS requires developing a transparent system of indicators for preventing and predicting the risks of its occurrence and developing a model for overcoming its consequences. To this end, the article presents several approaches to identifying and counteracting the manifestations of EIS, both at the emergence stage and its transition to the next phase or stage of hybrid warfare. This is the most destructive effect of EIS on the country, as seen in the case of Ukraine. It has been active since the so-called congress in Severodonetsk, which took place in 2004 when the first determinants of Russia's influence on internal political, ethnic, religious and social processes in Ukraine were outlined. During this period, the boundaries of the territories of EIS spreading in Ukraine were outlined, which was later implemented in 2013-2014 through artificial regional referendums. It should be emphasized that all manifestations and forms of the EIS violent ideology go beyond the state's legal framework and, therefore, require an appropriate response from both the political leadership and law enforcement agencies. The lack of an effective counter-EIS system, combined with the innovative nature of this hybrid warfare stage, has posed a significant challenge to Ukraine's political leadership, enabling the adversary to further its agenda, culminating in the occupation of Ukrainian territories. EIS represents a new form of separatism, emerging as a sophisticated tool of Russian influence in Ukraine. It spreads through artificially engineered conflicts facilitated by Russian agents and political actors, ultimately aiming to annex Ukrainian territories.

The practical significance of these findings lies in conceptualizing EIS as a distinct technology, enabling the analysis of its negative impacts and the development of indicators for identifying its progression.

It is advisable to focus further research on developing a system of indicators that would allow the risks of externally inspired separatism in the country to be identified and an effective state strategy to counter the foreign policy of EIS to be developed.

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