Partition, Autonomy, Secession. Three Roads to Separatism

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RÉSUMÉS

In this paper three basic manifestations of separatism are examined, all three with important theoretical and practical consequences: partition (the “velvet divorce”), secession (the “confrontational divorce”) and autonomy to which a special attention is paid. Autonomy and other forms of devolution are often considered with great reserve if not hostility by states. In an attempt to address state fears, devolution-autonomy is approached mainly (a) by attempting to set clear-cut criteria for its realisation in some instances, (b) by pointing out that the record for successful military rather than political solutions is increasingly bleak as far as states are concerned and (c) that the “slippery slope” effect, the well-known nightmare of states, though real if far from pervasive and that the main responsibility for its occurrence lays in fact more in the behaviour of reluctant central authorities and less on recalcitrant separatists. Finally the principle of self-determination, which is central to the whole question of partition, secession and autonomy, is revisited and various avenues of revision are pointed out in order to overcome the limitations of a self-determination confined only to freedom from colonialism (as it is the case today under international law).