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Brusylovska O.

Prof. Dr (Political Sciences), Department of International Relations,
Odessa Mechnikov National University, r.32, French Bul., 24/26, Odessa,
65058, Ukraine, tel. +380482633259, e-mail brusylovska@gmail.com
ORCID orcid.org/0000-0003-0519-4206

**POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES:
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND RESEARCH PROBLEMS¹**

The article is sanctified to research of, firstly, reasons of system difference between post-Soviet and post-communist transit of European countries, secondly, the exposure of actual nature of the post-Soviet regimes. The aim of this research is a show of the different methodological approaches to the study of political transformations of former Soviet Union countries at the beginning of XXI century.

Key words: political transformations, post-Soviet countries, research methodology.

Raising of problem. The problem of defining the gray zone regimes remains one of the central themes in contemporary transition and democracy studies. In recent years, many political scientists have tried to solve this problem. However, there is still no consensus on how to name the hybrid regimes. Main questions in relation to political transformation of former Soviet Union countries remain, firstly, the exposures of reasons of system difference between post-Soviet and post-communist transit of countries of Europe, secondly, the exposure of actual nature of the post-Soviet regimes.

Analysis of the last researches. Thomas Carothers pointed to the uselessness of associating hybrid regimes with democracy no matter which qualifier accompanies it. For him, these regimes are not necessarily transitioning to democracy as transitology simplistically assumes. In fact, they may not undergo any political change at all. Nor do they unavoidably follow the teleological path from authoritarianism toward consolidated democracy. There are some other alternative directions they might choose to follow. Moreover, hybrid regimes can choose not to choose any of the existing directions or, worse, not to move at all.

The known methodological approaches are offered by such known Western scientists as Ulrich Beck [1] and Larry Diamond [2]. Their works are disrobed the features of development of transit societies in the conditions of global crisis. However, summarizing picture of post-communist development is impossible to imagine on the base of the use of their works. Democratization often brakes or the authoritarian orders renewed, regenerated by a pseudo-

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democratic rhetoric. There is a necessity of further scientific efforts in an order to produce the best methodological scopes of researches of political transformations of post-Soviet states.

The aim of the article is a show of the different methodological approaches to the study of political transformations of former Soviet Union countries at the beginning of XXI century. Among **tasks** will distinguish the following: 1) reviewing of «transitions to democracy» literature; 2) understanding of «quaduple» transitions comparing with «double» and «triple» ones; 3) revealing of pro's and contra's of «sultanism» theory.

Paul Kubicek in his article «Post-communist political studies: ten years later, twenty years behind?» insisted that «many of those who study post-communist transformations have searched for a broader, more comparative rubric into which they can place their studies» [3, p. 302].

According Kubicek, the one of choice has been that of the «transitions to democracy» literature, spawned by the publication of Schmitter, O'Donnell, and Whitehead's «Transitions from Authoritarian Rule». This work examined movements to democracy in Southern Europe and Latin America, and many have explicitly used its categories and frameworks to inform their studies of post-communist regime change. More broadly, comparison between «East» and «South» are widespread, leading to what some call the emergence of paradigms of «transitology» and «consolidology». From one perspective, this development can be seen as logical, almost inevitable, and potentially quite fruitful. Many post-communist states are in a transition to democracy, and the question of which states will become democratic and what stands in the way of democratic consolidation easily rank among the most interesting and timely in post-communist political studies. Moreover, given the ready-made frameworks of those who studied previous transitions, it makes sense to borrow and adapt the findings of others. Finally, this body of literature provides an obvious segue for post-communist studies to enter the mainstream of comparative politics. Schmitter argued that the post-communist cases can be treated «conceptually and theoretically equivalent to those that preceded them». His hope, of course, was that use of this comparative framework would both inform the study of post-communist transformations and contribute to the broader study of democratization [3, p. 302].

The transitology literature, however, concluded Kubicek, does suffer from several shortcomings, especially when applied to post-communist cases. The earlier works of this genre tend to downplay the impact of institutional legacies from the old regime, they adopt a teleology that may not be universally appropriate, the emphasis on voluntarism (elites can «craft» democracies) makes it essentially untestable and ungeneralizable, and they often overlook a host of issues central to democratic transition and consolidation. Civil society, whose «resurrection» is central to the transitology framework, may not always be unequivocally pushing for liberalization, it may simply fail to organize itself, or groups in civil society may make alliances with the powers-that-be. Accounting for the differences in civil society's strength and role is beyond the pale of transitology, as it remains an exogenous variable. Transi-

tology may be too «political» a framework, in the sense that it ignores how underlying economic and social structures may persist despite «democratic change» and thus subvert political outcomes.

Valerie Bunce, as Kubicek quoted, had led the charge on this front, arguing that one cannot simply transfer models across regions. We risk, she claims, falling victim to «designer social science» and comparing apples with kangaroos! Some of her concerns are echoed by Barbara Geddes, who recently noted that despite twenty plus years of studying democratization, we have learned very little. There is no modal transition, no iron-clad laws. The possibilistic and voluntaristic structure of the transitions literature produces few testable hypotheses. In addition, the most common conditions that Schmitter and colleagues found in Latin America, such as splits in the ruling elite and the ability to make pacts, are missing in a number of post-communist cases [3, p. 302].

The common wisdom, expressed by Geddes and by Linz and Stepan in their encyclopaedic volume, is «post-totalitarianism» differs from more generic «authoritarianism» on a number of fronts, including elite structures, the mode of transition, and the post-transition agenda itself (economic and political reform). Schmitter and Karl claimed that after one tries to incorporate post-communist cases in the transitions paradigm one will be able to see if in fact one has engaged in «concept-stretching» [3, p. 302].

Another inspiring article, «Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?», belongs to Taras Kuzio, who insisted that 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 [4]. 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.

His 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). The 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. Post-communist transition became a 'triple' transition (Offe), 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) [4, p. 168].

The 'triple transition' largely focused upon central-eastern Europe (Przeworski), 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). 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). Kuzio defines 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 [4, p. 169].

Table 1

Transitions in comparative perspective (according T. Kuzio)

'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

But may be the best way to understand special features of post-Soviet countries is using the «sultanism» theory, as it brilliantly did Farid Guliyev in his work «Post-Soviet Azerbaijan: Transition to Sultanistic Semiauthoritarianism? An Attempt at Conceptualization».

He started from the sultanistic regimes' frames of Houchang E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz (1998). «They predicted that sultanism's reemergence should not be ruled out; however, they could not expect their prophecy to be so promptly self-fulfilling. Five years later (October 2003), Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev succeeded in transferring presidential power to his son, Ilham Aliyev. Dynasticism was the first sign that the perception of Azerbaijan transitioning to democracy was at least overly optimistic.» [5, p. 394]. Peculiarities of Azerbaijani regime give us a solid ground to claim that it does not fit the pure authoritarian model.

Sultanism as an analytical concept has been applied to some Latin American cases (plus the Marcos regime in the Philippines and the Pahlavi regime in Iran). Through its theory-building case study the present research, on the one hand, complements Ottaway's theoretical framework and, on the other hand, reintroduces sultanism, now used to interpret a distinct case of the post-Soviet political transformation. The concepts of semi-authoritarianism

and sultanism are not mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, mutually supplemental. As compared with pure semi-authoritarianism and pure sultanism, the new framework that combines the two has some significant advantages. Semi-authoritarianism is useful to explain more about formal institutions, whereas sultanism can be used to depict the informal dimension [5, p. 395].

Thus, while treating the cases of Central Asia and the Caucasus we must keep in mind that analysis of formal institutions (presidency, elections, civil society, etc.) can distract our attention from the core realm of pseudo-politics — competing clans as precivic forms of institutionalized relations. Future students of social change interested in interpreting political processes in the Caucasus and Central Asia will need to look deeper into informal structures. Societies in this region are different from Western ones, and Western scholarship's operational apparatus, based on experiences of Western democracies or Latin American and Southern and Eastern European democratization practices, is not always the best way of conceptualizing. Existing transitological scholarship, grounded in the Western political tradition of deliberating about formal institutions while analyzing politics, is only somewhat applicable to the Azerbaijani and Central Asian cases because in these societies (unlike Western or Western-type democracies) what matters most is ethnic, religious, regional, clan, community, family, personal, tribal, and other informal specific relations inherent in these societies [5, p. 403].

Guliyev's ultimate purpose is to design a new theory to fit the political context of post-communist Azerbaijan. Final stage of the chapter is the application of a newly invented sultanistic semi-authoritarian sub-category to demonstrate how Azerbaijan fits the neoteric model.

Sultanism (according F. Guliyev). *Pluralism:* Economic and social pluralism does not disappear but is subject to unpredictable and despotic intervention. No group or individual in civil society, political society, or the state is free from the sultan's exercise of despotic power. No rule of law. Low institutionalization. High fusion of private and public.

Ideology: Highly arbitrary manipulation of symbols. Extreme glorification of ruler. No elaborate or guiding ideology or even distinctive mentalities outside of despotic personalism. No attempt to justify major initiatives on the basis of ideology. Pseudo-ideology not believed by staff, subjects, or outside world.

Mobilization: Low but occasional manipulative mobilization of a ceremonial type by coercive or clientilistic methods without permanent organization. Periodic mobilization of parastate groups who use violence against groups targeted by the sultan.

Leadership: Highly personalistic and arbitrary. No rational legal constraints. Strong dynastic tendency. No autonomy in state careers. Leader unencumbered by ideology. Compliance to leaders based on intense fear and personal rewards. Staff of leader drawn from members of his family, friends, business associates, or men directly involved in use of violence to sustain the regime. Staff's position derives from their purely personal submission to the ruler [5, p. 408]. The present study suggests that we should better talk in

terms of semi-authoritarianisms, that is, various sub-categories of it. Semi-authoritarianism, Azerbaijani-style, has two important peculiarities: dynasticism and the dominance of informal politics. The latter has deep historic roots, can be related to Islam, and is similar to the Middle Eastern patterns of patrimonial leadership.

Traditional institutions survived the Soviet rule (due to «korenizatsiya»). Both characteristics are found in another form of political regime — sultanism. The theory of sultanism gives us a better grasp of these peculiarities of post-Soviet Azerbaijani politics. It points to the primacy of socio-cultural structures. The present research has shown that we can sort out Azerbaijan to a specific subcategory of semi-authoritarian political systems — sultanistic semi-authoritarianism. The fusion of semi-authoritarianism with sultanism, which is proposed as a result of this study, gives the analytical tool, which, to a certain extent, represents an attempt to revitalize the debate about the applicability of the transition to democracy model to post-Soviet societies with their weak states, distorted bureaucratic-rational way of legitimating and the lack of many institutions whose functions are accomplished and substituted by more tradition-based structures [5, p. 424]. To conclude, according Gulyev, Azerbaijan belongs to the gray zone majority of contemporary political regimes. However, the term «gray zone» is too ambivalent, and countries that fall in it differ in some essential aspects. In general, the introduction of the term «semi-authoritarianism» to delineate the gray zone regimes has significantly ameliorated the conceptualization of these regimes. The theory of semi-authoritarianism that was already there helped us to handle some principal challenges of the convention transitology. However, the case of Azerbaijan appeared to be more complicated (dynastic succession, the prevalence of informal institutions over legal-rational ones) and has challenged the theory of semi-authoritarianism. The study resulted in the establishment of the new framework that combines the two theories and is set forth as a more serviceable one.

Conclusions. The «coloured revolutions» on post-Soviet space clearly showed the fundamental incompleteness of institutional transit and outlined the degree of difference between the political systems formed in the republics of the former USSR and in the countries of Eastern Europe. Parliament-president republics were formed in the last; on post-Soviet space, after the exception of Baltic countries, temporal authoritarian hybrids aroused. Strong vestiges of traditional patriarchal society were saved in post-Soviet countries; such typical for the «Third world» phenomena are present in them as agrarian overpopulation, sharp social stratification, propensity to personification of power. Thus, methodological approach that today looks most acceptable for post-Soviet states is a comparative analysis not with the countries of post-communist Europe, but with the countries of the «Third world», that experienced the process of general modernization. The empirical case study has confirmed the validity and greater serviceability of the new sultanistic semi-authoritarian framework. However, the study recognizes that comparative research must be conducted to show whether the newly created model is generalizable or not.

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Брусиловська Ольга

кафедра міжнародних відносин ОНУ імені І. І. Мечникова
к. 32, Французький бул., 24/26, г. Одеса, 65058, Україна

ПОЛІТИЧНІ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ У ПОСТРАДЯНСЬКИХ ДЕРЖАВАХ: МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНІ ПІДХОДИ ТА ПРОБЛЕМИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Анотація

Стаття присвячена, по-перше, дослідженню причин системної різниці між пострадянським та посткомуністичним транзитом країн Європи, по-друге, викриттю дійсної природи пострадянських режимів. Метою даного дослідження є показ різних методологічних підходів до вивчення політичних трансформацій країн колишнього СРСР на початку ХХІ ст.

Ключові слова: політичні трансформації, пострадянські країни, методологія дослідження.

Брусиловская Ольга

кафедра международных отношений ОНУ имени И. И. Мечникова
к. 32, Французский бул., 24/26, г. Одесса, 65058, Украина

ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИИ В ПОСТСОВЕТСКИХ СТРАНАХ: МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПОДХОДЫ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

Аннотация

Статья посвящена, во-первых, исследованию причин системной разницы между постсоветским и посткоммунистическим транзитом стран Европы, во-вторых, осуждению истинной природы постсоветских режимов. Целью данного исследования является показ разных методологических подходов к изучению политических трансформаций стран бывшего СССР в начале ХХІ в.

Ключевые слова: политические трансформации, постсоветские страны, методология исследования.