



European  
University  
Institute

ROBERT  
SCHUMAN  
CENTRE FOR  
ADVANCED  
STUDIES

## **CARIM EAST – CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Co-financed by the European Union

# ***Migration Rhetoric in Armenian Political Parties' Programs***

**Haykanush Chobanyan**

CARIM-East Explanatory Note 12/102

September 2012



© 2012. All rights reserved.  
No part of this paper may be distributed, quoted  
or reproduced in any form without permission from  
the CARIM East Project.



## Abstract

Migration, and emigration in particular, is one of the most debated topics in Armenia. Since Armenia became independent after the collapse of the USSR, a multi-party system has been established. During these years the legislative developments in the migration sphere and adopted laws were not the initiatives of the political parties represented in the National Assembly but the legislative initiatives of the Government. The legal developments and rhetoric on the migration issues of political parties in the National Assembly of the fourth convocation (2007-2012) and the pre-electoral campaigns/programs/rhetoric of the political parties of the National Assembly of the fifth convocation (2012-2017) are declarative and general and do not touch upon the details of the regulation of migration issues and the realization of the programs suggested by them. Thus parties in their rhetoric seem to appeal emotionally rather than by trying to win the votes of the electorate through offering concrete change.

The activities of all political parties, save obviously the Communist Party, were forbidden during the times of the Soviet Union. On the collapse of the Soviet Union the Pan Armenian National Movement (*Hayots Hamazgain Sharzhum*) was established (in 1989) in Armenia and included thousands of representatives of different strata of the society, and this movement went after political objectives. Then, in the 1990s, the first traditional Armenian parties abroad<sup>1</sup> (“old” diaspora) began to move into Armenia, while many new parties emerged and a multi-party environment were properly established.

In 1990 the Supreme Council of ASSR (the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic) made the Supreme Council of the twelfth convocation into the Supreme Council of the first convocation of the Republic of Armenia (RA). The political struggle for power gradually grew from that point onwards as parties began to nominate their own candidates and to question the internal and external policies of the authorities. One aspect of their rhetoric was migration caused by social-economic difficulties. In 1995 the Legislative Body of Armenia was renamed a National Assembly and in these stages and afterwards during elections and legislative activities political parties in Armenia made migration issues into slogans<sup>2</sup>.

During these years the legislative drafts referring to migration and adopted laws did not mark the initiatives of the political parties in the National Assembly but rather the legislative initiatives of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Three main political parties were established in Diaspora in the nineteenth century. The *Armenian Revolutionary Federation* (also known as *Dashnaktcutyun*) was founded in Tbilisi in 1890. The party operates in Armenia and in countries where the Armenian Diaspora exists, notably in Lebanon where the *Armenian Revolutionary Federation* is considered the strongest political party within the Lebanese-Armenian community. The party adheres to socialism and is part of the *Socialist International*.

The *Armenian Democratic Liberal Party* or the *Ramgavar Party* (known as the *Armenakan party* before 1921) is an Armenian political party in Armenia and in the Armenian Diaspora including the Middle East, Europe, the Americas and Australia. The *Armenakan party* was one of the first parties established in the Ottoman Empire by the Armenian national movement. At the Armenian parliamentary elections 25 May 2003, the party won 2.9 % of popular votes and had no seats.

The *Social Democrat Hnchakian Party* is the oldest Armenian political party and was the first Socialist party in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. It was founded in 1887 by a group of college students in Geneva, Switzerland, with the goal of gaining Armenia's independence from the Ottoman Empire, which is part of Armenian national liberation movement.

<sup>2</sup> The first elections of the National Assembly took place on 5 July 1995. Since 1995 four National Assembly elections have been held, and on 6 May, 2012 the elections of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia of the fifth Convocation took place. The National Assembly of Armenia has 131 deputies, which are elected by a majority and proportional electoral system. See the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia <http://www.parliament.am/parliament.php?id=parliament&lang=eng>. Accessed 13 April 2012.

Government. For example, the author of the Law on Refugees (1999) and on Political Asylum (2001) was the Department of Migration and Refugees under the RA Government (today the State Migration Service). Likewise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RA drafted the Law on Foreigners (2006), and the RA National Security Service the Law on the State Border (2001).

Perhaps the only exception has been the introduction of dual citizenship institute in Armenia. The Constitution of 1995 banned dual citizenship. But this was changed in a referendum in 1995. In 2007 in order to implement dual citizenship there were some legislative developments. In 2007, the Parliament of Armenia adopted amendments to the Citizenship Law, establishing dual citizenship. Legislation was supported by two of the three factions in Armenia's ruling coalition: the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Republican Party. It was widely reported that the Republican Party initially opposed the measure but reluctantly voted for it in the end. The third coalition partner, the United Labor Party (ULP), voted against it, ostensibly over disagreements on eligibility standards for dual citizens serving as Prime Minister and cabinet members<sup>3</sup>.

The National Assembly of the fourth convocation of the RA started its work 7 June 2007 and ran until 2012. In the National Assembly of the fourth convocation five parliamentary factions were established:

1. The Republican Party of Armenia (*64 Parliament Members*)
2. Prosperous Armenia (*25 Parliament Members*)
3. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*16 Parliament Members*)
4. The Rule of Law (*8 Parliament Members*)
5. Heritage (*7 Parliament Members*)

11 Parliament Members were not included in these factions.

According to the RA Constitution the government must include the majority of the Parliament Members. So, by voting for one of the party's voters not only elect MPs, they also entrust the country to an actual party or alliance of parties, allowing the creation of governmental coalition.

In 2008 a memorandum of political coalition was signed and a coalition government<sup>4</sup> was formulated, in which the Republican Party of Armenia had a leading role. On 30 April 2008 the National Assembly gave its approval to the Government Program for 2008-2012.

The problems of migration, diaspora and repatriation exist in the pre-electoral programs of the parties and in their rhetoric.

**“Republican Party of Armenia”**<sup>5</sup> in its 2007 program touched upon the problems of migration by referring to the Armenian diaspora: *“The state must create facilities to consolidate the potential of the Armenian diaspora, to strengthen the Armenian State with the objective of bringing back Armenians from all over the world to Armenia”*.

The prevention of migration (emigration) is considered an important issue in the program of **“Prosperous Armenia”**<sup>6</sup> as part of the achievement of an effective, purposeful social policy in Armenia.

---

<sup>3</sup> Policy Forum Armenia (2010) “Armenia-Diaspora Relations: 20 Years Since Independence”

<sup>4</sup> “Հայաստանում համաձայնագիր է ստորագրվել կոալիցիոն կառավարության ձևավորման վերաբերյալ” [*Agreement on government coalition formation signed in Armenia*] in Panarmenian.net, 29 February 2008. <http://www.panarmenian.net/arm/news/25037/>. Accessed 24 March 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Web page of the Republican Party of Armenia. <http://www.hhk.am/en/>. Accessed 24 March 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Web page of the Prosperous Armenia party. <http://www.bhk.am/>. Accessed 25 March 2012.

In the program of “**Heritage**”<sup>7</sup> “*a reduction in migration from Armenia and a spurring of repatriation*” is the main objective, but the methods to achieve this are not described.

There is no reference to migration problems in the programs of either “**The Rule of Law**”<sup>8</sup> or the “**Armenian Revolutionary Federation**”<sup>9</sup>.

Despite migration being a very topical issue in Armenia, political parties have not referred much to the regulation of migration problems either in their pre-electoral programs or during their activities in the National Assembly. Even those parties which have touched upon migration problems in programs and speeches have not posed any legislative initiatives in the last parliament (2007-2012). The only exception is the draft law “*On Repatriation*”<sup>10</sup>, which was presented during the subsequent hearings of the National Assembly in 2011 but which has not been accepted yet. The author of the draft law is the RA Minister of Diaspora who is a member of the Republican Party of Armenia as well as a member of the Republican Party’s Council.

In 2010 and 2011 much energy was put into the regulation of migration issues. During this period several legislative and policy documents were worked out, particularly, the “*Concept for the Policy of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia*” (approved by the protocol decision №51 30 December 2010). Then “*The Action Program for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016*” were elaborated by the State Migration Service of the RA and adopted by the Government. It should be mentioned that this was the response to obligations undertaken within the ENP (European Neighborhood Policy) and did not directly relate to the activities of the political parties.

All political parties, without exception, discuss migration problems. The topic is being discussed by both governing and opposition parties and migration is often employed to beat the government for supposed failings.

In the 6 May 2012 elections nine political parties participated; five of which had already been in the National Assembly. The following migration related issues were included in their pre-electoral campaigns/programs of 2012-2017:

1. “**the Republican Party of Armenia**”<sup>11</sup> continues to pose questions on the Armenian Diaspora. Hence, in the program “*National unity, strong Diaspora*” the RPA writes: “*Using the institution of dual citizenship and the repatriation program we are going to create a favorable environment in order to abet the involvement of the diaspora in the economy of Armenia*”. It also demands: “*Let’s change the conditions of life, create new opportunities for people to work and earn money, help win justice everywhere, eliminate poverty, migration, and modify return migration to the homeland and fill the citizen of the Republic of Armenia with infinite faith towards his/her motherland and his/her future.*”
2. “**the Prosperous Armenia**” in the section “*Employment as a main way of preventing the migration*” we read “*the main condition of preventing migration from the country is to raise the level of the employment for which the country must take up some obligations and gradually add to the volume of those obligations. “Prosperous Armenia” stands by its slogan “Next to everyone, by everyone and for everyone” and will do its best to give solution to the issues related to the elaboration and realization of state programs on employment, improvement of self-employment mechanisms, increasing professional abilities and creation of*

<sup>7</sup> Web page of the Heritage party. <http://www.heritage.am/en>. Accessed 25 March 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Web page of the Rule of Law party. <http://www.oek.am/official/>. Accessed 24 March 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Web page of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. <http://www.arf2012.am/>. Accessed 24 March 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Web page of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia: [http://www.parliament.am/draft\\_history.php?id=5019&lang=arm](http://www.parliament.am/draft_history.php?id=5019&lang=arm). Accessed 24 March 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Political Program of the Republican Party of Armenia: <http://hhk2012.am/arm/program/>. Accessed 11 May 2012.

*working places. The individual must be protected in their country and in order to be protected they must have a job, enabling them, as far as possible, to take care of their family's concerns, renouncing the intention of reaching well-being in other countries".*

3. **"the Armenian Revolutionary Federation"**. In the section "Salary, social defense, demography" there is written: *"An active demographic policy will be carried out to raise the birthrate, to reduce mortality, to prevent migration and to encourage immigration. As a result, every year the population will grow on average by 50,000"*. According to one of the last points of the pre-election program of "the Armenian Revolutionary Federation" *"comprehensive projects on the repatriation and resettlement of Artsakh will be implemented"*.
4. **"the Rule of Law"** - In the pre-electoral program of this party it is written that: *"The creation of workplaces is the most important social-economic issue. It is the way to overcome poverty, to prevent migration and to shape a worthy mode of life"*<sup>12</sup>. With the view of creating new working places twelve "extremely urgent and important" measures are listed, the first three of which are as follows: the drafting and implementation of National Strategy "On working places and worthy/deserving salary"; adopting and implementing a five-year program on unemployment reduction and creation of working places according to branches of economy and places of residence; and the drafting and implementation of employment projects.

The issue related to the integration of refugees is also underlined and there is a suggestion *"to draft and implement a state-targeted project on the prevention of emigration and a contribution to repatriation"* in the part of the program entitled "Homeland-Diaspora".

5. **"the Heritage"**<sup>13</sup> - In the section of "ruling justly, affirmation of legitimacy, justice and the struggle against corruption" some legislative and executive steps are suggested with regard to immigration: *"To secure the return of many migrants to Armenia from which the balance of the migrants in Armenia will become positive, on average 100,000 people per year. To secure at least a population of at least four-million over the next ten years and a five-million population over the next fifteen years". This is a basic necessity for the state and public security of the Republic of Armenia. The inability to guarantee the relevant balance of immigration and emigration, approved for each year in office, will be equivalent to a failure of the President's duties, and will lead to his unconditional resignation"*.

And in the chapter "Economic development, creation of workplaces, an opportunity for respectable work" we find written: "after the modulation of tax legislation the tax burden will be transferred from small businesses to large businesses, which will abet the creation of additional workplaces, a change in the economic structure and also the prevention of migration".

In the section "National Security and Defense" it is written that the problems concerning the well-being of all our compatriots are also in the framework of Armenia's national security.

In order to reach those goals a number of legislative and executive steps are listed:

1. "Extension of effective and multilateral relations with the Diaspora, harmonization of strategies a view to preserving national goals of Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora".
2. "Carrying out complex measures in order to improve the demographic situation, to foster the natural growth of the population and to reduce the migration level."

In order to achieve this objective "Heritage" envisages the following initiatives:

---

<sup>12</sup> Political Program of the State of Law Party: <http://www.oek.am/official/index.php/2012-01-27-10-47-18/2012-04-13-12-21-32>. Accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Political Program of the Heritage Party: <http://www.heritage.am/hy/about/election-program>. Accessed 17 April 2012

1. to adopt the Law “On Repatriation” with a view to promoting repatriation and resettlement in order to coordinate these processes with concrete obligations undertaken by the state, as well as stipulating the mechanisms for solutions to housing and the social issues of returnees.
2. to reconsider the functions of the pan-Armenian foundation “Armenia” transforming it into an institution contributing to Armenia-Diaspora cooperation, the activities of which will be supervised through Armenian society and diaspora collaboration.
6. “the **Armenian National Congress parties’ alliance**”<sup>14</sup> is the opposition political power, which touches upon the migration issues more often employing them as a means to criticize the authorities. In its different programs and rallies the leader of ANC has often spoken about the dangers of migration. And to ameliorate the general condition of the country ANC offers a few programs: “100 steps/measures”; systemic transformation program of social-economic policy; pension reform plan; platform for the reform of the electoral process; industry development program; and urgent measures to promote agriculture.
7. “the **Communist Party of Armenia**”<sup>15</sup> - “*Nationalize all strategic sectors, mineral resources, the deposits of the earth, alcoholic beverages, petrol, bread and other things, which will promote the provision of new jobs and immigration issues. Centralize all this in the hands of the state and nation which will foster the elimination of unemployment and migration*”.
8. “the **United Armenians**”<sup>16</sup> - “*Prevention of emigration and the return of compatriots, taking into account the political, economic, moral and social transformations caused by injustice, corruption, unemployment and other negative phenomena. As a result of constantly increasing emigration it is very important for “United Armenians” with its intellectual, scientific, moral, legal and economic power and the ability to struggle against negative phenomena pushing people to the edge of poverty. “To commence a struggle against the negative phenomena which have led the nation to the edge of poverty, against emigration and trafficking*”.
9. “the **Democratic Party of Armenia**” has also touched upon migration issues in its pre-electoral campaigns and has made some suggestions to prevent migration from Armenia.

### **In conclusion:**

- all parties touch upon the migration/emigration issues in their pre-electoral campaigns during the parliament elections in 2012;
- however, those issues do not differ from the approaches of 2007-2012 parliamentary parties’ programs;
- they are mainly declarative and general (e.g. *prevention of emigration, promotion of immigration, return of compatriots to Armenia*) and they do not touch upon the regulation of migration issues (e.g. *mechanisms, necessary means for their implementation and legal acts to be drafted and etc.*) and the carrying out of programs suggested by them.
- the topic of migration is one of the most urgent and challenging issues within Armenian society, thus parties crank up the rhetoric looking for an emotional response (e.g. *to prevent migration, to ensure the return of 100,000 people to Armenia...*) thus trying to win the sympathy and votes of the electorate.
- it should also be mentioned that whenever the government drafts any law related to migration all political parties agreed and there were no cases of opposition by any party.

<sup>14</sup> Political Program of the Armenian National Congress: <http://www.anc.am/en/>. Accessed 10 May 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Political Program of the Communist Party of Armenia: <http://norkhosq.net/category/general/>. Accessed 20 April 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Political Program of the United Armenians Party: <http://www.mhk.am/en/>. Accessed 20 April 2012.

## References:

Political Program of the Prosperous Armenia Party 2012. Available at: <http://www.bhk.am/datas/media/elections2012/Pages1-16.pdf>. Accessed 12 April 2012.

Political Program of the Heritage Party. Available at: [http://www.heritage.am/images/documents/Heritage\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.heritage.am/images/documents/Heritage_Booklet.pdf), 17 April, 2012. Accessed 17 April 2012.

Armenian National Congress 2012. Available at: <http://www.anc.am/en/>. Accessed 10 May 2012.

Political Program of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation 2012. Available at: <http://www.arf2012.am/img/Introduction.pdf>  
<http://www.arf2012.am/img/Socio-Economic.pdf>  
[http://www.arf2012.am/img/Sustainable\\_development.pdf](http://www.arf2012.am/img/Sustainable_development.pdf)  
[http://www.arf2012.am/img/National\\_Democratic\\_state.PDF](http://www.arf2012.am/img/National_Democratic_state.PDF)  
[http://www.arf2012.am/img/National\\_state-building\\_policy.pdf](http://www.arf2012.am/img/National_state-building_policy.pdf). Accessed 12 April 2012.

Political Program of the Communist Party of Armenia 2012. Available at: <http://norkhosq.net/2012/04/12/%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%AB-%D5%AF%D5%B8%D5%B4%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%BD%D5%A1%D5%AF%D6%81%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5/>. Accessed 20 April 2012.

Political Program of the Republican Party of Armenia 2012. Available at: <http://hhk2012.am/arm/program/>. Accessed 11 May 2012.

Political Program of the United Armenians Party 2012. Available at: <http://www.mhk.am/am/content/9/>. Accessed 20 April 2012.

Political Program of the Rule of Law Party 2012. Available at: <http://www.oek.am/official/index.php/2012-01-27-10-47-18/2012-04-13-12-21-32>, Accessed 24 April 2012.

Margaryan L. “Ինչն է են խոսում արտագաղթից” [*Why emigration is spoken about?*] in Lragir.am, on April 20, 2012. <http://www.lragir.am/armsrc/comments63615.html>. Accessed 22 April 2012.

Avagyan S. “Ծնելիության խթանումը, ներգաղթն ու արտագաղթը՝ կուսակցությունների նախընտրական ծրագրերում” in Hetq.am, on April 27, 2012 <http://hetq.am/arm/articles/13648/tsneliutyanyan-khtanumy-nergaxtn-u-artagaxty-kusakcutyunneri-nakhyntrakan-tsragrerum.html>  
<http://hetq.am/arm/articles/13713/tsneliutyanyan-khtanumy-nergaxtn-u-artagaxty-kusakcutyunneri-nakhyntrakan-tsragrerum---2.html>. Accessed 10 May 2012.