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Migration Rhetoric in Political Party Programs: Comparative Review of Case-Studies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine

Shushanik Makaryan

CARIM-East Research Report 2013/28



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CARIM-East
Creating an Observatory of Migration East of Europe

Research Report
CARIM-East RR 2013/28

**Migration Rhetoric in Political Party Programs:
Comparative Review of Case-Studies of Armenia,
Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine**

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CARIM-East – Creating an Observatory East of Europe

This project which is co-financed by the European Union is the first migration observatory focused on the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Union and covers all countries of the Eastern Partnership initiative (Belarus, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and Russian Federation.

The project's two main themes are:

- (1) migration from the region to the European Union (EU) focusing in particular on countries of emigration and transit on the EU's eastern border; and
- (2) intraregional migration in the post-Soviet space.

The project started on 1 April 2011 as a joint initiative of the European University Institute (EUI), Florence, Italy (the lead institution), and the Centre of Migration Research (CMR) at the University of Warsaw, Poland (the partner institution).

CARIM researchers undertake comprehensive and policy-oriented analyses of very diverse aspects of human mobility and related labour market developments east of the EU and discuss their likely impacts on the fast evolving socio-economic fabric of the six Eastern Partners and Russia, as well as that of the European Union.

In particular, CARIM-East:

- builds a broad network of national experts from the region representing all principal disciplines focused on human migration, labour mobility and national development issues (e.g. demography, law, economics, sociology, political science).
- develops a comprehensive database to monitor migration stocks and flows in the region, relevant legislative developments and national policy initiatives;
- undertakes, jointly with researchers from the region, systematic and *ad hoc* studies of emerging migration issues at regional and national levels.
- provides opportunities for scholars from the region to participate in workshops organized by the EUI and CMR, including academic exchange opportunities for PhD candidates;
- provides forums for national and international experts to interact with policymakers and other stakeholders in the countries concerned.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: <http://www.carim-east.eu/>

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Executive Summary

This paper is a comparative review of country analyses of migration rhetoric in political party programs of seven post-Soviet states --Russia, as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia in the South Caucasus, and Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine in the Eastern Europe. All six post-Soviet states in the South Caucasus and in the Eastern Europe are members of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative of the European Union since 2009.

The post-Soviet political and economic transition in the 1990s led to massive emigration of populations from the former Soviet states. By the end of the 1990s, migration issues had become a salient and politicized issue in the post-Soviet states. The opposition parties often used it to expose the country leadership in inadequate handling of domestic economic and socio-political development. Thus, already in the 1990s migration issues were part of the public debate in those countries and focused on concerns of high emigration and brain-drain.

In the 2000s migration dynamics stabilized, new migration patterns emerged. Ukraine and Georgia gradually transformed from emigration into a transit countries (Tolstokorova 2012b, IOM 2008b), whereas the economic boom in the energy and construction sectors of Azerbaijan attracted migrants (SSC 2012) from the Middle East, Turkey and the Central Asia. As some post-Soviet states started to receive immigrants, and their compatriots settled down in destination countries, the migration debate expanded from emigration concerns into rights of migrants (at home and abroad), diaspora issues, integration of migrants.

Political elites came to realize that migrants are a powerful electoral force and a potential mechanism for economic investments and development (Bobrova 2012, Chelidze 2012, Chobanyan 2012, Mukomel 2012, Oprunenco 2012, Romyansev 2012, Tolstokorova 2012a). Thus, the migration became a national interest matter for almost all countries.

Yet, the examination conducted by CARIM-East experts revealed that political party programs failed to reflect the significance of migration policy as a priority in their party programs. The political landscape of the country very much shaped the migration debate among political parties. Namely, in those countries where the role of political parties is rather limited (such as in Azerbaijan or Belarus), migration issues are also barely mentioned in the party programs (Bobrova 2012, Romyansev 2012). If included in the party programs (such as in Armenia, Chobanyan 2012), the discussion of migration appeared problem- centred rather than migration policy-centred, i.e. there were little, if any policy proposals on migration, and migration remained heavily linked to domestic problems, such as socio-economic issues (e.g. unemployment) or demographic (e.g. low child-birth, depopulation).

In Ukraine and Russia, the migration issues are entangled with the ethno-politics, and have appeared in conjunction with the debate on the protection of the culture, rights and opportunities and integration of migrants and minorities (on the liberal side) or on protecting the titular nation and strengthening its culture amidst "migrant invasion" (on the conservative side). In Ukraine this has framed migration as interlinked to and dependent on the solution of larger societal processes, such as diasporas, rights of ethnic minorities, national identity, etc. By expanding the context, migration has also been exposed to political manipulations and such issues as the rights of Ukrainian migrants abroad, immigration of foreigners, brain drain have become only selectively emphasized and have avoided targeted policy response (Tolstokorova 2012a).

In Russia, the sensitive nature of pro and anti-immigrant attitudes has forced some political parties to take a more moderate stand on migration to escape "political suicide", others have avoided elaborating migration issues in their party programs to not alienate their electorate (Mukomel 2012).

The proposals from political parties to reform the migration policy of the country, or to adopt certain legislation related to migration issues were rare for some post-Soviet states where most of the migration-related legislative initiatives came from the government (such as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, or Moldova).

This pilot study also reveals that there is substantial role that the civil society and international organizations can play to increase the awareness about migration issues and the migration policy perse among the political actors, such as political parties. To increase the emphasis on migration issues in political party programs, the civil society organizations can conduct advocacy campaigns to push the migration issues into agendas of political parties. This should increase the awareness about and also the involvement of multiple actors in migration policy-making. Second, this should also have a counter-balancing affect on political parties that use migration as an election card: the civil society can monitor that parties remain consistent to positions on migration they take on the paper (in the party programs) vs. during elections and then when they achieve power.

The findings of this pilot study can serve as baseline data for developing a more systematic analysis of political debates in post-Soviet states and can be combined with the analyses of the migration discourse in the mass media, in the civil society, etc. to fully represent the discourse on migration, as well as the entangled dynamics of public discourse on the one hand and the actual migration policy-making on the other.

Introduction

When the Soviet Union collapsed, challenges of socio-economic transition led to high unemployment, corruption, and political repression; in some post-Soviet states ethnic or civil conflicts erupted. These led to high emigration volumes in the post-Soviet period. The emigration dynamics raised fears of depopulation, and became highly politicized. Emigration became a target for political opposition and was used to expose the bad handling of economic development of authorities in power. The issue was so sensitive that in some post-Soviet states the authorities delayed the first post-Soviet population censuses to avoid the gloomy constitution of the extent of emigration from their countries (Arel 2002).

However, the dramatic emigration trends, discussed by many scholars (Arel 2002, Bukhovets 2002, Korobkov and Zaianchkovskaia 2004, Yeganyan 2001) are not the focus of this paper. Rather, it is the consequences that emigration dynamics had on political debate on migration, and *the extent to which this debate got institutionalized in agendas of such political actors, as political parties*. As migration debate gained momentum, and was often politicized for electoral support, migration issues gradually penetrated into programs of political parties in post-Soviet states.

This paper comparatively examines the migration rhetoric in political party programs of seven post-Soviet states --Russia, as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia in the South Caucasus, and Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine in the Eastern Europe. All six post-Soviet states in the South Caucasus and in the Eastern Europe are members of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative of the European Union since 2009.

The role of political parties is crucial in policy-making process. In consolidated democracies political parties set agendas for policy-making. Those in the legislature are directly involved and responsible for certain directions of policy that their country makes. Yet, the rhetoric of party agenda does not always go beyond "election talk" to translate into a policy. This is especially the case for young states where democratic and political culture is still not institutionalized. Thus, understanding what issues on migration are addressed in programs of political parties serves four research and policy-making purposes: (1) it maps the range of issues that are interlinked to or are in the core of the migration debate in a particular country, thus helping to highlight what migration issues get neglected and which ones get overemphasized, and politicized; (2) depending on what migration issues are addressed in political party agendas will help predict what legislative framework will get institutionalized by the parliament; (3) will help identify the inconsistencies of the "election talk" vis-à-vis concrete action on adopting and implementing a migration policy and legislation. And finally (4) from the policy-making perspective, this research will help identify the gaps in party agendas on migration policy-making, and allow civil society and international organizations to better target their civic education and advocacy campaigns to make certain migration issues better understood and adequately addressed in political agendas of political elites of their countries.

Methodology and Limitations of the Findings

This comparative analysis is based on a pilot mini-examination of migration issues addressed in the platforms and programs of political parties in seven post-Soviet countries: Russia and six countries that are currently part of the European Union (EU) Eastern Partnership initiative-- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

The examination of programs and platforms of political parties was carried out in 2012 (in Moldova in 2011) in the framework of CARIM-East project by country-experts. All seven countries covered in this pilot mini-study are part of the CARIM-East project. The findings are discussed in detail in seven short country papers (Bobrova 2012, Chelidze 2012, Chobanyan 2012, Mukomel 2012, Oprunenco

2012, Rumyansev 2012, Tolstokorova 2012a) published by the Project. This comparative analysis is written based on the findings discussed in the above mentioned papers of the country experts.

Given that migration has become a hot political topic in all countries of the project, most political parties in post-Soviet countries have expressed their position on migration by publishing party programs, releasing election platforms during election campaigns, or issuing some policy recommendations, policy papers on migration, etc. (often available on the internet websites of the political parties). Of particular focus were the programs of those parties that were represented in the legislature at the time of the pilot mini-study.

One of the objectives of this research was the balanced examination of programs of political parties both elected and not-elected into national parliaments if they had a publicly influential rhetoric on migration and/or were in the political opposition.

Given the limited time and financial resources invested in this pilot examination, the review of programs of political parties is not comprehensive for some countries (please, see the separate country analysis for details). Given the variation in the extent to which political parties are institutionalized in post-Soviet states, for some countries party programs were not available (for various reasons), or were simply non-existent if the political party was weakly institutionalized, even though may have been active in the public debate.

Many political parties in post-Soviet states that endured into the late 2000s adopted their party programs in the 1990s or in the early 2000s, and have not revised since then. While this is an indicator of a weak institutionalization of political parties as a political force, the reverse causality is also possible-- it is because of their weak, and in some post-Soviet states only symbolic role, that political parties often fail to put resources into revising their programs unless there are elections or a perceived chance for them to win in the elections. And thus, many political programs may have simply not been revised or updated to accurately represent the party's activities. Thus, if the program of a political party does not address a particular migration issue, then that does not necessarily indicate that the party does not have a position on the issue, or does not pursue a policy on that migration issue.

There is also a lagged affect between the salience of the issue in the public discourse vs. when the issue is consolidated in the political party program. Many issues get into the party programs after some tipping point or threshold is reached among the public that consolidates the issue as cornerstone of the national interest.

The examination of migration discourse in political party platforms is important, and the findings of this pilot investigation conducted by CARIM-EAST experts reveal valuable insights that can further be pursued in a more methodologically systematic study. Political parties (in the parliament and in the opposition outside of the parliament) affect and also reflect the public debate on migration issues in a particular country. Political parties in the legislature have a more direct impact on migration policy-making by designing the legislation that affects migration issues in the country. They are directly responsible for the policy choices the country takes on migration. Thus, the examination of the position of political parties on migration issues in post-Soviet states will help better capture the underlying political processes on migration policy-making in post-Soviet states, and in some cases even predict the direction in which the migration policy of the country will evolve.

Main Findings:

Evolution of the Migration Debate in Political Party Programs

The post-Soviet political and economic transition in the 1990s led to massive emigration of populations from the former Soviet states. By the end of the 1990s, migration issues had become a salient and politicized issue in the post-Soviet states. The opposition parties often used it to expose the country leadership in inadequate handling of domestic economic and socio-political development.

Thus, already in the 1990s migration issues were part of the public debate in those countries. However, due to the lack of proper statistical systems to capture migration (Makaryan 2012), and partially due to antagonism among political elites to establish institutions for migration regulation (Tolstokorova 2012b), migration management in post-Soviet states continued to remain poor. Thus, migration rhetoric focused on concerns of high emigration and brain-drain.

While Russia was traditionally the main destination of migrants from former the Soviet Union, in the 2000s migration dynamics stabilized, new migration patterns emerged. For example, since the 2004 enlargement of the European Union Ukraine gradually transformed from emigration into a transit country (Tolstokorova 2012b). Georgia too, in recent years has become a transit country for human trafficking (IOM 2008b). Azerbaijan official statistics (SSC 2012) imply that since the late 2000s the country has become an immigration country. As some post-Soviet states started to receive immigrants, and their compatriots settled down in destination countries, the migration debate expanded from emigration concerns onto rights of migrants (at home and abroad), diaspora issues, integration of migrants (see Mukomel 2012 for Russia).

Political elites came to realize that migrants are a powerful electoral force and a potential mechanism for economic investments and development (Bobrova 2012, Chelidze 2012, Chobanyan 2012, Mosneaga 2012, Mukomel 2012, Oprunenco 2012, Rumyansev 2012, Tolstokorova 2012a). Thus, the migration became a national interest matter for almost all countries.

Yet, the political party programs failed to reflect the significance of migration policy as a priority in their party programs. Migration issues remained (a) vaguely elaborated, in some countries (such as Azerbaijan) barely mentioned in the political party programs. (B) If included in the party programs, the discussion of migration appeared problem- centred rather than migration policy-centred, i.e. there were little, if any policy proposals on migration, and migration remained heavily linked to domestic problems, such as socio-economic issues (e.g. unemployment) or demographic (e.g. low child-birth, depopulation).

(C) In other cases, such as in Ukraine and Russia, the migration issues have been entangled with the ethno-politics, and have appeared in conjunction with the debate on the protection of the culture, rights and opportunities for migrants and minorities (on the liberal side) or on protecting the titular nation and strengthening its culture amidst "migrant invasion" (on the conservative side).

(D) The proposals from political parties to reform the migration policy of the country, or to adopt certain legislation related to migration issues were rare for some post-Soviet states where most of the migration-related legislative initiatives came from the government (such as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, or Moldova).

When the Role of Political Parties is Limited ...

Government Takes the Initiative on Policies

All seven countries-- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia face challenges for democratic transition and fair elections. And thus, the role of political parties is often quite limited given a country or a particular leader in power. Here are a few examples.

In Belarus, due to regression in country's democratic development, the political stage has become passive. The institution of political parties is weakly developed. In 2012 there were 15 registered political parties (Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus 2012a) compared to 40 parties in 1990 (Bobrova 2012). Partially, due to the intra-party or inter-party antagonism, political parties fail to develop into strong political actors (Romanovskiy 2007 cited in Bobrova 2012). Moreover, in Belarus political parties do not have a favourable image, and at times the public opinion is more negative than

positive towards political parties, and thus, persons prefer to run for elections as individuals rather than as affiliated with parties (Feduta et al 2003 cited in Bobrova 2012).

In the parliament too, the number of political parties has decreased (Bobrova 2012). In fact in the 2012 September elections of the lower house (House of the Representatives), only five out of 109 deputies (one seat left vacant) were representatives of political parties-- three from the Communist Party one from the Agrarian Party, one from the Republican Party of Labour and Justice, 104 independents (Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus 2012b). Both the Communist and Agrarian Parties are pro-governmental political forces, and were the only political parties represented in the House of Representatives in 2008-2012 Convocation too (where six seats were for the Communist party and one seat for the Agrarian party, 103 were independents).

Political parties are as passive in Azerbaijan as in Belarus. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the New Azerbaijan Party has been the ruling party and has won the majority of seats in all parliamentary elections in the last 18 years since 1995, and is also the political party that supports both the former and current presidential administrations in Azerbaijan (Rumyansev 2012). Seats in the parliament of Azerbaijan are divided among the independents and candidates from political parties. Since 1995 other political parties have not been able to win more than six seats in the parliament in any election. Thus, the role of political parties is very symbolic, if any, in the parliament of Azerbaijan. The New Azerbaijan party ultimately has no challenging opposition in the legislature of the country.

While in other post-Soviet states too the role of political parties remains weak. For example, in Ukraine, the limited role of political parties is partially determined by the circumstances of their institutionalization in post-Soviet period in Ukraine. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the political parties were a mechanism for the new economic and political elites to penetrate into the legislature and to promote their interests, and thus, were formed to carry on upon this objective (Malinovska 2010 cited in Tolstokorova 2012a). The antagonism between the executive and legislative powers and political elites led to the "the war of decrees" (Malinovska 2011 cited in Tolstokorova 2012b), due to which Ukraine failed to establish a functioning unified migration service until mid-to-late 2000s (Tolstokorova 2012b).

The weak standing of political parties in the political system of the country very much determines their little, if any, contribution to policy-making. And, hence, as one can expect, the role of political parties in migration policy-making in some post-Soviet countries is rather limited.

In these circumstances, it is often the government that is the initiator of migration policies or the legislative reforms affecting migration. In Armenia the government has elaborated both the policy frameworks in migration, as well as such legislative initiatives as the Law on Refugees [1999], on Political Asylum [2001], on Aliens [2006], on the State Border [2011] (Chobanyan, 2012). In Belarus, while the parliament is comprised of independent candidates, and the political opposition is highly oppressed, the parliament has adopted one of the highest number of legislative acts on migration among the countries studied. Among those are the Law on Labour Emigration, on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless persons, on Citizenship, etc (Bobrova 2012). In Azerbaijan too, "[The] MPs [Members of the Parliament] representing either the ruling party or pro-governmental parties and the so-called independent MPs in the Parliament do not introduce anything new to the debate on migration. Activities of the members of Parliament are mostly associated with approval of laws drafted by the government, the content of which as a rule is not seriously debated or criticized" (Rumyansev 2012:1).

An interesting outlier is Moldova. In Moldova during 2001-2009 the country was ruled by the Communist party which did not acknowledge neither the significance of emigration trends nor the economic hardships as a cause for emigration (Oprunenco 2012). Even more, the program of Communist Party (PCRM 2008 cited in Oprunenco 2012) mentioned migration only once. Thus, the political opposition has had a much larger emphasis on migration issues in its political party programs, and has often criticized the Communist party for failing to recognize the negative impact of emigration

from Moldova (Oprunenco 2012). And yet, as an apparent paradox, during its rule the Communist government of Moldova implemented numerous policy initiatives on developing mechanisms to use Moldovan labour migrants for Moldova's economic development, on migration management and on bilateral cooperation in regard to labour migration (Oprunenco 2012, Mosneaga 2012). And to date, Moldova has one of the most elaborated legislative and policy frameworks on migration among the post-Soviet states.

Migration Issues Neglected in Political Party Programs

Not only the political parties have limited role in the political life in some post-Soviet states, but also the political programs they elaborate often carry a declarative nature. Migration issues come into the political party platforms amidst the elections (Chobanyan 2012, Chelidze 2012, Mukomel 2012, Tolstokorova 2012a). The political landscape of the country very much shapes the migration debate among political parties. Namely, in those countries where the role of political parties is rather limited, the migration issues are also barely mentioned in the party programs.

In Belarus, despite frequent reference in political party programs to human rights, ethnic non-discrimination, preservation of cultures of minorities (the Communist Party, the Republican Party of Labour and Justice, Conservative Christian Party), or to the revival of the culture of Belarussians (the Republican Party of Labour and Justice), the protection of Belarussian culture and language (Conservative Christian Party), migration issues are barely mentioned (Bobrova 2012).

In Azerbaijan too the migration discourse has practically been absent from political party programs, and the main political parties, among those the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (Rumyansev 2012). Instead, the consequences of Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and namely, the refugees and the internally displaced persons are the very few issues on migration emphasized in political party programs of Azerbaijan (Rumyansev 2012).

Country-experts provide several explanations for the lack of attention to migration issues in the political party programs. For example, despite undocumented migration dynamics, the official statistics of Belarus on international immigration and emigration have not portrayed the number of migrants in the country as a matter of political, socio-economic, demographic or cultural concern for Belarus (Titarenko 2012). In turn, it is the socio-economic issues that have received a higher priority of policy action (Bobrova 2012). However, despite no less harsher socio-economic problems and high unemployment that face other post-Soviet countries, such as Armenia or Moldova, migration issues have been emphasized by the political parties in party programs (Chobanyan 2012, Oprunenco 2011). In Belarus the weak contestation of migration issues is likely to be due to the lack of political freedom and the weak role of political parties in Belarus' political life. Migration has been debated in the mass media, and such topics as the depopulation of Belarus (Respublica 2011), or the low wage attractive to only low-skilled migrants (Naviny.By 2011), brain drain (Infobank.By 2012) have been frequently emphasized in the Belarussian media. Even the political elites have discussed whether the migration policy of the country is able to attract sufficient number of immigrants to neutralize population decline (Naviny.By 2011). Yet, the involvement of political parties in this matter remains weak, and is probably due to the political landscape of the country.

When Migration is in the Political Party Discourse ...

Focus is on Migration Trends or Generic Causes, not the Migration Policy

Migration rhetoric in all countries examined is typically focused on either migration trends itself or the socio-economic situation that drives migration, not on migration policy itself. Even when migration

rhetoric has been entangled with other issues of the society, the focus on trends and causes of migration has remained stable in all countries. Here are a few examples:

Migration in Armenia became highly politicized since the dramatic emigration trends of the 1990s. According to Armenia's Aviation Department, during 1990-1999 years 630 thousands *more* passengers left the country than arrived (Yeganyan *et al.*, 2001). Political opposition parties often used migration to blame national authorities of Armenia for bad governance of the country. Their party programs pledged to create new jobs and reduce emigration (Prosperous Armenia party, Rule of Law party), halt depopulation by increasing the birth-rate (through financial incentives, ANC 2012) and by reducing the mortality, increase the economic well-being and the wages (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), develop mechanisms to encourage return migration (Heritage party) or repatriation of the diaspora (Republican Party of Armenia) (see for detail Chobanyan, 2012).

In 2003 the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2003) estimated that remittances sent by Moldovan migrants home accounted as much as 20% of the GDP share in Moldova. The high emigration of the country has successfully been used by the political opposition to expose bad economic governance of the country by ruling authorities. Thus, migration, such as rights of labour migrants, brain drain, facilitated visa regime, risks and benefits of labour migration have frequently been cited in political party programs (Oprunenco 2012). Nevertheless, both the ruling and opposition parties agree with main challenges faced by Moldova and are centered around "migration-development nexus" (Oprunenco 2012, Mosneaga 2012).

In Georgia, despite the very liberal migration regime and lack of migration policy since 1991, migration issues have been in the public debate. These issues have aired both in connection to European integration, as well as in the framework of country's general concerns for emigration and depopulation. Albeit, the debate on migration has been more dynamic in the mass media (in such TV show as "The European Choice" or Radio show "Routes of Migration", than in the parliament among the political faction (Chelidze 2012). The ruling party-- United National Movement, has had a weak migration policy in Georgia, and in the past too, the ruling political elites have failed to develop a sound migration regime in Georgia despite being active in forging EU-Georgia collaboration and in signing EU-Georgia visa facilitation and readmission agreements (Chelidze 2012, IOM 2008a). Thus, the opposition parties have consistently exposed the policy weaknesses of ruling authorities.

Migration Entangled with Ethno-Politics

In Russia and in Ukraine the migration rhetoric of political parties has also focused on trends and causes of migration. However, here migration rhetoric has been entangled with ethno-politics given the multi-ethnic structure of the society. Both countries (and Belarus) have also been recipients of heavy labour immigration flows.

In Ukraine, given the country's large Russian minority, and a large Ukrainian diaspora abroad, the migration policy-making has often been linked with ethno-national and language politics. Even the political actors have been victims of this divide. Just recently, In the current newly-elect Verkhovna Rada (the parliament of Ukraine, elections held in October 2012), the ethnic divide was manifested when scuffle broke-in in December, 2012 among the elected parties. While many international organizations had condemned the parliamentary elections of Ukraine as unfair, still several opposition parties won seats in the parliament in the 2012 elections (USA Today 2012). The United Opposition coalition, organized by and supporting the former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, shouted at members of parliament from the Party of Regions (representing the current President Yanukovich), any time they spoke in Russian (USA Today 2012, CNN 2012). The incident highlighted the divide between the Ukraine' West (mostly rural and Ukrainian speaking, pro-western) and the Ukraine's East (industrial, and Russian speaking, pro-Russian).

The ethno-political issues have largely expanded the context in which migration from/to Ukraine has been discussed. Migration issues proposed to the parliament have rarely appeared as stand-alone problems, but rather have been discussed as part of an ethno-politics, entangled with language policies and bilingualism (Ukrainian and Russian), and issues on national minorities (Tolstokorova 2012a). This has framed migration as interlinked to and dependent on the solution of larger societal processes, such as diasporas, rights of ethnic minorities, national identity, etc. However, by expanding the context, migration has also been exposed to political manipulations and such issues as the rights of Ukrainian migrants abroad, immigration of foreigners, brain drain have become only selectively emphasized and have avoided targeted policy response, and thus, the Ukrainian migration policy has been described as fragmented and inconsistent (Tolstokorova 2012a).

In Russia the political landscape has been polarized with pro-immigration and anti-immigration attitudes. Those political parties taking the liberal stand have supported the rights of migrants and called for more immigration, whereas the conservative political parties have called for restricted migration policy (Mukomel 2012). However, the wide public support for xenophobic attitudes in the 2000s has forced some political parties, such as Just Russia, to take a more moderate stand on migration to avoid "political suicide", others, such as Yabloko or the Right Cause have reframed the migration rhetoric onto advocacy for ethnic/migrant tolerance and anti-nationalism, whereas the United Russia, in an effort to not alienate its electorate, had until recently avoided elaborating migration issues in its political programs (Mukomel 2012). Thus, given the rise of xenophobia in the 2000s, in Russia the migration rhetoric is entangled with ethno-politics and integration discourses.

When the Focus is on Migration Policy...

The examination of experts of political party programs revealed that rarely do the programs directly debate or address migration policy of the country. Yet, in some countries more than in others, migration policy has been critiqued in the programs of political parties, and has even led to certain policy initiatives. However, the reader should not overestimate the involvement of political parties in focusing on actual issues of the migration policy: when the debate is framed in anti-immigrant terms and centred on halting the inflow of foreigners, by default it is a debate on migration policy. One would expect that in multicultural societies the migration rhetoric of political parties would relate to the immigration policy and the integration of migrants, more so than in ethnically homogenous societies. Thus, country specifics (e.g. multi-cultural society, destination of migrants, etc.) partially determine whether the migration rhetoric will fall into migration policy domain or remain focused on trends and socio-economic causes. For details, the reader can consult the separate country analysis as part of this research.

In Ukraine, just to name a few, in the previous --the sixth-Convocation of the parliament-- the Verkhovna Rada (2007-2012 years) the "Party of Regions" has submitted a pocket of legislative reforms on migration regulation (Tolstokorova 2012a), and has in 2011 initiated a study on "The Current Situation and Prospects of Migration Politics in Ukraine" (cited in Tolstokorova 2012a) to explore the possibilities of preventing labour emigration from Ukraine. The opposition faction "Block of Yulia Tymoshenko" had proposed in the previous Convocation amendments to the Refugee Law of Ukraine (the amendments were not approved) (Tolstokorova 2012a). The political faction "Lytvyn's Block"-- coalition of People's and Labour Parties -- was the one, in the opinion of experts, most concerned with migration issues in the country (Tolstokorova 2012a). People's Party emphasized that migration policy of Ukraine should ensure that illegal migration of labour migrants did not jeopardize the life chances and the rights of Ukrainian citizens (Tolstokorova 2012a). The Block proposed an amendment to the Immigration Law of Ukraine and was also the co-author of the draft legislation on Foundations of Ukraine's State migration Policy (Tolstokorova 2012a). Among the new factions in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, based on October, 2012 elections, the Svoboda political party has an extensive coverage of migration issues in its political party program, with particular reference on establishing a stricter citizenship and naturalization policy for immigrants, and for establishing

penalties for Ukrainians who hide their dual citizenship, as well as establishing some limitations for foreigners in the country in order to increase the opportunities and privileges of Ukrainian ethnic citizens (Svoboda 2009).

In Georgia, albeit at times very weak elaboration of migration issues in political party programs (Chelidze 2012) some parties have taken a stand on certain issues on migration policy issues. For example, the Labour Party has advocated for a stricter immigration policy and limiting the immigration of foreign labour force into Georgia, and has been specifically against the Readmission Agreements despite supporting visa facilitation reforms in Georgia and despite calling for the improvement of visa regime with the EU and Georgia's neighbours (Rustavi2 2011 cited in Chelidze 2012). The National Council political party has also debated the implementation of the policy mechanisms, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, through which Georgia seeks integration with the EU (Chelidze 2012).

In Russia the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) has called for the rights of Russians abroad, for the protection of the Russian nation and the Russian language, the party has also several legislative proposals, such as adopting a law on immigration to contain the uncontrolled inflow of persons from the CIS and the far abroad, amending Russia's Constitution to strengthen the position of ethnic Russians in the country, adopting a law on the "Special Status of the Russian Language", etc. (cited in Mukomel 2012). The political party Just Russia, in its focus on integration for migrants, suggests that for acquisition of citizenship of Russia foreigners be required to also pass a test on the Russian language, culture and history (Mukomel 2012). The Party is also for limiting the compact settlement of migrants by ethnicity (Just Russia 2009 cited in Mukomel 2012). The political party Right Cause advocates for issuing work permits not in Russia, but in countries of origin, and for ease the acquisition of citizenship for some categories of persons.

Conclusion

This comparative review was written based on the pilot examination of political party programs in seven countries-- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine--and was conducted by country-experts of CARIM-East project. The examination of political party programs aimed to explore the extent to which migration debate was institutionalized in agendas of political parties in those countries, with particular focus to political parties in the parliament-- as political actors that initiate country's legislation and policy on migration.

The study revealed that migration issues are usually vaguely elaborated in political party programs, and the debate on migration policy is even less frequent. If migration issues are mentioned in the programs of political parties, then in most of the post-Soviet states examined, migration issues are mentioned either as a simple affirmation of the challenges faced by the country (such as emigration, brain-drain, illegal migration), or the focus is on causes of migration (such as unemployment, poor socio-economic development, etc.). In Ukraine and Russia the migration debate among political parties has been entangled with ethno-politics and has been expanded to include the integration of not only migrants, but of also minorities, and preservation of rights and the culture of migrants and minorities on the one hand vs. the strengthening of the role of the titular/core nation on the other. Thus, typically political parties pledge, albeit only declaratively, to address these challenges. Rarely, in some countries examined, do we see political parties to elaborate concrete positions on certain aspects of the migration policy. The migration rhetoric in political party programs is on migration issues, rather than on migration policies.

This pilot study also reveals that there is substantial role that the civil society and international organizations can play to increase the awareness about migration issues and the migration policy per se among the political actors, such as political parties. To increase the emphasis on migration issues in political party programs, the civil society organizations can conduct advocacy campaigns to push the migration issues into agendas of political parties. This should increase the awareness about and also

the involvement of multiple actors in migration policy-making. Second, this should also have a counter-balancing affect on political parties that use migration as an election card: the civil society can monitor that parties remain consistent to positions on migration they take on the paper (in the party programs) vs. during elections and then when they achieve power.

The findings of this pilot study can serve as baseline data for developing a more systematic analysis of political debates in post-Soviet states and can be combined with the analyses of the migration discourse in the mass media, in the civil society, etc. to fully represent the discourse on migration, as well as the entangled dynamics of public discourse on the one hand and the actual migration policy-making on the other.

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