

Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?

Taras Kuzio

York University, Ontario, Canada

When the study of transitions moved from Latin America and southern Europe scholars initially assumed that transition in these two regions would be regime-based 'double transitions' of democratisation and marketisation. Gradually, it was accepted by scholars that many post-communist states inherited weak states and institutions, thereby adding a third factor to the transition process of stateness. This 'triple transition' has been largely accepted as sufficient to understand post-communist transitions and, in some cases, includes nationality questions. This article builds on the 'triple transition' by separating the national and stateness questions within its third aspect and argues that although both processes are interlinked they should be nevertheless separated into separate components (democratisation and marketisation are treated separately but are also closely related phenomena). This article argues two points. First, stateness and the nationality question were until recently ignored by scholars because these were not factors in earlier transitions. Secondly, they were ignored because the relationship of nationhood to the civic state is still under-theorised.

Until the mid-1990s the bulk of the literature on post-communist transition (herein defined as 'transitology') largely ignored stateness and nearly completely ignored the national question. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, p. 366) therefore concluded that 'stateness problems must increasingly be a central concern of political activists and theorists alike'. Linz and Stepan believe that these two issues were largely ignored in the first half of the 1990s because they had not influenced earlier transitions in Latin America and southern Europe. The classic four-volume study of Latin American transitions by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Lawrence Whitehead (1986) therefore largely ignored stateness. Yet as early as 1985 Theda Skocpol had argued in favour of 'Bringing the state back in'.

Until the second half of the 1990s the bulk of transitology tacitly assumed that post-communist transition would follow the pattern of earlier transitions in southern Europe and Latin America. In these two regions the focus was upon only two areas – democratisation and marketisation – because these transitions took place within long-established states or their former imperial metropolis. In most cases national integration had been largely achieved (for an earlier discussion on how this applies to central-eastern Europe see Terry, 1993; Schmitter and Karl, 1994; Bunce, 1995; Karl and Schmitter, 1995; and Munck, 1997).

With the addition of stateness by scholars to the framework, post-communist transition became a 'triple' transition (Offe, 1991), in contrast to the 'double transition' that post-authoritarian states had to grapple with in southern Europe and Latin America. Some scholars continued to conflate a four-pronged transition into two broad areas – democratisation/marketisation and state/nation-building (Hall, 1996,

p. 22). The 'triple transition' largely focused upon central-eastern Europe (Przeworski, 1995), a region with three monoethnic states (Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary) and where national integration was less problematical than in the former USSR, with the exception of Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia from the former Yugoslavia. The greater the degree of cultural, linguistic and religious pluralism in the immature state the more complex will be the democratic transition. This does not rule out creating consociational norms (e.g. in Ukraine between Ukrainian and Russian speakers) but this takes up energy and time which could have been devoted to political-economic reform (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Many citizens in post-Soviet states exhibit multiple identities (linguistic, regional, inter-cultural and Sovietophile) that compete with the allegiance requested from them to their new national states. In the eastern Ukrainian Donbas region some opinion polls in the mid-1990s found that upwards of half of respondents defined their identity as 'Soviet' (not Ukrainian or even Russian).

But, when referring to post-communist states, did transitologists go far enough in their development of a transition framework that subsumed stateness and the national question within the 'triple transition'? (see Kuzio, 1998 and 2000). This article's first argument is that it is more illuminating to separate stateness and the national question as overlapping but 'conceptually and historically different processes' (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 20). I define this as therefore a 'quadruple' transition by not subsuming stateness and nationhood into one category. Dealing separately with the national question will also help us to understand why post-communist transitions have failed in states such as Belarus, where the weakness of the national idea has directly contributed to the consolidation of an authoritarian, neo-Soviet regime (see Eke and Kuzio, 2000).

A second argument that this article brings out is that early discussions of, and policy proposals for, central-eastern Europe may have sidestepped stateness and the nationality questions because of the still insufficient work undertaken by political theory *vis-à-vis* the relationship between nationhood, the state and a liberal market democracy. Although Offe did understand his 'triple transition' to include the national question, scholars have usually taken 'triple' to mean only democracy, market and the state (see Kubicek, 2000). Thus, greater attention should be devoted to these two questions of stateness and nationhood as they influence the success rate of democratic consolidation (Linz and Stepan, 1997). This article builds on the work undertaken by a small number of political theorists such as Rustow (1970), Dahl (1986 and 1989) and Canovan (1996) agrees with Roeder (1999, p. 856) that 'successful democratic transitions are improbable when national revolutions are incomplete'.

Nationhood and the civic state

In western Europe change of such magnitude as that taking place in post-communist countries did not take place simultaneously, as a state and nation more often than not had preceded the creation of democracies and market economies. Meanwhile, transition in Latin America and southern Europe had been regime-based (Motyl, 1997, p. 53).

The situation is different in post-communist states. Only a small minority of them are monoethnic. The majority inherited national minorities, secessionist threats, the need to define the 'we' and the basis for national integration, obtain legal recognition of inherited borders and establish a constitutional framework within a short period of time. Civil society, fully functioning institutions and national unity are largely absent within them.

Margaret Canovan (1996) is one of a few political theorists who has persuasively argued that nationhood is a necessary condition of the liberal democratic welfare state. This factor has largely been ignored by political theory which assumes that a territorially bound political community (i.e. civic nation) is already in place. Nationhood is at the heart of political theory, Canovan believes, because liberal democracies require states and political communities. The question of how they appear is, however, ignored in the theoretical literature and is perhaps a factor explaining the reluctance of transitologists to discuss the national question as separate from stateness.

Nationhood generates collective power, creates a 'we' (unity, legitimacy, permanence), enables mobilisation and representation and produces people who are ready to make the highest of sacrifices for a political community that is both modern and based upon some ethno-cultural and historical factors. The presumed existence of this nationhood as a pre-requisite for liberal democracy also assumes recognised borders, and a 'people' constituting a political community within those borders who do not call into question these boundaries. Democratisation in the absence of agreement on the proper boundaries of the political unit will not be consolidated (Dahl, 1989, p. 207).

In a celebrated article, Rustow stated his belief that stable democracies not only require sound economies and high per capita incomes. They also need a consensus on certain values and beliefs through which the community is united, boundaries are fixed and the composition of citizenship is made 'continuous'. In a democracy, therefore, the majority of citizens 'must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong'. National unity, Rustow believes, means that 'There must be a prior sense of community, preferably a sense of community quietly taken for granted that is above mere opinion and mere agreement' (*ibid.*, p. 350).

This is certainly not the case among many Soviet successor states. In the former USSR, communist parties in the non-Russian successor states do not accept the legitimacy of these newly independent states and instead seek to reintegrate them into a new union. Such a political constituency did not exist in earlier transitions or in the outer former Soviet empire. In Belarus this Sovietophile group captured the state in 1994 and has halted political and economic reform (see Eke and Kuzio, 2000). In Ukraine, Sovietophiles are supported by a quarter of the electorate and can reach 40 per cent support when the left is united (as in the second round of the Ukrainian presidential elections in November 1999). In Russia communists and nationalists, who also do not recognise the legitimacy of the Russian Federation, commanded as high as 50 per cent of the vote in elections during the 1990s.

A modern liberal democracy is also usually a welfare state with proportional taxation. Canovan argues, therefore, that 'social justice will be politically feasible

only in a polity with a high degree of communal solidarity' where a 'community of obligation' is in place (Canovan, 1996, p. 28). Such a 'community of obligation' requires there to be mutual trust, a shared overarching national identity and common loyalties. David Miller (1996) also argues that 'trust' is required for any democracy to function effectively. A shared national identity (or 'nationality' in Miller's term) is a precondition to achieve certain political aims such as social justice and a deliberative democracy. Trust requires solidarity not merely within groups but across them, and this in turn depends upon a common identity of the kind that nationality alone can provide.

Every society requires such values for it to constitute a cohesive polity. These are not usually morally neutral because they inevitably endorse one set of behaviour, that of the values of the core nation. The existence of these commonly held values that underpin the overarching societal culture and national identity of political communities are largely absent in post-Soviet countries. The transition period from communism is therefore also the scene of antagonistic debate about how to define the values contributing to the societal culture of the newly emerging political community. This, in turn, is made all the more complicated by the inherited regional divisions and the legacies of tsarist and Soviet nationality policies which often divided the titular nation and brought in large numbers of Russian migrants.

Modern liberal democracies depend upon the collective power generated by national (particularist) loyalties which are inconsistent with the universalist loyalties of liberalism. Nevertheless, the problem of national unity has always been at the root of politics, as it is in post-Soviet transitions. As Motyl points out, 'Nationalism connects nations with the "essence" of the political states – and claims that all nations should have their own political organizations in control of administration and coercion in some geographic space ...' (2000, p. 80).

The assumption cannot be made that central-eastern Europe and the majority of post-Soviet states inherited national unity. Of the 22 post-communist European states only three (the Czech Republic, Serbia and the Russian Federation) inherited the infrastructure of the former metropolis. Other post-communist states inherited some degree of stateness (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania) or were incorporated into other states (the German Democratic Republic). The Soviet successor states were a mixed group. Only the three Baltic states could draw upon a tradition of inter-war statehood and their titular nations were not divided. Two of them (Latvia, Estonia) did, however, inherit from the Soviet era large numbers of Russian-speaking minorities, making national integration difficult.

Post-Soviet states therefore launched into democratisation and marketisation without the many state and national attributes commonly assumed to be necessary for the success of a market economic and liberal democratic project.

The role of civic nationalism in post-communist transitions

Is there a link between national identity and civil society? If such a relationship is established we can argue that it will have an impact upon the transition process. A weak national identity leading to a weak civil society will therefore negatively

influence the 'quadruple transition'. Democratic consolidation will produce a robust civil society that will help create a sense of national solidarity within the political unit while taming and marginalising ethnic nationalism.

The strength of civil society and national identity are therefore closely interlinked. Nationalist mobilisation against communism was greater in those regions where national identity was higher (the three Baltic states, western Ukraine, Poland). Areas with weak identities (e.g. eastern Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia) played no role in the national democratic movement in the late Soviet era and have been bastions of support for Sovietophile political parties. In contrast, areas that have robust national identities (e.g. western Ukraine and the three Baltic states) followed similar patterns to central-eastern Europe in removing communism at an earlier stage and endorsing political and economic reform. Breaking with the communist past quickly and decisively is likely to lead to more rapid reform and success in the quadruple transition process (Bunce, 1999, p. 790). A rapid break with the past was only possible in areas with robust national identities that usually perceived the communist regime as 'foreign'. In the post-communist world this was only possible in central-eastern Europe, the three Baltic states and western Ukraine where civic nationalism was strong; in the remainder of the former USSR no decisive break occurred except as a form of ethnic nationalism, which led to the near collapse of the state (Georgia) (Nodia, 1996).

It is precisely nationality that, 'provides the cohesion which would otherwise have been lacking in those civil societies' (Shils, 1995, p. 118). In inclusive political communities, such as most Western liberal democracies, all of its inhabitants are citizens and therefore members of the civic nation. In such inclusive states, where civic nationalism predominates, the nation and civil society are coterminous. The granting of citizenship assumes that the citizen will become a member of the civic nation (political community) and that a 'particular nationality' (usually defined as the titular or core nation) will have 'precedence' over all others within the bounded territory of the community.

How does the absence of a nation affect civil society? Shils believes that without a nation there can be no civil society. The absence of national unity generated by the existence of a civic nation will therefore directly affect civil society. Without a civic nation the state does not possess the necessary preconditions to create a civil society, an effective constitution, laws or citizenship because the core of civil society is the 'dominant nation'.

But how will civil society be affected if this 'dominant nation' is itself divided, as in some post-Soviet states? This is yet another obstacle faced by such states in the creation of civil societies. Consequently, a divided titular nation (Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan) impedes the formation of national integration and therefore by default the rise of civil society. Areas with weak identities are also likely to be the most nostalgic for the former communist regime during periods of socio-economic crisis, a crisis from which some post-Soviet states, such as Russia and Ukraine, only emerged in 2000.

The disintegration of empires leads to the proliferation of multiple identities that are not conducive to promoting civil society and national integration. Russophone Ukrainians and Russians, with weak national identities, are inactive between

elections and remain the mainstay of Ukraine's delegative democracy (Kubicek, 2000). Civil society is consequently more active in western Ukraine where national identity is stronger and citizens take an active part in politics both during and between elections.

The relationship between civil society and national identity lies at the heart of the transition process in post-communist states. Civic nationalism is an occasional friend and not an eternal foe of civil society. When both are opposed to a despotic regime and/or colonial rule they are natural allies, as inclusive civic nationalism commonly found in liberal democracies. If nationalism is ethnic, exclusive and integral it is more than likely to oppose civil society. Rather than rejecting any role for nationalism per se, and thereby only discussing transition in a triple context (Kubicek, 2000; Wilson, 1997), scholars should identify how nationalism and identity can be mobilised along civic – not ethnic – lines in order for it to reinforce – not suppress – civil society.

Transitologists have perhaps been unwilling to bring the 'nation' back in along the lines of stateness because nationalism is often defined as an ally of ethnic exclusivity and xenophobia. But to deny the centrality of national questions to post-communist transitions is to negate the close interrelationship between civil society and ethno-cultural factors in *all* civic states (Kuzio, 2001). Without a common identity and group solidarity, which presupposes trust, societal mobilisation for the goals of political-economic modernisation are not possible. An atomised population, regionally divided, cynically disposed in their ability to effect change and lacking trust with other citizens in the same country are unlikely to generate either a vibrant civil society or societal mobilisation towards stated goals (Kubicek, 2000). National unity and integration therefore play a central role in sustaining civil society and generating mobilisation.

Towards a new framework for post-communist 'transitology'

When discussing the incompatibility of 'simultaneous transition', scholars often only address the problem of creating a market economy at a time of democratisation. Scholars rarely address the incompatibility of state-institution and civic nation-building with democratisation and marketisation.

I would argue that the unwillingness to integrate stateness and nationality within democratisation studies does not provide a complete picture of the complexity of the transition process:

- *Post-authoritarian transition* in Latin America and southern Europe largely focused only upon democratisation and – to a lesser extent – marketisation. State-institution and civic nation-building played no role in these transitions. In the majority of cases in central-eastern Europe transition is also post-authoritarian democratisation, as it was in Latin America and southern Europe. Some elements of a market economy also existed in many of these states (e.g. the service sector and private agriculture in Poland).
- *Post-colonial transition* best fits the quadruple nature of transition in some former Yugoslav states and the former USSR because it more closely resembles states

having to come to terms with fundamental questions of stateness, nationality, the relationship to the former ruling 'other' and national minorities (Kuzio, 2001, forthcoming a and b). This quadruple transition includes democratisation, marketisation, state-institution and civic nation-building. These post-colonial transitions are also simultaneously dealing with totalitarian legacies, which was largely absent from central-eastern Europe after 1953 when they evolved into authoritarian regimes.

Table 1: Transitions in comparative perspective

| 'Double (democracy/market)' | 'Triple (democracy/market/ stateness)' | 'Quadruple (democracy/market/ state/nation)' |
|---|--|--|
| Latin America and southern Europe, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic | Remainder of central-eastern Europe | Former Yugoslavia and USSR, Slovakia |

Few scholars have grappled with the added complication of post-Soviet states not only introducing political and economic reform simultaneously, but also building institutions and a state while forging national unity. The democratic process presupposes a unit that encapsulates both a bounded state *and* a civic nation because all civic states are composed of both civic and ethno-cultural factors. Scholars who have subscribed to a 'triple transition' framework have often tacitly assumed that pure civic states exist in practice (see Kubicek, 2000; Wilson, 1997). Liberal democracies have only been created within national states and therefore any discussion of stateness – as an additional component of post-communist transition – should be expanded by bringing in the national question. If we were to follow the advice discussed earlier, the proper sequencing for post-communist transition should be first state- and nation-building, secondly establishing a market economy and only finally a democracy. Instead, we have all four processes occurring simultaneously (Bunce, 1999, p. 774; Offe, 1991, pp. 871–872). As Offe argues, 'This upheaval is a revolution without a historical model and a revolution without a revolutionary theory' (1991, p. 866).

Many scholars are now arriving at the conclusion that it is precisely the weakness of civic (in contrast to ethnic) nationalism which is proving to be a negative influence upon the post-Soviet transition process. Mobilisation in support of political and economic modernisation is less likely if civic nationalism is not present. In countries with developed civic national identities, such as Poland, civic nationalism has been important in promoting domestic reform as part of a foreign policy agenda of 'returning to Europe'. In immature states where new nations are created from the ruins of multinational states or empire, such as in the former Yugoslavia and USSR, nationalism is all too often likely to be ethnic (e.g. Georgia, Moldova

and Chechnya) rather than civic. Ethnic violence tends to occur in unconsolidated democracies because transitions to democracies have tended to trigger 'some of the world's bloodiest nationalist struggles' (Snyder, 2000, p. 16). Democratisation in its early stages can often encourage threatened elites and groups to utilise ethnic nationalism and/or keep their states 'institutionally weak and manipulative' (ibid., pp. 54–55). In other states, such as Belarus, the weakness of national identity *per se* makes *both* civic or ethnic nationalism impossible and the country therefore seeks to reintegrate with the former imperial metropolis.

In the absence of a legitimising ideology for political-economic reform, the transition process lacks the ability to mobilise the population and can be attacked and derailed by ethnic nationalists and communists on both extremes of the political spectrum. Civic nation-building is therefore central to the political-economic transition process, preferably prior to democratisation. 'In the postcommunist world, stable democracy has triumphed only in countries that have solved their nationness problem' (Roeder, 1999, p. 860). Philip Roeder argues that because the national revolutions were incomplete in many post-communist states, we are witnessing problems in their political and economic transitions. If a national state was established prior to communist rule (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria), democratisation is likely to be faster. 'In short, a consolidated nation as the core of the state is a precondition as well as a parsimonious predictor of successful democratisation in the first decade of postcommunist politics' (ibid., p. 863).

When discussing transition in post-communist countries we therefore need to look not only at questions of stateness, Offe, Roeder and a minority of scholars argue, but also at those within the national domain, such as identity, national unity, regionalism and minorities. All of these areas influence the fate of the democratic transition.

Conclusion

This article has made three arguments. Firstly, transition in post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet states is all-embracing as it requires a far greater degree of change than that which occurred earlier in Latin America or southern Europe, and also in the majority of central-eastern Europe. Transition in these three regions was post-authoritarian and largely regime-based. In the case of earlier transitions in Latin America and southern Europe these can be classified as 'double' (democratisation/marketisation).

Secondly, a minority of scholars (Offe, Linz and Stepan) have expanded the dual transition undertaken in Latin America and southern Europe into a triple-based one. This has tended to conflate stateness and nationness into the third added element of the transition process. I have argued that a more insightful understanding of transition in the former Yugoslavia and former USSR would be undertaken if we separated these two elements into a third and fourth transition, which I have termed a quadruple transition. Although they are closely related phenomena, stateness can be resolved by legislatures and decrees and in a shorter time frame than consolidating national identities in people's hearts and minds. The time frame for the former may be counted in decades while the latter is likely to take generations.

Twenty-seven states emerged from communism in the early 1990s, some from totalitarianism and empire, others from multinational federations and some with liberalised politics and consolidated nation states. 'Historical factors therefore, produced different outcomes, which in turn produced contrasting postsocialist pathways' (Bunce, 1999, p. 790). When dealing with transition issues in post-communist states, scholars would be advised to discuss them within a quadruple framework in those post-Yugoslav and Soviet states that inherited both weak states and nations. Transitions in these post-Soviet states should therefore be defined as 'quadruple'.

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