

questions, but they seem to me to be at the appropriate level of generality for a book of this kind, and central to the motivating question that drives it.

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Lazenby, H. 2011. 'Is Age Special? Justice, Complete Lives and the Prudential Lifespan Account.' *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 28: 327–340.

Zenonas Norkus: *On Baltic Slovenia and Adriatic Lithuania: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Patterns in Post-communist Europe*
Vilnius 2012: Apostrofa, 375 pp.

In this rich book Zenonas Norkus aims to develop a general theory of patterns of post-communist transitions, constructed using the method of multi-value comparative qualitative analysis. He goes to great lengths to avoid the teleological traps of transitology in explaining the 'entire spectrum of economic and political outcomes of post-communist transformation' (p. 13). Even more ambitiously, the author aims to explicate the entire spectrum of political and economic outcomes of the post-socialist transformations. Norkus complements an impressive methodological display with in-depth historical inquiries. On the other hand, it seems legitimate to ask: does this allow the author to offer innovative insights, or does this amount to a re-iteration of the 'fanciful', yet rigid, comparative impetus of transition studies? This represents the lingering question for a work that surprisingly juxtaposes a very refined small intra-Baltic comparison, with a rather rigid, overarching comparison, that echoes the forcing and oftentimes static 'state-of-the-art' of political science transition studies.

The book begins with a neat layout of typologies of communist regimes following Kitschelt, which is laced with small inserts of interwar history. The scope is very wide: outside the typical clusters of CEE communist regimes, detailed dissections of China and Vietnam are used in the construction of in-depth variables. By building on his previous work on 'mechanistic approaches' [Norkus 2005], the author is extremely precise in delineating the strong and soft points of competing explanations of communist regimes (such as communism as path to modernisation and communism as totalitarianism). While a pinch of salt can be advocated in reading the overarching comparison of a centrally planned economy to an *oikos*, individual points about regime typologies warrant attention as they open up fascinating research avenues. To give just some examples, Norkus suggests pushing the path-starting moment of certain social phenomena in national-communist regimes to the interwar (p. 40), and argues that middle classes of patrimonial-communist regimes originate from villages and hence see their mobility as 'historical' success (p. 41). Simple and effective definitions and thresholds characterize the otherwise detailed categorisations—transition as exit (p. 43; unlike Kopecky and Mudde [2000], who define transition as the time-lapse between the dissolution of the old regime and the installation of a new one) and the country is considered as not being communist when Marxism-Leninism stops being the official or dominant discourse, *or* when the Communist Party loses its monopoly, *or* when a free market starts to function (p. 44). It is exactly in this line of thought that the author confirms the existing consensus that transition and consolidation are different (p. 89).

From the very careful categorisation stems one of the author's central aims: a 'hard' theory which can predict outcomes under different combinations of initial con-

ditions, even ones that have never been observed (p. 63). By contrast, a weak theory only describes existing cases and parameters. Here a dialogue is obvious with the vast majority of transitologists that forecasted polarizing outcomes (either success—liberal-democracy, or failure—a return to authoritarianism; Kopecky and Mudde [2000]). Norkus' variable construction and categorisation process is painstaking and more encompassing than other models [e.g. Stepan and Linz 1997]. The qualitative comparative analysis is successful in showing that success and failure should be judged according to multiple start and end points (rational economic capitalism, coordinated market capitalism, etc.), which are themselves pursued through a plethora of paths. In addition, a path itself must be defined through orientation, economic mode of exit, political mode of exit and outcome (p. 49). Although this somewhat neglects the possibilities of slip-ups and reversals within a path, it would be far-fetched to argue that the arguments are teleological in nature.

Norkus is however careful before jumping into the actual categorisation process—perceptions on transitions, as are the dominant post-communist transformation orientations, are not always just in the mindset of the ruling elite, but also part of the 'social imaginary' (pp. 51, 203–205). While this contrasts somewhat with the literature on elites proactively shaping the arena by disengaging potentially disruptive groups [Vanhuysse 2006, 2007], it does open the way for integrating an important variable into transition studies—nationalism qua political ideology. Particularly for the Baltics, where Laitin's [1998, 2005], work is the reference point, nationhood related questions seem pressing in any analysis of the post-communist transition. In this respect, Norkus is more sophisticated than predecessors who have tried to integrate nationalism as a variable [Kuzio

2001], as he pays more attention to long-term processes and historical legacies. Yet, a closer look at how nationalism is added to the equation reveals a partial answer to the opening question. The last three chapters give the impression that an in-depth Lithuanian case-study which could have easily transcended the shortcomings of the stalemate 'hybrid typology' consensus on CEE welfare states and of studies on Eastern European nationalisms, was forcefully simplified to better fit a more "fashionable" comparative work. It is, for instance, a static understanding of nationhood (for instance, p. 223—mentalities inherited from older times; for a critique, see Brubaker [1998]) that invalidates the claims that Norkus does not simplify. Perhaps a single, in-depth case study could have relieved the book of some back-and-forth stuttering, as in the main analysis chapter somewhat renounces the important role of path-dependency proclaimed in the introduction.

On the other hand, the comparative analysis of chapter 4 is one of the most detailed of its kind. While the writing is at times obscure, the reader discovers an interesting blend of political economy variables laced with an exhaustive understanding of cultural legacies that include historical-institutional frameworks and flows of ideas (both political and economic). Therefore, the book's main contribution lies in tearing down dichotomies in assessing post-communist transitions and replacing them with more nuanced scales that factor in plural aims, not just the teleological 'REC-liberal-democracy' nexus. To repeat, the scope is fascinating, as the author's gaze covers more than the stereotypical clusters of Eastern Europe. Any brief overview would not do justice to this part of the book, yet it feels necessary to at least highlight these important contributions: a careful approach to generalisations (pp. 188–192), a clear definition of thresholds within multiple pathway alter-

natives, and the inclusion of methodologically sound counterfactual constructions.

The last three chapters are the complete opposite of the QCA chapters in terms of reader-friendliness. The social and cultural history complements the political economy analysis with intriguing research avenues such as path-dependent interpretations on perceptions of capitalism and cultural biases of FDI's (p. 223). The transition from Protestant Moravian Brethren to post-Soviet economic policy is smooth and strikes an important blow to scholars who generally relegate path-dependency and the role of ideas to a secondary place in the analysis of post-communist transitions. Again Norkus impresses with his outstanding theoretical scope—from an exit-voice-loyalty analysis of worker behaviour (p. 249) to a look at qualitative transformations in the education system (p. 252). Unlike the general comparison of chapter 4, the intra-Baltic and Slovenian comparison benefits from a much more dynamic and flexible operationalisation as well as from a welcomed addition of historical institutionalism with a cultural layer. If one is to answer the opening question solely by reading the final three chapters, then the answer would be a strong 'yes' in favour of this book bringing consistent innovation to the scholarship on post-communist transitions. Granted, the path-dependent analysis could have gone even further in-depth (i.e. more space devoted to interwar developments and legacies), yet this barely detracts from the strength of the main arguments.

In sum, this book represents an important step forward for the scholarship on post-communist transitions. Although there is a lingering feeling that some of the comparisons are indeed forcefully stretched and rigidly operationalised to fit fanciful social science methods trends, this does not detract from the multi-layered contributions of Norkus' rich work. The book perfectly highlights some of the major

problems of transitology, and where it does not fully solve them it offers fruitful avenues forward.

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