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Reintegration Practices in Post-Soviet States

Irina Isaakyan

CARIM-East Research Report 2013/48



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CARIM-East
Creating an Observatory of Migration East of Europe

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Reintegration Practices in Post-Soviet States

Irina Isaakyan
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence

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European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

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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.

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- 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.

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For more information:

CARIM-East

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)

Convento

Via delle Fontanelle 19

50014 San Domenico di Fiesole

Italy

Tel: +39 055 46 85 817

Fax: + 39 055 46 85 770

Email: carim.east@eui.eu

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/>

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Abstract

This paper uses, as its starting point, the argument that integration presupposes reciprocity. On the basis of secondary qualitative data analysis, the paper examines reintegration practices in post-Soviet countries where the State is said to be a weak provider of integration. The purpose is to explore inter-regional differences and major critical issues in existing reintegration practices. To achieve this, the paper looks at the expectations to integration held by the European Commission, evaluates the reintegration practices in the former Soviet Union against the EU standards, and makes intra-regional comparisons based on the EU standards. Placing Georgia and Ukraine at the low extreme across the reintegration continuum, the constructed Reintegration Barometer locates the best reintegration country of Armenia halfway far from the theoretical/utopian ideal of the European Union.

Introduction: What is (re)integration?

Integration is basically viewed as ‘the process of mutual adaptation between host society and migrant...implying a sense of *mutual obligation and respect* for a core set of values that *bind* migrants and their host communities to a common purpose’ (IOM 2011: 51). As the International Organization of Migration recognizes, the responsibility for the success of integration rests not only on the migrant and but also on the accepting society, including the state, various institutions and local communities (ibid). The European Commission further stresses that, while actively participating in the integration process, the migrant *must not be forced* to lose his/her intrinsic self-identification (Commission 2003).

Defining integration as ‘a dynamic, *two-way* process of *mutual* accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States’ and placing this definition as the first Common Basic Principle of EU integration (CBP1), the Council of the European Union, thus acknowledges *reciprocity* as a pre-requisite for integration (Council 2004).¹ Underpinning the rationale for the rest of the EU 10 Common Basic Principles, reciprocity is therefore what makes the integration different from other adaptation processes such as assimilation, separation or rejection (Segal 2012).

As shown in literatures and as summarized in Appendix A, integration means a complex variety of practices, all inter-connected by the rhetoric of reciprocity, which must be shaped by the active role of the state, if in the ideal terms (Biles et al. 2008; Penninx & Martiniello 2004; Zincone 2006). When there is no reciprocity, there is no state as a strong actor of integration. However, when the role of the state is weak, does it mean that there is no reciprocity and consequently there is no integration? Research recognizes alternative mechanisms of promoting the reciprocity between the migrant and society and consequently the integration (Anghel 2012; Bleahu 2004; Boyd 1989; Burawoy 200; Faist 2000).

When taking into consideration complex migration trajectories, integration may involve more than one round of settlement and adaptation – including, for example, the round of *reintegration*. Reintegration can thus be understood as *revised integration* (or integration on new terms), which is to be implemented with respect to the mentioned EU principles. Otherwise, there is a risk of misunderstanding reintegration.

The overall work of Jean-Pierre Cassarino demonstrates that reintegration is not merely a return to the first or historical homeland. It is a return with the ability to stay and proliferate. Reintegration can be therefore understood as revised communication between the migrant and the civil society, mediated by the state or by other (alternative) mechanisms.

Cassarino (2004, 2008) further shows that the specificity of this revision (compared, for example, with the integration of immigrants) is that it should relate to the migratory history and consider the migration cycle. A strong variable in reintegration, the prior emigration experience should become an essential part of the reintegration policy discourse. In this respect, it is important to differentiate between reintegration of returnees and integration of immigrants. For returnees, reintegration is the continuation (or the end) of their migration cycle, during which they might have accumulated some integration (skill-transferability) capital; whereas for immigrants, integration is the beginning of their migratory cycle within the context of the receiving society.² Therefore, policy makers and those who write policy reports should clearly differentiate between the categories of “returnee” and “immigrant” (under which the majority of so-called repatriates would probably fall).

¹ For the summary of EU CBPs and their basic characteristics, see Appendix A.

² In his most recent research, Cassarino (2008) points to the complexity of migration cycles. In this connection, it is legitimate to say that the migration cycle of a circular or serial migrant may consist of several mini-cycles, each associated with a particular country.

Thinking about the relationship between integration and reintegration, Segal (2010) notes that if the state cannot appropriately accommodate its own citizens who are returning home, it will most likely also have difficulties supporting a successful integration of immigrants. That is why reintegration is currently being placed on the research and policy agenda as a strategic prerogative and a way toward a multicultural society.

Looking at migrant-sending post-Soviet states, policy analysts often observe that there is no centralized and consistent reintegration policy in these states (Badurashvili 2004, 2005, 2013; Chobanyan 2008, 2012; Makaryan 2012; Mansoor & Quillin 2007; Poghosyan 2007). This paper **seeks to explore critical issues and problems of reintegration** in four post-Soviet countries that accept their returnees in the conditions of so-called “stateless” reintegration.

The post-Soviet case

Independent studies point to a number of complexities within the post-Soviet migratory space (Brubaker 2001; Makaryan 2012; Rummyantzev 2011, 2012; Yunusov 2009, 2013). Due to the post-Soviet emergence of “cataclysm diasporas” and vague regulation policies on migration (Mansoor & Quillin 2007), it is difficult to say exactly *who* migrates *where*, and whether the person *enters a new country* or *returns home*. Even the understanding of “home” as such has been substantially re-shaped since the Soviet collapse. Thus since the early 1990s, the post-Soviet migratory space has been very dynamic. However, little is known about post-Soviet migrants who *return now* either from the former Soviet republics or from overseas. Their migration streams are chaotic and uncontrollable (Cassarino 2004, 2008).

In our work, we would like to look at issues of reintegration in four post-Soviet states, namely: the South Caucasian countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan; and also Ukraine. We have chosen these countries because of their sociological relevant differences and commonalities. First, the three South Caucasian states have tangible differences in their integration policies (although the South Caucasian reintegration has been generally recognized as non-state-regulated). Thus Georgia can be placed at the low extreme along the reintegration provision continuum, while Azerbaijan claims to have successful reintegration practices and Armenia occupies a position somewhere in the middle.

Second, they share such commonalities as a strong political turmoil due to ethnic conflicts and wars and a consequent inflow of undocumented refugees.

Third, these three states (as well as Ukraine) have a historically shaped, strong cosmopolitan condition, illuminated either by relatively old diasporas [for Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine] or the cosmopolitan status of the (post)Soviet city of Baku. The South Caucasus, in particular, is known for strong co-ethnic networks supporting people.

Fourth, the majority of the returnees to these four states often return from the same destination country – Russia – where they were assigned different status positions within the ethnic minority hierarchy. Thus people from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia belong to the upper-low level (after migrants from Middle Asia). In Russia, they are viewed as too “visible” in the negative sense whereas Ukrainians are considered the “titular” Slavic ethnicity (Mukhomel 2011, 2012, 2013).³ With respect to the interconnection between reintegration and migration cycle, this may have a strong impact upon reintegration practices (Cassarino 2004, 2008).

³ See also Connor (1993), Isaakyan (2008), Mitrokhin (2003) and Slezkine (2004) on the historical roots of the post-Soviet ethno-nationalism in Russia.

Finally, the case of Ukraine is also interesting because of its “European Mexico” status or leading position in EU migrant inflows (Duvell 2006). In addition, the majority of people returning to Ukraine and Georgia have been illegal immigrants in Russia or EU countries, and reintegration of illegal migrants is expected to be more challenging because of the trauma and unofficial credentials.

Methodology

Method and objectives

This paper **seeks to explore critical issues and problems of reintegration** in four post-Soviet countries that accept their returnees in the conditions of so-called “stateless” reintegration. In order to explore the reintegration situation within the post-Soviet migratory space, we seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. to look at the expectations to integration held by the European Commission;
2. to evaluate the reintegration practices in the former Soviet Union against the EU standards; and
3. to make intra-regional comparisons based on EU standards.

To achieve all this, the method of **secondary data analysis** is used, with emphasis on qualitative re-examination of regional policy reports from South Caucasus and also on re-interpretation of Common Basic Principles of the European Commission. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in the methodology of secondary analysis of qualitative data. According to Heaton (2000, 2008), some categories of qualitative data [e.g.: such as life stories, sensitive narratives, or policy reports] may demand secondary analysis or a thorough re-examination. However, the secondary-analysis-based qualitative revision is not the same as review of prior studies/reports because the latter does not require a substantial reworking of data and generation of new analytical units (ibid).

Assessment

The EU basic expectations to integration are generally formulated as the EU Eleven Common Basic Principles of Integration, or **CBP 1-11**. They may be understood as a theoretical ideal for integration and reintegration. Below is their brief analysis.

The summary of EU CBP 1-11 and implications for assessment are presented in Figures 1 and 2. Although the EU indicators are to serve as guidelines for our understanding of (re)integration, “integration” is a nebulous concept per se: it has a number of components and ambiguities around the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved. That is why scholars and policy analysis of integration always have difficulties evaluating its outcomes, particularly given the complexities of the post-Soviet migratory space.

Our assessment of reintegration in post-Soviet states is based on different degrees of agency (the role of a particular actor) and also on the quantity of criteria (as indicated by CBPs). According to the European Commission, the degrees of agency are not homogenous across the CBPs. Some areas of integration depend of migrants’ socio-demographic characteristics [e.g.: their migratory capital or ability to integrate] while others – solely on the state capacity to provide appropriate conditions for integration.

Figure 3 graphically presents the summary of reintegration assessment in four post-Soviet states in relation to prevailing groups of the returning migrant: high-skill temporary labour migrants (Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine) and three distinct groups of migrant in Azerbaijan who are classified as “returnees” by the Azerbaijani government and policy analysts. These three groups predominantly include: (a) male Azerbaijani migrants from Russia and Ukraine (who left Azerbaijan many years

ago); (b) their Russian/Ukrainian dependents or family members; and (c) ethnic Azerbaijanis from Georgia (who had never lived in Azerbaijan before their repatriation).

These prevailing groups and consequent reintegration country profiles are graphically presented in Figure 3 and analyzed on the basis of the discursive cohesion between the state policy discourse and the policy-analysis discourse. In some cases, the differentiation of such migrant groups results from policy cleavages, when the presence of an omitted migrant group is not considered to be statistically eminent [e.g.: labour migrants in Azerbaijan]. In others, it may be based on methodological pitfalls: when policy analysts who inform the state policy on integration obviously ignore the presence of certain groups.

Each CBP requires one or two actors. These actors are: the migrant (indicated in the charts as “**M**”) and the society/state (both indicated in the charts as “**S**”). If the CBP requires only 1 actor, it is indicated in the charts as “**M**” or “**S**”, depending on whether this actor is the migrant or the society/state. Although the state and society are exactly synonymous in their integration-management roles, we still mark their presence with one letter “**S**” for the purposes of convenience. If the CBP requires both the migrant and the society, the actors are marked as “**MS**”.

Apart from that, each CBP involves 1 or 2 criteria for assessment. Their presence is also indicated with the number “**1**” or “**2**”. For example, CBP1 requires the presence of both actors and therefore involves 2 criteria for assessment (when there are 2 actors, the indicator always involves 2 criteria – one for assessing the migrant’s role and one for assessing the role of the society). It is therefore marked as “**MS2**” [see Figures 1-2].

Another example is CBP11. It requires the presence of only one actor, which is the State and only one criterion for assessment – the effectiveness of state planning. It is therefore marked as “**S1**” [see Figures 1-2]. The State never liaisons with the migrant directly because it is the mediator between the migrant and the society.

Except for the economic integration (CBP3), the CBPs have either 1 or 2 criteria for their assessment. The intensity of **1 criterion** is assessed as:

- “++” or “2” (everything is done according to the EU indicator);
- “+” or “1” (something is done but there are some limitations);
- “-“ or “-1” (almost nothing is done); and
- “--” or “-2” (not only nothing is done but the situation is also worsened by negative public attitudes, leading to marginalization and rejection).

The presence of the 2 criteria is assessed as:

- “++” or “2” (everything is done according to the EU indicator, and both requirements for integration are in place);
- “+-” or “0” (something is done: the 1st criterion is matched while the 2nd is not);
- “-+” or “0” (something is done: the 2nd criterion is matched while the 1st is not)
- “--” or “-2” (neither criterion is matched, leading to marginalization and rejection).

The economic reintegration, it is assessed as based on the presence of the 4 criteria (employment, entrepreneurship, remittances and savings):

- “++++” or “4” (all 4 criteria are present);
- “----” or “-4” (all 4 criteria are absent);
- “+-+-” or “0” (half of the criteria are present while the other half are not); etc.

In our calculations, the presence of a certain criterion is marked as “+” and given **1** point. While the absence of a certain criterion is marked as “-” and given **(-1)** point. All points are then summarized [**Figure 3, Blue Scores**]. In the case of Azerbaijan, we calculate the mean score for its three diverse

migrant groups. Finally, convert all blue scores by adding (+20), in order to eliminate negative numbers and to construct the Reintegration Barometer [Figure 4].

Discussion of findings

Integration Benchmarks

CBP1 is the first and foremost principle of integration that should underpin the overall rationale for the integration of immigrants in any state. It says: “Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.” Its basic meaning is reciprocity: integration is understood as a two-way process of mutual respect and adaptation between the migrant and society, mediated by the state.

The other 10 principles are to conform to the general idea of reciprocity. Thus there are two actors involved in the realization of the reciprocity principle: the migrant (**M**) and the host society (**S**). There are two criteria of its effectiveness: the effort from the migrant and the effort from the society and/or the state. The effectiveness of this principle should be therefore assessed as based on the presence of these two criteria. In some areas of integration (like the one indicated in CBP1), the state may be synonymous with society, while in others (CBP10 and 11), the role of the state is more distinct from that of the society.

In the majority of situations observed within the post-Soviet migratory space, the reciprocity is one-sided, when the returnee seeks to become part of the new society while the society rejects him/her. In Georgia and Ukraine, both the society and the returnee reject each other. As the data show, Georgian and Ukrainian returnees often have intentions to adjust to the life back home but later become more negative as they do not see any support from the society and therefore become demotivated.

CBP 3/7 also demand the presence of two actors – the migrant and the society. CBP stresses the economic integration: “Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible.” Appropriate employment (according to one’s qualifications) and public visibility of the migrant’s professionalism form the basis for understanding economic integration. For example, migrants may make efforts to apply for jobs whereas the society may be irresponsive by discriminating on the basis of nationality or by not recognizing foreign credentials, or by making the migrants’ professional achievement “invisible.” Such delicate balance between employment and visibility make the economic integration a complex concept to understand and a complex practice to measure.

In reference to reintegration, scholars further emphasize the importance of 4 criteria - rather than just one - in the assessment of appropriate job. Thus economically-reintegrated migrants are those who: (1) easily find adequate jobs upon their return; (2) easily engage in entrepreneurship upon their return; (3) send home remittances while abroad; and/or (4) make savings from their earnings abroad [see Figure 1].

The best economic reintegration is observed in Azerbaijan, where Azerbaijanis returning from Russia or Ukraine fulfill all four requirements: they come back with savings and remittances, buy property in Azerbaijan and either find lucrative jobs or engage in family businesses. A relatively positive case is found in Armenia, whose returnees do not bring back sufficient savings but do manage to economically support their families, to find jobs or engage in entrepreneurship upon return (much more frequently than returning Georgians or Ukrainians). In the majority of cases (illuminated by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijani dependent migrants and ethnic Azerbaijanis from Georgia), there are only remittances and there are no savings, adequate jobs or entrepreneurial activities.

CBP 7 stresses the responsibility of the migrant and the host society from the cultural perspective: “Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens.” This indicator aims at achieving interaction between the migrant and the host society, resulting in the hosts’ knowledge about immigrants’ cultures. The effectiveness depends on the frequency and in-depth of this interaction. In many cases, migrants may become assimilated by rejected by the host society in terms of culture.

The best situation of the mutual cultural reciprocity is found in Armenia, whose returnees show the strongest positive attitude to the host society, with whom they engage in a number of cultural/informational exchange activities, often monitored through foreign NGOs and administered on-line. The other cases are almost zero-interactive as neither the society nor the migrants want to interact and to learn about each other.

CBP 2, 4, 5 and 9 presuppose the primary responsibility of the migrant in certain areas of cultural and political integration. It does not mean that the society is not involved – but the role of the migrant and his/her efforts play the crucial role. Thus **CBP2** emphasizes that integration “implies respect for the basic values of the European Union” – that is, the migrant’s respect for the basic cultural values of the host country. In the majority of cases, the returnees show a relative degree of respect for host values, with which they do not however agree completely. In Georgia and Ukraine, the returnees strongly reject the values of their home societies in favor of more westernized attitudes.

In continuation, **CBP4** says that migrants should develop “basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration.” Thus they should seek to speak the national language and understand the host culture. The migrant’s linguistic and cultural competences are two basic criteria of assessing his/her integration in this area. Almost all returnees are native speakers who know the home culture very well either from the inside or from the inter-generational/diasporic perspective (like the case of ethnic Azerbaijanis from Georgia). However, long-absent returning Azerbaijanis are not familiar with the post-Soviet Azeri culture or with the post-Soviet culture of Baku. Neither may their wives and children know this culture and speak the national language.

CBP5 stresses such an important aspect of both the cultural and economic integration as the educational integration of migrants and their children (with the inter-generational effect): “Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society”. On the one hand, migrants should be active in engaging in formal and informal education. But given certain difficulties of adult learning, the second (larger) accent is placed on the educational access and educational attainment of their children as second generation migrants.

In Azerbaijan, which claims to have a relatively strong case of overall reintegration, the educational attainment of returnees and their children is the worst as they constantly evaluate the Azerbaijani educational system against the more advanced Russian/Ukrainian system.

CBP9 emphasizes such two aspects of political integration as democratic participation and integration planning: “The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration”. It is extremely difficult to migrant (who are newcomers in their host societies) to independently plan their own integration due to a variety of unwritten factors. That is why the prevailing situation within the post-Soviet space is the returnees’ inability to participate in democracy. However, democratic participation frequently takes place through grass-root activities such as family emancipation, change of a more liberal dressing style and lifestyle, or reconsideration of gender roles. Research shows that female migrants from traditional societies are usually more active in grass-root

democratic participation. Thus Ukrainian female labour-migrants often develop better relationships within their families back home, which is a form of democratic participation.

Four other indicators (**CBP 6, 8, 10 and 11**) – point to the social responsibility of the host society and/or the state for the success of integration. According to **CPB6**, “Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration”. There is a uniform zero-access to institutions and services across post-Soviet states, which the majority of returnees complain about. They complain that the society keeps them unaware of repatriation programmes and social welfare services. Nor does it provide clear explanation about legal or other structural changes that took place in their absence.

As **CBP8** further states, “the practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law”. The cultural diversity is absolutely denied in Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine, where the mass media often shape the image of the returning migrant as a dissident or an alien element. Because of the cosmopolitan reputation of Baku (where the majority of Azerbaijanis return), returning Azerbaijanis are given a certain degree of cultural freedom, except the situations of pressure from religion ceremonies or corruption.

CBP 6 and 8 thus make the society responsible for the protection of cultural diversity and for the migrants’ access to services. Research shows that when the state is not present as another actor, alternative mechanisms (such as networks) may create practices of corruption and attitudes of xenophobia.

The final two indicators recognize the leading role of the state in the success of integration. Thus the state is responsible for the governance (CBP10) and management/planning of integration (CBP11): “Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public policy formation and implementation (**CBP10**). Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective” (**CBP11**). All cases and migrant categories observed in this study point to a complete inability of the state to govern or plan reintegration. This is the most negatively uniform indicator within the post-Soviet migratory space, which allows us to conceptualize the post-Soviet reintegration as absolutely “stateless”.

Theoretically, the state should be always present as it has the absolute power to interfere with the integration process and to set the overall national context for integration. In practice however, its involvement may be limited and replaced by institutions of the society. It is therefore de facto assumed that in certain areas of integration migrants themselves are responsible for their own adjustment. For example, some returning migrants may violate CBP2 and reject the basic values of the Azeri or Ukrainian culture; or the wives of Azeri returnees from Russia may refuse to speak the Azeri language (CBP4), or refuse to send their children to Azeri-speaking schools (CBP5). However, it would be simplistic to understand this opposition to integration only as contributed by the migrants’ prior culture (their socialization in Russia).

If we look at the case of South Caucasian migrants in Russia (Mukhomel 2012), their children may refuse to speak Russian because they may have no cultural or educational resources to learn it. They may reject the Russian school system because the Russian school culture is very xenophobic. This factor is already within the competence of the Russian state, which indeed can but does nothing to change the situation. This goes beyond the scope of CBP5: this is already the violation of CBP 8, 10 and 11.

Reintegration, in particular, shows a complex web of inter-influences, which can and must be governed by the state. For example, Ukraine does nothing about a large group of its returning labour

migrants while the press (which represents civil society) makes them extremely “visible” in the negative sense through the media counter-integration discourse.

Georgia

At present, the mass migration from Georgia is (1) recent, (2) homogenous and (3) informal-economy-driven. Before the Soviet collapse, more than 95% of Georgian population led a sedative way of life, full-time residing in their republic. Facilitated by ethnic wars and later by the extended political and economic crisis, the mass emigration only started after the Soviet breakdown and suddenly turned Georgia into *an express-human-capital-sender*.

The specificity of the economic and political development of Georgia compared with other post-Soviet countries is that it has not yet completed its transition to the post-Soviet space. For its returning migrants, re-integration is therefore a transition to the emerging post-Soviet space. Culturally displaced and economically vulnerable, they actually return to the society that is also very unstable and disoriented.

In this context, a new wave of economic migration has shaped over the last 10 years – temporary labour migration, leading predominantly to Russia and Southern Europe. Now this prevailing type of emigration has the status of “the national household strategy”, because it aims at sending remittances and making savings from overseas jobs to enable the economic survival of migrants’ families left in Georgia. People emigrate because they consider their emigration the only option available in order to survive economically. Thus the current emigration situation in Georgia can be summarized as *necessity-labour-migration under the extreme conditions* of economic hardships or *the household-ad-hoc-labour-migration*.

The majority of such labour migrants are highly educated people, who often leave Georgia for illegal low-skill work (often in the domestic work or construction sector) in Russia, Italy or Greece; and return 2-3 years after. They are also circular migrants because, unable to find appropriate employment at home, they engage in another round of illegal re-emigration. Therefore, Georgia’s integration policy should primarily seek to help returning illegal under-scaled migrants re-adjust back home.

In spite of the economic hardships associated with illegal migration, emigration had made, however, the positive effect of gender empowerment on Georgian women (who constitute 30% of the migrant body). Playing the role of the breadwinner and the principal decision-maker while in emigration, they had a certain degree of economic independence such as living in a flat of one’s own and other conditions of the household comfort. For them, repatriation conveys a return to the traditional – now unpleasant - gender role-playing and financial dependence on the man, from which existing reintegration policies cannot protect them.

Thus 92% of all returnees (including both women and men) are “unhappy with their return” and understand it as “involuntary” and caused by visa problems or family emergencies rather than the homeland call. As a result, they create their own “returnee networks” and connect with expatriate networks abroad in order “to alleviate the pain from their inability to re-integrate” and mostly in order to re-emigrate.

Policy analysts admit that in practice the returnees’ socio-economic reintegration does not exist. Thus 80% of such returnees remain unemployed for a long time even despite their active job search. 97% of them were not able to make savings in emigration because all the money from their overseas work was used to cover remittances for their families in Georgia. Only 3 % of the returnees were able to make savings and consequently to start their own business upon repatriation. Notwithstanding that returnees also feel sequestered from their families (with whom they reunify) and friends as well as from norms and values of Georgian society.

The statistical figures look even more miserable if to connect the reintegration project with a number of international programmes meant to support the reintegration. Thus only 1.3% of all returnees received the relocation support (including travel expenses and temporary housing) based on the readmission agreement between Georgia and the European Union. 0.5% managed to engage in entrepreneurship and only 0.07% could find a job within the framework of this initiative. The inefficiency of such international programmes is mostly explained in economic terms rather than in terms of informational access and civil society, emphasizing that the projects are too narrow-focused for the Georgian mass migration and repatriation.

The policy-making discourse relates reintegration foremost to the economic development of the household, with a particular accent on remittances and entrepreneurship as major proxies. The economic reintegration discursively dominates: the rest of the reintegration problems are explained as dependent on the economic development of Georgia. Without denying their present inefficiency, the reintegration discourse nevertheless recognizes the institutions of family, networking and informal economy as alternative mechanisms of reintegration. The underlying rationale is that reintegration must be in place as long as the migrants' connections are preserved and the economic development is facilitated.

According to the statistical predictions, illegal labor migration will increase over the next years, becoming the main source of the household income in Georgia. That is why the Georgian government is not going to do anything to stop the *pertuum mobile* of its nationals, which was once created by the collapse of the Soviet system and the inability of the government to manage the situation.

Ukraine

The Georgian case strongly resonates with the situation in Ukraine in many directions. The Soviet collapse and especially the economic crisis had made Ukraine one of the top ten senders to Europe – “the European Mexico”. Due to the current crisis, many Ukrainian migrants return home so that Ukraine is facing the problem of their reintegration.

Although the mainstream of returnees is very diverse in its composition as comprised of people who migrated in under different circumstances, the dominating returnee group is that of circulating labour migrants who left Ukraine not a long time ago for low-skill work in the EU. The mass circular migration and the mass illegal migration make respectively 80% and 95% of the overall Ukrainian migrant flows. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for the Ukrainian state is the reintegration of returning labour migrants, which places Ukraine on the same scale with Georgia.

The integration situation of the returnees remains very poor, almost on the null-level. They are reintegrated neither economically nor socio-culturally. There are absolutely no conditions for their reintegration to the national labour-market, with minimum rates of success in the private sector. Thus only 1/10 of the returnees engage in entrepreneurial activities. Like in Georgia, this labour migration only improves housing conditions but does not lead to any structural changes.

Envisioning the perspectives of reintegration in the economic terms of a competitive national labour-market development, the state discourse uses the concept “re-inclusion” rather than “reintegration” as such, which leads to simplistic views on the reintegration problems. Thus the policy projects and the mass media stress the importance of the economic re-inclusion rather than the socio-cultural reintegration, emphasizing the absolute dependence of the latter on the former and explaining the returnees' inability to adjust to the local community and society as an outcome of their inability to find employment.

Discourses also show a dogmatic understanding of the labour-migration phenomenon and fail to recognize that it has become a collective way of thinking and an existential condition rather than just a voluntary economic movement. A complete failure to recognize the importance of socio-cultural reintegration is a key factor impeding the reintegration process and policy-making in both Ukraine and Georgia.

The chart in Figure 3 and the Reintegration Barometer in Figure 4 place Georgia and Ukraine both at the very low extreme of the reintegration continuum when assessed against the EU benchmarks. Apart from their remittances and the native knowledge of the language and culture, Georgian and Ukrainian returnees are faced with insurmountable difficulties in their reintegration: they find it very difficult to accept that their home societies have rapidly changed in their absence and, moreover, to accept this change internally. They have no access to almost all services and institutions, including the system of education and legislature, and they do not interact with their home societies. Local communities have very limited and distorted knowledge about the returnees' needs and problems, which is largely contributed by the State's inertia in overseeing the reintegration process. Thus except CBP 3-4 (economic and linguistic reintegration), Ukraine and Georgia have the lowest score (-2) across all other indicators.

Azerbaijan

Like in the Georgian case, the collapse of the Soviet Union had made Azerbaijan a new sending country for some time. However, the difference in economic development has recently made Azerbaijan a new accepting country, accepting both returnees and immigrants.

Analyzing the current context of migration inflows to Azerbaijan, Azeri policy analysts recognize three migrant categories, each associated with rather imprecise incidence: (1) Azeri returnees and their non-Azeri families; (2) ethnic repatriants from Georgia; and (3) high-skill labour immigrants from overseas. Another distinct category – Azeri refugees from Nagorno- Kharabagh – is for whatever reason exempt from integrated political reports and is possibly merged with overall Azeri returnees. In spite of such categorical ambiguity and also statistical inconsistency, type number one is considered prevailing and devoid of fine gradations. It is therefore placed at the centre of the reintegration process.

Another essential feature of the current context is the solar gravitation of migration inflows toward the Azeri capital Baku, a very specific urban space – known for its long-standing cosmopolitanism and regional oil industry, and thus implicating benevolent conditions for socio-economic integration.

The state an absent actor in the integration process, while reintegration of Azeri returnees and their families is implemented by such alternative mechanisms as: (1) transnational networks and transnational spaces; (2) informal economy and corruption; and (3) extended family, in which the mother of the returning man protects national identities of her family members and pulls migration inflows.

Reintegration is discursively constructed as (1) returnees' entrepreneurship, (2) socialization in transnational networks and (3) family building within the framework of mother-dictated ethnic nationalism. The mechanism of transnational networking (often grounded in corruption and leading to family business) is viewed as a viable and stable replacement of the state in the reintegration process.

The Azerbaijani case is interesting not only because of its distinction along the South Caucasian continuum but mainly because of the controversies within itself. Although the mean and the converted score are relatively high, the two major migrant groups – returnees and their families, or principal returning migrants and their dependent migrants – have very different blue scores: (-4) and (-17). Striking differences are manifested in CBP 2-4, related to their economic, linguistic and cultural reintegration. Thus the wives and children of the returning migrants do not speak the Azeri language, more frequently disagree with the local culture and its implications, and therefore experience many more hardships in finding appropriate employment.

The case of Azerbaijani dependent-migrants strongly resonates with the Ukrainian case, with the difference that the wives of Azerbaijani returnees do not have the chance for grass-root democratic participation within their household (unlike returning Ukrainian women).

But based on the argument that the prevailing migrant group in Azerbaijan consists of Azeri returnees (who speak the national language, settle in the cosmopolitan city of Baku, have well-paid jobs in the private sector and actively engage in family-building), the migration mainstream is discursively constructed as homogenous, uni-directional and Baku-centred. Therefore, reintegration is understood as successful, although state-unsupported.

Armenia

Unlike its South Caucasian neighbours, Armenia has a very long history of migration and circulation, with return always being part of the migration cycle. The Soviet collapse and a number of consequent aggravating conditions [e.g.: the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the 1988 earthquake and extending economic crisis] had led to the emergence of the “new” Armenian diaspora, comprised of three distinct migration flows. The most recent migration stream within this post-Soviet diaspora is predominantly made of over-educated circular (but not illegal) labour-migrants, frequently rotating between Armenia and Russia. Thus 96% of most recent Armenian returnees have a history of (re)emigrating to Russia.

In demographic terms, 70% of these migrants are married people who have children. They are often “astronaut” migrants⁴ – that is, migrants who migrate alone and have their families left in Armenia. In comparison with Georgia and Ukraine, these migrants have a much stronger degree of volunteer return, which is primarily driven by pull-factors [e.g.: homesickness or inability to reunite with the family in emigration]. Even the effect of such banal push-factors as Russian xenophobia and unacceptable social values is eventually translated into the pull of the homeland – that is, a desire to raise one’s children only in Armenia.

In terms of reintegration policy-making, the 2010 Concept Paper and the 2012-2016 Action Plan were adopted in 2011 by the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The state and policy analysts clearly differentiate between returnees and migrants of the second or third generation (who comprise the “old” diaspora), which makes the reintegration policy more focused on the specific – prevailing – population. However, the overall understanding of reintegration is mostly that of “relocation” that is expected to be implemented in such major directions as: (1) employment [with the primary focus on entrepreneurship]; (2) advisory services [which seek to assist the returnees in the understanding of legal processes and in the solving of their residential problems]; and (3) schematic informational access and exchange, or Internet-based information for returnees and their e-communication with the state bodies.

Although the state is making an effort to steer reintegration, reintegration/relocation is in practice implemented by international NGOs, with the partial involvement of the Armenian Government. Therefore, the state is a weak (but not absent) actor. The relocation project is further associated with two very-limited-access “service packages”, donated by such organizations and offering a scholastic – though, to a certain extent, mechanic or simplistic -version of integration.

The “narrow package” conveys the idea of consultations or informational access whereas the “broad package” involves some entrepreneurial sponsorship, re-skilling and re-qualification, child education and medical support. In this context of informational shortages and limited access, the processes of socio-cultural insertion and obtaining legal literacy are foremost monitored by the institutions of family and personal networking.

Although rather schematic, the discursive understanding of reintegration in the country of Armenia is still more scrupulous and more detailed than that in Georgia. Also, the work of alternative mechanisms [e.g.: family, networks, international organizations], which influence the returnees’ resettlement, is more effective than in Georgia. However, this impact is not as strong as that in Azerbaijan, where the returnees’ circulation is less evident.

⁴ For “astronaut migration”, see Ong (2000) and Waters (2009).

Conclusion

The Reintegration Barometer (Figure 4) shows Georgia and Ukraine at almost the same very low extreme. Figure 4 also displays that the best reintegration-performing country (Armenia, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ further ahead of Georgia/Ukraine) is actually located halfway far from the theoretical ideal of the European Union or from the utopian situation when all eleven Common Basic Principles would be evaluated as “++”.

Four basic assumptions can be made from this general overview (which will further lead to a more complex discussion). The first assumption is that, except the case of Azerbaijan, the dominating migrant stream coming to the above-mentioned countries at the moment is comprised of returning (and, in many cases, illegal and circular) labour-migrants who did not spend many years abroad.

Second, the discursive presentation of their reintegration is made in rather simplistic economic terms, with very little attention to the importance and complexities of socio-cultural integration.

Third, the state is almost absent in the realization of such reintegration projects. Finally, in this stateless context there are alternative actors at play, which may often be powerful in the support of resettlement. The question to think about in the future is **to what extent these alternative actors are efficient in promoting “stateless” reintegration.**

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Figure 1. EU Indicators and Assessment Criteria

Quantity of assessment criteria in EU indicator	Assessment and its meaning				Score for each indicator	Actors involved - Migrant	Actors involved - State	Actors involved - Migrant and State
1	++ Everything is done, according to the EU indicator.				2	M1: CBP #2	S1: CBP # 6, 8, 10	
	+ Something is done (maybe not completely) – integration with restrictions.				1			
	- Almost nothing is done.				-1			
	-- Not only nothing is done, but the situation is also worsened by negative public attitudes. Marginalization and rejection.				-2			
2	++ Everything is done, according to the EU indicator. Both requirements for integration are in place.				2	M2: CBP # 9, 3, 4, 5	S2: CBP #11	MS2: CBP #7, 1
	+- Something is done: the first criterion is matched while the second is not.				0 [1+(-1)]			
	-+ Something is done: the second criterion is matched while the first is not.				0			
	-- Neither criterion is matched. Marginalization and rejection.				-2			
4	Adequate employment: 1(+) Yes / -1(-) No	Entrepreneurship: 1(+) Yes / -1(-) No	Remittances: 1(+) Yes / -1(-) No	Savings: 1(+) Yes / -1(-) No	4 (++++) -4 (----) 0 (+-+) Etc.	M4: CBP #3 (green area)		
Additional points	Involvement of strong (professional or other legal) networks in the mediation of the integration process between the migrant and the state. (This does not include corruption or other illegal activities, for which points are always taken away and which are always assessed as “-” or “--”.)				0.5			

Figure 2. Summary of EU indicators

#	<i>Common Basic Principle of Integration (CBP)</i>	<i>CBP basic meaning</i>	<i>Actors</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
1	Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.	Reciprocity: integration is a 2-way process.	MS2	++/+-/-/-- 2 / 0 / 0 / -2
2	Integration implies respect for the basic values of the EU.	Respect for basic values of the host society.	M1	++ /+ / - / -- 2 / 1 / -1 / -2
3	Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible.	Economic integration: appropriate employment (including visible contribution).	MS1	++/+-/-/-- 2 / 0 / 0 / -2
4	Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration.	Knowledge of the language and host culture .	M2	++/+-/-/-- 2 / 0 / 0 / -2
5	Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society.	Education of migrants and their children.	M2	++/+-/-/-- 2 / 0 / 0 / -2
6	Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration.	Access to institutions and services.	S1	++ /+ / - / -- 2 / 1 / -1 / -2
7	Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens.	Integration (resulting in the knowledge about the migrant's culture).	MS2	++/+-/-/-- 2 / 0 / 0 / -2
8	The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law	Cultural diversity – the state's protection of diverse cultures.	S1	++ /+ / - / -- 2 / 1 / -1 / -2
9	The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration	Participation in democracy and integration planning.	M2	++/+-/-/-- 2 / 0 / 0 / -2
10	Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public policy formation and implementation	State governance of integration.	S1	++ /+ / - / -- 2 / 1 / -1 / -2
11	Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective	State planning: state involvement in integration management.	S1	++ /+ / - / -- 2 / 1 / -1 / -2

Figure 3. Post-Soviet Migration Space – Reintegration Matrix

#	CBP Meaning: Key words	Georgia	Armenia	Ukraine	Azerbaijan			EU Theory
					Returning Azerbaijanis	Families of returning Azerbaijanis	Ethnic Azerbaijanis from Georgia	
1	Reciprocity (MS2)	-- [-2]	+- [0]	-- [-2]	+- [0]	+- [0]	+- [0]	2
2	Basic values (M1)	-- [-2]	+ [1]	-- [-2]	+ [1]	-- [-2]	+ [1]	2
3	Economic: (M2) or (M4)	--- [-2]	+++ [2]	--- [-2]	++++ [4]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
4	Language and culture (M2)	++ [2]	++ [2]	++ [2]	+- [0]	-- [-2]	++ [2]	2
5	Education (M2)	-+ [0]	++ [2]	-+ [0]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
6	Access to institutions and services (S1)	-- [-2] *	-- [-2] *	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
7	Interaction (MS2)	-- [-2] *	++ [2] *	-- [-2]	+- [0]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
8	Cultural diversity (S1)	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	+ [1]	+ [1]	+ [1]	2
9	Participation in democracy and integration planning (M2)	-- [-2]	-+ [0]	+- [0] Family	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
10	State governance (S1)	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
11	State planning (S2)	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	-- [-2]	2
	SCORE	-16	1	-14	-4	-17	-10	22
					Mean:	$(-4-17-10)/3=(-31)/3 = (-10)$		
	Converted score [+20]	[4]	[21]	[6]	[10]			[42]

Figure 4. Reintegration Barometer

