

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

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# ***Migration Rhetoric In Program Documents Of Russian Political Parties***

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## Abstract

Positions of registered Russian political parties with regards to migration policy issues are studied in the paper. The author analyzes program documents and electoral platforms of parties which were in play during the latest parliamentary elections.

Migration turned out to be the focus of attention of Russian politicians starting from mid-1990s, when it became clear that this is not only an ideological but also an electoral resource. Then the clear division emerged between liberal politicians with their emphasis on migrant rights and active migration policy to attract immigrants, and representatives of political spectrum extremes – communists and “national patriots”, concerned with social consequences of migration and supporting restrictive migration policy (Mukomel 2005).

With some variations the same division is also reproduced in the 2000s. The surge of xenophobia in the 2000s directed against migrant minorities contributed to the shift of emphasis in political party programs: to campaign for attraction of migrants became tantamount to political suicide.

Communists (KPRF, Communist Party of the Russian Federation) and populists (LDPR, Liberal Democratic Party of the Russian Federation) hardened their position even more, making protection of rights of ethnic Russians<sup>1</sup> and fight against illegal migration its central ideas. Liberal parties (“Yabloko”, “Right Cause”<sup>2</sup>), shifted emphasis to the dangers of xenophobia and the need to fight against ethnic nationalism, and advocated priority of individual rights regardless of ethnic, racial and social background.

Until recently the main pro-government party “United Russia” avoided articulating its own position, while “Just Russia” (that positioned itself as social-democratic and moved to opposition in 2011) was moderate. Marginalized party “Patriots of Russia” did not indicate its point of view on migration policy.

Analyzing party positions, one should take several factors into account. First of all, time of party program adoption (programs adopted in the early 2000s paid little or no attention to the problem of migrants; as the issue is becoming more and more relevant, it is also getting into party programs). Second, difference between strategic approaches reflected in the programs and timeserving declarations, which is especially manifested during election time: electoral platforms often contradict program documents. Third, discrepancy between approaches indicated in the party programs, where positions contradicting legislation are not allowed, and rhetoric of the party leaders who are not bound by formal restrictions (which is especially manifested during election time).

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<sup>1</sup> Since in English one word stands for two words in Russian (‘rusскиye’ for ethnic Russians and ‘rossiyane’ for citizens of the Russian Federation (civil nation), we’ll introduce more complicated terms for these cases: “ethnic Russians” for the first case and “Russian citizens” for the second one.

<sup>2</sup> In 2011 after the change of leadership party ideology has also changed, and the party focused on attracting nationalists to its ranks

## Political parties

In Russia, in accordance with current legislation (Federal Law 2001) 7 political parties are registered (Ministry of Justice 2011), the first four of which are represented in the State Duma (Parliament)<sup>3</sup>:

1. “United Russia” (238 MPs)
2. “Communist Party of the Russian Federation” (92 MPs)
3. “Liberal Democratic Party of the Russian Federation” (64 MPs)
4. “Just Russia” (56 MPs)
5. “Patriots of Russia”
6. “Right Cause”
7. “Russian United Democratic Party Yabloko”

## Reflection of position in the party programs and electoral documents

**“United Russia” party.** Program of the “United Russia” party was adopted on 1 December 2001 (United Russia 2001). Party position with regards to migrants and migration policy is absent from the program.

On 14 September 2011, prior to the parliamentary elections, the party adopted “Program statement of the ‘United Russia’ party” (United Russia 2011). In this statement the party affirms the need to combat illegal migration, ethnic crime and manifestations of xenophobia. (“Support of ethnic and religious peace; fight against illegal migration, ethnic crime, manifestations of xenophobia and separatism; support of free development of all cultures in Russia, all traditional religions” (United Russia 2011).

**Communist party of the Russian Federation (KPRF).** In the KPRF program adopted in 2008 the party does not state its position with regards to migration policy. The main attention is devoted to the status of the Russian nation: “Today Russians became the largest divided nation on the planet. Uncovered genocide of the great nation is going on. The population of ethnic Russians is going down. Culture and language with deep historic traditions are being destroyed. Resolution of the Russian question and fight for socialism are essentially the same tasks” (KPRF 2008).

From statements made by party leaders and members of the KPRF central committee, it becomes clear that the party stands for limitation of the influx of migrants, focusing on reconstruction of the USSR, protection of the Russian nation and compatriots in the near abroad. For the KPRF the problem of migration is secondary: traditionally being in favor of USSR restoration, the party believes that the problem will be resolved within the single state.

In the KPRF electoral program adopted on 12 October 2011, the party rejects accusations of nationalism and attempt to expand the electorate and indicates the need to preserve the culture of “indigenous peoples” along with the need to fight against “Russophobia”:

“Our party has seriously worked on the Russian topic, without it being debased by nationalism... we believe, in particular, that the following measures are necessary:

- *active counteraction to attempts of any spiritual aggression against national and cultural traditions of the peoples of Russia;*

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<sup>3</sup> Elections took place on December, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The same parties were represented in the previous composition of the Parliament

- *punishment with the utmost rigor of the law for any manifestations of Russophobia as an extremist way of spreading ethnic discord;*
- *adequate presence of culture of indigenous peoples in the media;*
- *achievement of the real equality of all nations of Russia in the field of state administration, business activity and access to natural resource rent”. (KPRF 2011).*

**Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR).** The party traditionally places an emphasis on the Russian issue and protection of compatriots in the near abroad and advocates for restrictive migration policy.

The program states: “LDPR believes it necessary to adopt a law on foreigners, in order to cease uncontrolled entry of the CIS citizens and citizens of the far abroad into Russia, as it significantly complicates the fight against crime” (LDPR 2005).

Prior to elections, the so-called “LDPR program” was published on the LDPR website (LDPR 2011a), where a special section was devoted to “Issues of special attention” (LDPR 2011b). LDPR supports nationalistic slogans:

“... the main issue at present is the Russian issue!

Enemies of Russia use the national issue as a weak spot of the Russian statehood and want to break the Russian nation by methods of ethnocide and spiritual violence...

*LDPR suggests:*

1. To cancel Article 282 of the Criminal Code that is used selectively, targeting Russian patriots exclusively<sup>4</sup>.
2. To introduce changes into the Russian Constitution, that would codify the special constitutional status of the [ethnic] Russian nation all over the Russian territory.
3. To develop and adopt the law “On the state support of the Russian nation”.
4. To adopt a law “On the special status of the Russian language” as a state language of nationwide communication.
5. Develop and adopt a law “On Russian national self-government”.

In another section of this unofficial program entitled “Practical program of the LDPR”, the party indicates its electoral ideas and clearly formulates one of the tasks – restricting the influx of migrants:

“To protect the country from migrants. Priority should be given to entering Russians who had found themselves outside Russia. Special attention to those who have occupations that the country needs, real professionals. Today there are up to 15 mln. migrants in the country, primarily in large cities, and significantly fewer of them pay taxes officially. Diseases, drugs, ethnic crime – all this is a foundation for the rise of national tension. In 10 years it may blow Russia up from the inside. The coming guests become hosts in the Russian land. In case of reasonable approach of authorities we will manage to do without foreign workforce” (LDPR 2011 c).

**“Just Russia” Party.** The party program was adopted in 2009. “Just Russia” has the clearest and most detailed position among parties represented in the parliament. The program has a special section – “Just Russia” pays special attention to: policy of migrant integration; social exclusion and emergence of ethnic enclaves; repatriation of Russian-speakers; facilitation of naturalization of Russian-speakers; social guarantees to migrants; protection of Russian speakers”.

There it is stated: “The need for extra working hands is constantly growing. The Party considers legal labor migration a civilized way to attract necessary workforce to the country.

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<sup>4</sup> Article, under which active participants of racist attacks are prosecuted.

...The government ought to ensure efficient regulation of labor migration, stemming from Russian interests and those of its regions. Migration must not create ethnic enclaves alien to our culture or destroy existing ethno-cultural balance of the recipient territory. Legal migrants acquire stipulated rights, while illegal ones are deported from the country.

We think that it is extremely important to stimulate migration influx of Russian speakers from near abroad, primarily qualified staff. Those who have historic ties with Russia, who see themselves as part of the Russian culture or culture of one of the Russia's indigenous peoples, ought to be granted citizenship based on a mechanism simplified as much as possible”.

Program of “Just Russia” suggests specific measures to reach the set objectives:

“The Party believes it is necessary to:

- Encourage attraction, in strict accordance with Russian interests, of workforce whose labor and qualification are needed for development of modern economy.
- Guarantee labor and social rights of migrants.
- Adopt special programs ensuring more efficient integration and socialization of newcomers, facilitating their ethno-cultural and linguistic adaptation to new conditions, including courses of Russian language, history and culture.
- Include successful tests in Russian language, culture and history into citizenship requirements.
- Ensure real observance of legal migrants' rights to decent living conditions, including education and healthcare.
- Organize public crisis centers to provide legal consultations and receive complaints from foreign citizens about violation of their citizenship and employment rights.
- Introduce restrictions on establishment of isolated ethnic migrant settlements.
- For each “donor” country it is necessary to introduce limitations on the number of accepted migrant workers, taking into account Russian need for specific working professions in specific regions. Limitations ought to take into account all aspects of Russia's political relations with the “donor” country (its political orientation, attitude to Russian diaspora, responsibility for its citizens etc.).

The Party believes that Russia must protect the rights of Russian speakers residing in neighboring territories”. (Just Russia 2009; 63-64).

Overall, the party program is balanced, but already in electoral program prepared in September 2011 the Party focused more on negative consequences of migration and the need to restrict it:

“Protection of the Russian language is a foundation of national unity, integration of ethnic groups into a single civil nation.

...Labor resources from other countries will be attracted in strict accordance with Russian interests, within the stipulated limit of accepted migrant workers for each “donor” country. Migration must not create ethnic enclaves alien to our culture or destroy the existing ethno-cultural balance.

We will introduce programs of socio-cultural integration for migrants. Exam in Russian language and history will become mandatory”. (Just Russia 2011 b; 44).

It is even more alarming that restrictive migration policy is unequivocally expressed in the Guide to the Program published by the party:

“MIGRANTS – this is what people coming to Russia to earn money are called. There is legal and illegal labor migration.

Uncontrolled migration inflicts monstrous damage on economy and interests of the Russian citizens. Budget losses associated with unpaid taxes are growing; national tension associated with migrants' lack of social adaptation and lack of knowledge about Russian culture is also growing. Ethnic enclaves alien to our culture destroy existing ethno-cultural balance of the recipient territory.

“Just Russia” believes that Russia does not need illegal migrants. Aggregate public spending and costs of guest workers' subsistence are significantly higher than their contribution to the country's economic development. Migrants ought to be attracted only to those areas and those territories, where it is impossible to do without them. One must not let migrants occupy Russians' jobs and create excessive competition on the labor market. It is necessary to introduce strict quotas for maximum permissible number of workforce attracted from elsewhere. It is necessary to introduce an exam in Russian language for migrants. At the same time, it is necessary to oblige employers employing legal migrants to guarantee normal working conditions and protection of their rights” (Just Russia 2011 c; 18).

**“Yabloko” Party.** In the party program adopted in 2006, “Yabloko” distances itself from migration problems and central attention is paid to combatting nationalism and xenophobia: “Nationalism of any kind is hostile to Russia, as far as it leads to ethnic strife and destruction of ethnic peace, on which integrity of our country is based. Chauvinist hysteria, search for external and internal enemies lead Russia to xenophobia, internal discord, weakening and dissolution” (Yabloko 2006).

In the previous party program (Yabloko 2001), liberal position was formulated more clearly: first, priority of human rights over rights of an ethnos was stipulated; second, the party announced “Acknowledgment of ethno-cultural diversity as a public achievement, subject to state protection”. Specific measures were also indicated: joining the European Social Charter and conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

In electoral program “Russia demands change!”, the party only appealed against national enmity and intolerance: “We demand: ensuring strict liability for manifestations of national enmity and discrimination based on ethnicity and race; inclusion of international (intercultural) communication lessons into the secondary school program (Yabloko 2011).

**Party “Right Cause”.** In the party program adopted in 2008, “Right Cause” that positioned itself then as a conservative party of the middle class clearly expresses its views: “We stand for streamlined process of attracting labor migrants to Russia. Permit enterprises to form personnel based on foreign workforce quotas established by law depending on industries and regions. Move to issuing work permits not in Russia but in the home country of labor migrants, including CIS countries, while retaining visa-free regime for tourists and businessmen within the CIS space and supporting pursuit of the same regime with the maximal number of countries.

It is necessary to facilitate procedure of obtaining citizenship for compatriots, for all those who share our cultural values; introduce point system when obtaining residence permit or citizenship for other categories of migrants, exams in the Russian language; we stand for granting citizenship primarily to highly qualified professionals” (Right Cause 2008).

In electoral program statement adopted prior to parliamentary elections, party rhetoric drastically changed. The party, whose leadership and ideological program changed, started to stem from restrictive positions – in favor of: “streamlining of external migration, introduction of exams for migrants (after preliminary training, if necessary) in the Russian language and basics of the Russian legislation, culture, traditions, rules of coexistence etc. (using experience of the European countries)”.

**Party “Patriots of Russia”.** Party program was adopted in 2007. The party stated its position neither with regards to migrants nor concerning the national issue. Only incompatibility of the party with fascism, chauvinism, nationalism and racism is declared (Patriots of Russia 2007).

Judging from the statements of party leaders, the party supports restrictive migration policy (Patriots of Russia 2012).

Migration topic was widely discussed during presidential elections of 4 March 2012 that involved all leaders of parliamentary parties and the billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov, who for a short period of time headed “Just Cause”.

Leaders of the KPRF, LDPR and “Just Russia” adhered to positions formulated in party documents. Vladimir Putin, informal leader of the “United Russia”, supported by the dwarf parties “Just Cause” and “Patriots of Russia”, clearly formulated the need to tighten migration policy.

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