

Changing Georgian Policies and their Effect on Egyptian Immigration

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As you stroll down Aghmashenebeli Avenue in Georgia's capital Tbilisi you might easily imagine you are in a European city. The cobbled walks, fountains, and cafés filled with olive-skinned faces all add to the illusion. You might then be startled to notice, peppered among the signs in Georgian, Russian, and English, the occasional placard printed in Arabic. If you kept a sharp eye and ear out, you would realize that one café or restaurant per block or two features Middle Eastern fare and boasts an Egyptian clientele.

If you happened by the Roman Catholic church in the center of Tbilisi on a Wednesday morning, your suspicions would be confirmed: Tbilisi is home to a small but significant Egyptian immigrant population, many of whom are Coptic Christian and meet at the Catholic church weekly for special Coptic services.

While the number of Egyptians currently living in Georgia is relatively small (approximately 2,500) it is nearly five times the number of Egyptians that lived in Georgia in 2010 (Gente, Georgia: Land of Exile for Egypt's Coptic Christians 2013a). This astounding increase, coupled with anecdotes from Coptic Egyptians in both Georgia and Egypt, confirm that (primarily) Coptic Egyptians are increasingly seeking opportunity in the South Caucasus nation.

What is "pushing" Copts from Egypt and "pulling" them to Georgia? Georgia's immigration statistics confirm a boom in Egyptian migration to Georgia; will this trend continue as Georgia's new and more conservative government implements tighter immigration policies? What will be the implications of the policies of the new Prime Minister Ivanishvili and his party Georgian Dream for Copts in Georgia, would-be émigrés in Egypt, and an Egypt that relies so

heavily on remittances from abroad? Will Georgian Dream's immigration policies have an impact on the Georgian bid for EU membership?

In the following paper I seek to answer these questions both because I sense the political and social importance of the issue and because I am a long-time student of Egypt with a recent interest in Georgia. I will begin in Section One by looking at the factors pushing Egyptians to emigrate. My discussion will consider the controversy surrounding the topic of Coptic emigration and the two primary forces pushing Copts from Egypt. In Section Two I will examine the factors pulling Egyptians increasingly to Georgia. These factors include Georgia's immigration policies and Orthodox religion. I also explore here the role that rumor seems to play in driving Egyptian interest in Georgia. In Section Three I share the stories of three Copts living in Tbilisi that corroborate the academic and journalistic work on these push and pull factors. Section Four presents the background information on the ideology of the Rose Revolution and the policies of Saakashvili that brought about the liberal visa regime so attractive to Egyptian immigrants. I contrast Saakashvili's basic ideology and policy with that of the current government in Section Five. In Section Six I analyze the impact of Ivanishvili's immigration policies on Egyptians, Egypt, and Georgia. I explore recommendations for future Georgian immigration policies conducive to EU membership. I conclude in Section Seven with suggestions of areas for further research.

A final note regarding terminology: the Georgian Ministry of Justice does not keep record of any religious or ethnic minorities and so it is impossible to know the percentage of Copts that make up the number of Egyptians residing in Georgia. Anecdotal evidence gathered both in Georgia and Egypt, however, suggest that Egyptians who wish to immigrate to Georgia are predominately Coptic. Therefore, I refer to Copts and Egyptians interchangeably throughout

this paper except when I refer specifically to Muslims either as a group or to individual Egyptian Muslims (such as Mohamed Morsi or Hosni Mubarak).

Section One: Push Factors

Copts officially comprise 9 to 10 percent of the Egyptian population but some skeptics claim that there is likely only half that many remaining in the country. It is thought by the Egyptian Human Rights Organization—but not officially confirmed by the Egyptian government—that over 100,000 Copts have emigrated in the last two years (Sennott 2013). It is impossible to know exactly how many Copts have emigrated from Egypt since 2011 as Egyptian press reports are notoriously unreliable and the number is a controversial issue (Caryl 2013). The controversy is apparently perpetuated both by the Egyptian government and by the Coptic Church leadership. Reports that Copts are emigrating from Egypt in favor of other lands is a stigma for Morsi and other Egyptian government leaders for their inability to protect Coptic citizens (Abdul-Rahman 2012). Coptic Pope Tawadros II and other clerics also maintain that there is no significant increase in Coptic migration in the last two years. The Pope has explained that claims of increased migration “harms Egypt’s image abroad,” something he as an Egyptian cannot accept (Aswat Masriya 2013). It would seem that Coptic leaders and Morsi’s government have had an understanding: the international media may observe, report, and comment on Coptic emigration but the Coptic Church itself should remain silent on the issue.¹

Regardless of the exact number, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests increased Coptic desire to emigrate. While this is not the first time Egypt has experience a wave of emigration—the International Organization for Migration (IOM) notes that this is Egypt’s third wave of

¹ This is purely my speculation. However, *Al Ahram* journalist Michael Adel also believes that the Coptic Church rejects the notion of a recent Coptic exodus from Egypt “out of fear of the Islamists” (Adel 2013).

emigration in the last sixty years—this emigration boom is singular in that it is largely comprised of religious minority group (ICMPD-IOM 2010; see also Glain 2013).²

What is pushing Copts to emigrate? Surveys suggest that a marked decrease in economic opportunity and sense of security since the 2011 revolution are Copts' primary reasons for leaving Egypt.³ Unemployment was high before the 25 January revolution (8.7 percent in 2009) but rose sharply after the regime change and reached 11.9 percent by the end of 2011 (IOM Egypt 2012). The current rate is 13.2 percent and is reflective of how “stricken” Egypt's economy has been since the revolution (Al Ahram 2013b). Unemployment and greater demand from family to provide financial support are undeniably strong factors pushing Copts to seek economic opportunity elsewhere.

Most researchers agree, however, that financial strain is only one of two main factors contributing to a recent boom in Coptic migration. IOM scholars Hafez and Ghaly assert that “[Copts] don't always look for money alone, they search for a better quality of life....[they are] worried about the political situation and issues of security” (2012, 11). Anecdotal evidence⁴ also confirms that Copts are increasingly fearful in post-revolution Egypt and prefer to leave their country rather than continue to live with a constant lack of security under Morsi's regime.

Copts' current sense of insecurity is rooted in (at least) three trends that have evolved since Mubarak's ouster and the rise in political prominence of the Muslim Brotherhood. The

² *Al Ahram* journalist Michael Adel firmly believes this is not the first time Copts have emigrated *en masse*. According to Adel, there has been a Coptic wave of emigration with each bout of political or sectarian turmoil in the last century of Egyptian history (Adel 2013).

³ Mohamed Morsi was removed from power by the Egyptian military on 3 July 2013. This event and the subsequent turmoil in Egypt are so recent that I do not include a “post-Morsi” period in my analysis. For simplicity's sake I have also chosen not to refer to him as the “former” president.

⁴ See the Egyptian narratives in Section Three. Also, in nearly every article cited within this paper are testimonials of Copts claiming to live in fear. Regis Gente's article is one of these (2013a).

first of these trends is increased violence to Copts by Islamists (Gente 2013a; Gubash 2013). Most attacks have been located near Coptic churches where a number of Copts—as many as twenty-nine in one incident—have been killed at each location by militant Islamists (Abdul-Rahman 2012; Al Ahram 2013a; Sennott 2013). Equally as worrisome to Copts are reports on attacks on individuals. Militants are said to be increasingly targeting and (often sexually) assaulting Coptic women. Coptic women are increasingly being reported as missing.⁵

The second trend worrying Copts is a marked lack of protection from militants' assaults by Morsi's police forces. A prime example⁶ is the attack on the Coptic cathedral in Cairo on 7 April 2013 that took place after the funeral of five Copts who were killed in a clash elsewhere three days prior. Islamists militants attacked mourners leaving the funeral resulting in at least one death and over eighty injured (BBC 2013). Copts claim that the police, who were slow to arrive on the scene, not only withheld assistance to the Copts within the cathedral compound, but assisted the militants in targeting the mourners. Pope Tawadros II chastised Morsi for his “delinquency” in protecting the cathedral and its people (Glain 2013; Gubash 2013). The anecdotal evidence presented later in Section Three suggests that the majority of Copts, like the Pope, are increasingly distrustful of Morsi and his law enforcers.

The third growing trend inflaming Copts' insecurity is institutionalized discrimination and anti-Copt sentiment. Morsi's victory in the post-revolution 2012 presidential election was widely understood as a victory for Islamists (Adel 2013). Copts believe that the Muslim

⁵ I found no reports of assaults on Coptic women by any liberal academic or internationally reputable news sources. However, conservative news agencies, such as the *Washington Times* (see Smith 2012), regularly report on the assaults. See also smaller conservative media sources such as Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN.com), copticworld.org, and religiousfreedomcoalition.org. Additionally, all of the Egyptians I interviewed claimed to know someone who had been attacked by militants.

⁶ Copts also cite law enforcers' strong response to attacks against the Muslim Brotherhood's headquarters (Huffington Post 2013) as an example of State protection for the Brotherhood and their headquarters (in contrast to the perceived lack of protection of Copts and Coptic churches (Al Ahram 2013a).

Brotherhood—the ideological movement behind Morsi’s Freedom and Justice Party—directly encourages hate crimes and inflammatory rhetoric. A prime example of this is a speech given by one Muslim Brotherhood leader who declared that any Copt who criticizes Morsi will cause the Brotherhood to “spill his blood”. Shortly after this speech, the same Brotherhood leader was appointed to Egypt’s National Council on Human Rights. Another leading Brotherhood cleric earlier in 2013 urged Muslims to refrain from wishing Copts a “happy Easter” saying that the holiday is “un-Islamic” (Gubash 2013).

In summary, while Copts are still allowed to worship in Egypt, they have grown increasingly fearful within their own nation since the 2011 revolution and the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. Copts are facing physical and rhetorical intimidation by Islamists that is tolerated—if not encouraged—by the post-revolution government. It is this unfavorable climate that is pushing Copts to emigrate to new lands.

Section Two: Pull Factors

The United States and Europe⁷ are desirable yet unattainable destinations for many of the reportedly 100,000 Copts that have left Egypt since the 2011 revolution. What forces are pulling nearly five times⁸ more Egyptians to Georgia in 2013 than before the revolution? The primary pull factors unique to Georgia are its historically open visa regime, immigrant-friendly

⁷ NPR reports that the number of Egyptians granted asylum in the United States more than doubled from 2010 to 2011, bringing the number of Copts in the United States to approximately 400,000 (Calamur 2012). Adel reports that the Dutch government agreed in 2013 to allow Copts to immigrate to Holland without the need to prove persecution. Even Israel, Adel claims, is receiving Coptic emigrants (2013).

⁸ I will revisit and analyze emigration statistics in Section Six of this paper. This particular statistic comes from raw data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Public Services Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. I received the data from IOM Georgia specialist Marc Hulst (2013). See the Appendix for the raw data.

investment and labor policies, and strong Orthodox Christian heritage. An additional factor is the role that rumor is playing in amplifying Coptic interest in Georgia.

Georgia has had a diplomatic mission in Cairo since 1997 and reportedly aims to establish and strengthen “avenues of cooperation which are based on the historical ties existing between Georgia and [Egypt] throughout the centuries” (Embassy of Georgia to Egypt n.d.). Georgia has demonstrated this goodwill through its historically visa-free regime with Egypt (Gente 2013a; Hulst 2013), a policy that is well known among Egyptians interested in emigration (Khalil 2013).

Georgia’s reputation for its relatively lax business regulations also draws Copts in search of economic opportunity (Gente, Georgia: Land of Exile for Egypt’s Coptic Christians 2013a). Georgian law has historically allowed non-citizens to obtain employment, invest, and conduct business activities, with few barriers (Ministry of Justice 1997).

Georgia’s Orthodox Christian church is also a factor behind increasing Egyptian immigration. Copts say that Georgia’s Orthodox heritage makes the country a desirable location for the Coptic Christians seeking freedom from fear and persecution (Caryl 2013; Gente 2013a). While Copts and Orthodox Georgians are not strictly co-religionists—the Coptic Orthodox Church diverged from the Eastern Orthodox Church in the sixth century A.D. over a disagreement related to the nature of Christ—the Georgian Orthodox Church is, at least, tolerant of Copts within its jurisdiction (Gente 2013b).

Georgia has actively promoted both its open visa and business policies in Egypt, which has contributed to increased Coptic interest in the South Caucasus nation. The website of the Georgian Embassy in Cairo broadcasts the “Ten Reasons to Invest in Georgia,” with political

and liberal economic reforms listed as the first item on the list (Embassy of Georgia to Egypt n.d.). Media and anecdotal sources claim that Georgia has promoted tourism and investment in an “explosion” of advertising in Egypt (Gente 2013a; Wali 2013).

As interest in Georgia has grown, so have the rumors surrounding its residency and citizenship policies. Would-be emigrants and journalists alike confidently claim that it is “relatively easy to obtain residence” (Gubash 2013) and that anyone willing to invest (the supposed amount varies from USD 10-20,000) is able to gain citizenship (Glain 2013; Sennott 2013). Some Egyptians are quoted as choosing Georgia because of its anticipated membership in the European Union make it an even more desirable las a gateway to Europe (Gubash 2013). It is evident that rumor, in combination with fact, is contributing to the long lines that form at the Georgian embassy in Cairo. Misinformation—a negative byproduct of the gap between fact and rumor—may contribute to Egyptians’ failure to thrive in Georgia, a situation that I will address briefly in Section Six.

Section Three: Anecdotal Evidence

The following are narratives of three Egyptian immigrants in Georgia that affirm the push and pull factors I presented above. All three are Copts that I interviewed in their native Egyptian dialect. I received permission from each individual to include their stories in this paper.

I met Sameh Maged (2013), a single man in his late thirties, at Mapshalia Restaurant on Aghmashenabli Avenue. He explained that he had come to Georgia to research business opportunities. Sameh told me that he hopes to leave Egypt permanently because of Morsi and his unwillingness to institute laws that protect the rights of everyone. Sameh chose Georgia primarily because, unlike the United States and Europe, an Egyptian can visit Georgia—even if

only temporarily—with relative ease. Georgia’s laws also protect minorities and create a feeling of security for Copts. Sameh mused that if he is able to obtain permanent residency he may stay in Georgia indefinitely regardless of any future regime changes in Egypt.⁹ Incidentally, Sameh assured me that single Egyptian women are available for marriage in Georgia although he would be perfectly happy with a Georgian mate.

‘Emad Yusuf (2013) also works on Aghmashenabeli Street at the Cleopatra Café. I spoke with him briefly while his clientele and staff were raptly watching coverage of anti-Morsi protests in Cairo on the café television. His responses were brief but complementary to those of Sameh’s. ‘Emad also left Egypt because of his dislike of Egyptian politics. He chose Georgia because it is friendly to immigrants, the land is beautiful, and the people are friendly. ‘Emad assured me that the Egyptian community in Georgia does include women and children. He confirmed my assumption that initially it is the men who come and start a business, waiting only until it is successful before bringing their families.

Sameh and ‘Emad both confirmed that Georgian’s Coptic community meets weekly at the Roman Catholic Church near Liberty Square in the center of Tbilisi and so I attended a service. To my delight, I met there Mona Ibrahim (2013), standing in front of the church with a group of other mothers with babes-in-arms. Mona affirmed that the political climate in Egypt is currently intolerable for Christians. Her immediate response to my question “Why did you leave?” was “Fear.” She fears violence to her family and, in particular, kidnapping of her female children. Like Sameh and Maged, she claimed to know Copts who had been physically persecuted, particularly in Upper (South) Egypt where the Muslim Brotherhood enjoys great

⁹ I interviewed Sameh Maged on 1 July 2013, just two days before the Egyptian military removed Mohamed Morsi from office.

public support. Mona was equally swift to assure me that the problem comes not from Muslims in general but specifically from activists with the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁰

Mona's husband chose Georgia for the ease with which he, a non-native, could establish a business. Mona assured me that she finds Georgia and its people to be pleasant but it is difficult to make a profit when the cost of living (rent, in particular) is so high. Furthermore, while the lack of regulations prohibiting immigrant business and labor allowed her husband to establish a small produce store, Mona is ashamed that her husband, an educated man, has been brought so low. Georgia has been a hospitable but financially disappointing location for her and her family.

Section Four: Saakashvili's Liberal Regime

Egyptians began emigrating to Georgia in greater numbers since 2011 but Georgia has had an immigrant-friendly climate since the beginning of Mikheil Saakashvili's administration in 2004. Saakashvili rose in popularity and power during the years prior to the 2003 Rose Revolution. At that time Georgia, under Eduard Shevardnadze, was floundering. The economy was dependant on the support of NGOs which paid decent salaries and employed many of the activists that would bring about the resignation of Shevardnadze during the so-called Rose Revolution of 2003. A leader of a new political movement at the time (known today as the United National Movement), Saakashvili was in an optimal position to win the January 2004 presidential elections with over 96 percent¹¹ of the votes cast (Blauvelt 2013).

¹⁰ Cairene Muslims marched in support of Copts and against rising targeted violence against Copts in April 2013 (Gubash 2013).

¹¹ See van Selm 2005.

Saakashvili is praised for restructuring the public service sector and the police force, reducing the mafia's influence, reforming education, and implementing much needed taxation and public services. While promoting his campaign against corruption, Saakashvili adopted free market economic policies for which he won George W. Bush's approval and support (Blauvelt 2013), liberalized Georgia's visa regime, and reduced investment and labor regulations for immigrants (Gente 2013b; IOM Georgia 2012).

Section Five: Ivanishvili's Conservative Georgian Dream

Saakashvili and the leaders of the Rose Revolution, in their passion to eliminate corruption, abolish bureaucratic waste, and make Georgia's institutions as democratic and transparent as possible, implemented policies rooted in classical liberal ideology. The democratization processes may have been painful for Georgians but Saakashvili held firmly to his liberal ideals and his hold on Georgia's development.

Saakashvili's opponents feared he was too Western-oriented. It is unclear whether this was based on anti-American sentiment or, as some believe, a remnant of Soviet mentality that still exists in Georgian political culture (Rondeli 2013). Bidzina Ivanishvili, a businessman-turned-politician and former supporter of Saakashvili, decided that Saakashvili's vision for and grip on Georgia needed to be loosened (Lahue 2013). His Georgian Dream coalition party won the most recent parliamentary election and Ivanishvili became the Prime Minister in 2012. It is highly likely that Saakashvili will be replaced by a Georgian Dream candidate in the coming presidential election in October 2013 (Lomsadze 2013).

Georgian Dream¹² is not, as described by the head of the NATO Liaison Office in Georgia, “very liberal” (Lahue 2013). Such a description may be tempting because Georgian Dream, in general, pushes back against the American economic and foreign relations policies popular during the Republican George W. Bush’s administration. As a coalition, Georgian Dream brings together a disparate group of parties but is, in fact, generally conservative and promotes traditional Georgian institutions. Genri, the caretaker of the Holy Trinity Church in Kazbegi (Stepantsminda), explains that these institutions include national identity and the Georgian Orthodox Church, both of which have been growing in intensity and popularity since Georgian Dream’s formation and victory in the 2012 election (Genri 2013). As a result, the institutions of political and social pluralism, hallmarks of Saakshvili’s administration, have weakened.¹³ As popular support for Georgian Dream has increased, so have reports of arrests of opposition leaders and Church-supported intolerance of homosexuality (Blauvelt 2013).

Section Six: The Implications of Political Change for Egyptians, Egypt and Georgia

The shift in political power from the National Democratic Movement to the Georgian Dream coalition has also resulted in a change in Georgia’s liberal visa regime. In marked contrast to Saakashvili’s liberal immigration policy, the Georgian authorities are “currently reviewing the immigration law and preparing serious amendments to the entry policy” (Hulst

¹² Ivanishvili is still a relatively new leader with no political history. Georgians know very little about him and find it difficult to predict his movements. One Georgian expressed a popular frustration—at least for those who still support Saakashvili—by exclaiming “Is he stupid...or is his political reticence a brilliant strategy?” (Sanikidze 2013). Due to Ivanishvili’s enigmatic nature I refer here mostly to his party and not to the man himself.

¹³ Saakashvili has sought to establish a national identity by recognizing the existence of groups (churches other than the Georgian Orthodox Church, for example) and encouraging their inclusion under a united Georgia (Blauvelt 2013). The Georgian Dream version of national identity appears not to celebrate diversity in quite the same way. While the Georgian Dream coalition and the Orthodox Church are not the same entity, it appears as though the latter has some influence on the former. And the Church strongly opposed Saakashvili’s initiatives to register religious minorities as legal organizations (Gente 2013a).

2013). The Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs have committed to “set the standards’ bar higher” and are inclined to begin denying visas to people from some countries (Gente 2013a).

The changes are affecting Egyptians hoping to immigrate to Georgia. Georgia no longer permits Egyptians to enter the country without a visa and is increasingly turning Egyptians away from the border (Embassy of Georgia to Egypt n.d.; Hulst 2013). Egyptians are thus now advised to obtain a visa in advance of travel from the Georgian embassy in Cairo and must present a hotel receipt and a round-trip plane ticket to qualify for one (Wali 2013).

Statistics provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs report that 5,161 Egyptians entered Georgia in the first half of 2013. This is almost double the number that entered in 2012. The border crossing statistics suggest that the Egyptian immigration to Georgia still is booming. However, given the political developments in Georgia, the boom is likely to wane as Ivanishvili’s political agenda becomes clearer and his conservative immigration policies take effect.

Is the new government’s tightening of immigration policies a purely ideological act? Likely not, says Caucasus specialist Regis Gente (2013b). Ivanishvili’s deliberalization of Georgia’s visa regimes may be political posturing. It may be a strategic foreign relations move. Whatever the case, Georgia has also revoked its visa-free regime with Iran, as William Lahue (Lahue 2013) predicted only a few days prior to the announcement by the Georgian Foreign Minister. While the move may be temporary, it is still a political message to Iran, the United States and possibly even to Russia.¹⁴

¹⁴ I am speculating that Georgia’s unilateral removal of its visa-free travel rules with Iran is a political message to Russia. I make this assumption based on Georgia’s part-defensive, part-aggressive attitude toward Russia (Rondeli 2013). However, international relations analysts have connected Georgia’s visa policy change with respect to Iran

Whether the victims of a Georgian ideological or political battle, Egyptian hopeful emigrants will not find entry into the South Caucasus country as easy as it once was. Their numbers will undoubtedly dwindle. Other factors may also contribute to the probable end of the boom. Immigrants in Georgia do not qualify for the same health care and education services they are entitled to in Egypt (Avaliani 2013; Wali 2013). Also, Copts do not enjoy the level of welcome they may have expected from the Georgian Orthodox Church. The Coptic congregation has been trying to obtain a blessing from the Georgian Patriarch to begin building their own church but that has not yet occurred (Gente 2013a). It is also possible that the Egyptian immigrant community in Georgia has either the ability nor the interest in fellowshipping new arrivals. Journalist Regis Gente observes that the Copts whom he interviewed for his EurasiaNet article did not seem to be well connected or supportive of each other (2013b). Another factor is that Egyptian businesses (often restaurants) do not thrive in Georgia. Egyptian immigrants rarely make a return on their investments (Gente 2013a; 2013b). Finally, it is possible that fewer Copts may wish to emigrate now that Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood are no longer in power (Khalil 2013).

Egypt itself will also feel the effects of Georgia's political change. As Georgian Dream's policies increasingly prevent more Egyptians from immigrating to and working in Georgia, fewer people in Egypt will benefit from the trade linkages, transfer of technical skills, and remittances that migration can provide the sending country (IOM Egypt 2012). Egyptian immigrants in Georgia often struggle financially and likely do not remitt much of the estimated US\$9.5 billion (ICMPD-IOM 2010) transferred from Egyptians working abroad to their home country in 2008. However, other benefits of Egyptian migration to Georgia will be missed—

and Georgia's relations with the United States, Iran, and even Israel. See Eurasia Daily Monitor (Rukhadze 2013) and the Wall Street Journal (Faucon, Solomon and Fassihi 2013) for detailed analyses of the issue.

namely, the reconstruction and development of Egypt through its emigrants or those who return home (Fargues and Fandrich 2012; IOM Egypt 2012).

Considering that Egyptians see Georgia as a possible gateway to the Eurozone, it is important to ask how Georgia's new immigration policies will affect Georgia's bid for membership in the European Union.

Georgia is facing a phenomenon addressed by Mitsilegas in his work on immigration control in the era of globalization (2012). Globalization, he observes, has led to the strengthening, not the weakening, of the state. A perceived link between globalization and unwanted migration has prompted states to make use of global technologies to enhance and "harden" border controls (Mitsilegas 2012, 5).

The EU, conversely, demands of its members to diminish dividing lines. Members are expected to "soften" and speed up legal cross-border traffic by reforming visa and immigration policies (K. E. Smith 2005, 766). As a hopeful candidate for EU membership in a rapidly globalizing world, Georgia must balance between the demands of "hard" and "soft," exclusive and inclusive.

Tim Blauvelt of American Councils in Georgia believes that Georgian membership in the EU is impossible (2013). This will be so if Ivanishvili takes Georgia off the pro-Western path forged by Saakashvili and declines pursuit of membership or because the EU may find issue with, among other things, Georgia's too tight immigration policies. Openness to immigration plays a key role in a successful bid to the EU. According to Joanne van Selm of the Migration Policy Institute, one of the obstacles to EU membership is a satisfactory immigration and asylum policy (2005). In an article exploring migration after the Arab Spring, Fargues and Fandrich

argue that EU Member States must demonstrate their willingness to “share the burden” of asylum seekers from Egypt (2012). 150 Egyptians reportedly apply to the Georgian Embassy in Cairo for asylum every week (Gubash 2013); if Fargues and Fandrich’s argument is valid, Georgia will need to expand its capacity for absorbing asylum seekers and immigrants or will fail in its bid for EU membership. Will Ivanshivili and the Georgian Dream coalition sabotage, as Saakashvili claims, the country’s progress toward the EU by overly tightening Georgia’s immigration policy? Ivanishvili may not act deliberately to undermine Saakashvili but his new policies may put Georgia’s EU bid at risk.

Section Seven: Conclusion

In this paper I explore the impact of a specific event (a turnover in political power from Saakashvili and his United National Movement party to Ivanishvili and his Georgia Dream coalition) on a specific people (Egyptians). More specifically, I look at the implication of new immigration policies on Egyptian emigrants to Georgia, their families back in Egypt, and on Georgia as a potential member of the EU.

Ivanishvili’s political ambitions for Georgia remain a mystery but his new policies indicate a less Western and less liberal approach to immigration than his predecessor Saakashvili. Egyptian immigrants continue to apply for entry into Georgia but new policies are making the processes more difficult, more expensive, and—for many—just impossible. The wave of immigration will inevitably slow causing Egypt to suffer the lack of financial remittances its emigrants to Georgia provide as well as democratization. Georgia, too, will suffer if a deliberalization of immigration policies jeopardizes its bid for EU membership.

I am aware that my study is not comprehensive; despite multiple efforts I was unable to learn, for example, what (if any) are the precise rights to education of immigrant children in Georgia. Unfortunately, I had to rely exclusively on two vague journalistic references to (the lack of) educational opportunity for the children of Egyptian immigrants in Georgia.

I here conclude this particular analysis of the implications of changing Georgian policy on Egyptian immigration but will continue my research on the subject. I will pursue an answer to my question above related to the educational rights of immigrants. I am also curious about Georgians' opinions, if any, of the Egyptians in their country. I questioned a few educated Georgians on the topic and each individual seemed surprised—shocked, even—to learn of a significant Egyptian community within their country. I will revisit the Caucasus Research Resource Center¹⁵ website to see if their 2012 surveys contain data on Georgians' opinions on immigrants from countries outside the region. I will also follow the current crisis in Egypt and attempt to predict how it will affect that country's emigration trends.

In my future study I also intend to explore other immigrant groups in Georgia and see how Georgia's new policies will affect them. I am interested in discovering how the experiences of other minority populations—Armenian, Azeri, and Chinese—resemble and differ from that of Egyptians. The possibilities for further research are as rich with potential as are Georgia and Egypt.

¹⁵ For the Caucasus Resource Center, see <http://crrc.ge/oda/>. None of their surveys currently contain data on Georgians' opinions about immigration.

Appendix

EGYPT	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010-2011	2012	2013 2nd Q.	TOTAL
Entry	92	211	494	602	391	1164	2763	5161	10878
Exit	92	220	462	595	349	1089	2113	4348	9268
Difference	-2	-9	32	7	42	75	650	813	1608
Residence permits obtained 2005 - 2012									703

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Public Services Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, provided by Marc Hulst of the International Office of Migration in Georgia (2013).

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