

## **Citizenship Ethnicization in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia: Is Ethnic Conflict Relevant?**

### **The Puzzle: In Place of Introduction**

Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia are four post-Communist states sharing many historical similarities. Starting from the most recent experiences, all four states broke away from the socialist federations in 1991 and undergone turbulent transition periods. Volatility of the post-communist transition and deep ethnic divisions led to full scale armed conflicts and major political upheavals. As a result, all four states remain politically and culturally unconsolidated. *From* the Communist period, all four states inherited political culture, understandings of the nationhood, administrative practices, and legal traditions, including similar Soviet and Yugoslav citizenship laws. *In* the Communist period, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia were seen as relatively underdeveloped peripheral regions. *Before* the Communist takeover, neither of these republics had an established statehood tradition. Finally, the nationalist ideologies started to develop in all four countries as late as in the 1870s, while the mass cultural identity remained blurry and flexible up until the 1920s and 1930s.

General theoretical literature on nationalism, citizenship and migrations usually attributes divergences in citizenship policies across states to differences in concepts of nationhood (ethnic vs. civic), migratory patterns (societies of emigration vs. societies of immigration), democratic experiences (early democratizers vs. late democratizers), imperial legacies (metropolis vs. colony/non-imperial state), and legal traditions (British vs. French etc.) (Brubaker 1992; Howard 2006; Schnapper 2002; Weil 2001). Besides, among independent variables scholars list party competition (right vs. left), external pressures and presence or absence of irredentist issues (Howard 2006; Joppke 2010; Maatsch 2011). In case of Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia one will not find variation on almost all these explanatory variables. All four states, are non-colonial and nationally unconsolidated recent democratizers, societies of emigration, where ethnic nationalisms are dominant and legal traditions inherited from the socialist federations. Political left has been strong in three of four states in the recent

decades. Despite mentioned similarities, these countries show a huge divergence in citizenship policies. *Azerbaijani and Moldovan* citizenship regimes are among the *most inclusive* in the whole post-Communist area, and clearly the most inclusive ones in post-Soviet republics. *Bosnia and Macedonia* have just the opposite, the *most exclusive* citizenship regimes. This article represents an attempt to account for this divergence.

Recent studies put in question the common wisdom that the absence of ethnic conflict, border issues and pressing national questions lead to inclusive citizenship regimes (Weil 2001; Joppke 2010). According to Oxana Shevel (2017: 416–418) and Maxim Tabachnik (2019) de-ethnicization of citizenship and application of territorial principle of granting state membership comes exactly as a result of civil wars, border disputes and unconsolidated statehood. However, again the comparison of developments in war-torn post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav republics posits a serious challenge. The effect of civil wars on citizenship regimes in these regions was at times opposite.

Area-specific literature focusing on citizenships in the Balkans and Eurasia points to ethnic and civic nationalisms, different understandings of nation and state, political contestation between post-Communists and nationalist democrats, kin state policies, and international organizations' pressures (Brubaker 1992; Barrington 1995; Dzankic 2015; Ginsburgs 1993; Krasniqi 2013; Makaryan 2007; Shevel 1009; Spasovska 2012; Thiele 1999; Thompson 1998).

In this paper, I use comparative historical methodology, namely process tracing and pattern-matching (see: Lange 2012). Contrary to the literature, I find that alone all factors identified in the literature do not explain openness of citizenship in Azerbaijan and Moldova and its restrictiveness in Bosnia and Macedonia. While the factor of internal conflict, understanding of states as multiethnic, strength of the political left and compliance with the EU conditionality have clearly had liberalizing effects on citizenship in the region, further questions appear. *Why some states react to the break-out strengthening ethno-nationalist take on citizenship, while other de-ethnicize it? Why multiethnic concepts of the state are present in some countries and absent in others? Why some left-wing parties support inclusive citizenship, while others do not? Why some governments are more willing to implement substantial changes under external pressure than other governments?*

My argument is manifold. I argue that: First, the de-ethnicization of citizenship may happen even in states weakened by internal conflicts and territorial disputes. Second, however, only left-wing post-Communist parties in Eurasia and the Balkans tend to react to state breakdown by liberalizing

citizenship regime. Third, only those left-wing parties, whose members understand the boundaries of the dominant ethno-national group as blurry, tend to allow for multiethnic visions of state and citizenry introducing open citizenship regimes. Fourth, the presence of these blurred understandings depends on positive images of the Communist past shared by the party members. Finally, the Communist period with its cultural policies is viewed positively only when early pre-Communist encounters of local nationalists with former metropolitan (Russian and Serbian) authorities had been positive. This is because nostalgia for Communist ethno-cultural policies only emerges, when the former center of rule with its multiculturalist ideology is not perceived as a potential cultural threat to the nationhood of the peripheral ethnic group.

In accordance with this explanatory model, open citizenship in Bosnia has never been introduced because the political left had been non-existent here since 1991 in contrast to Azerbaijan, Moldova and Macedonia. Within the latter group of countries, pre-Communist Serbian state severely repressed early Macedonian nationalism, which in the early 1990s resulted in establishing restrictive citizenship regime. In contrast, relations between the Russian imperial authorities and early generations of nationalists in Azerbaijan and Moldova were largely peaceful, if not mutually supportive. These historical legacies have eventually led to liberalization of Azerbaijani and Moldovan citizenship in the post-Communist period.

### **Measuring Citizenship in the Western Balkans and Eurasia**

The scholars studying national membership in Europe have come to complex conclusions with regards to the state of citizenship in different countries and identified contradictory tendencies towards “restricting” and “liberalizing,” “fortifying” and “lightening” citizenship, making citizenship more “exclusive” and more “inclusive” (Howard 2006; Joppke 2010; Maatsch 2011; Soysal 1994; Vink and Baubock 2013; Weil 2001). They have offered a variety of approaches to measuring citizenship’s openness for minority populations such as members of non-dominant ethnic groups and immigrants. Some scholars assessed citizenship laws (Howard 2006; Weil 2001). Others proposed to compare the conditions of state membership across countries qualitatively focusing on different aspects of citizenship: legal status, rights, identity and participation (Dzankic 2015; Joppke 2010; Maatsch 2011; Shevel 2009). Still others argued that in order to determine the degree of openness of citizenship, its “ethnicization” or “de-ethnicization” it is fruitful to look at how countries treat non-resident co-ethnics of the dominant group (Iordachi 2004; Joppke 2010; Kovacs 2006; Osamu 2004; Shevel 2010). Their

research has examined legal documents granting preferential access to citizenship to non-resident co-ethnics, “status laws” in Eastern Europe, out-of-country voting and political participation of historical diasporas. Immigrant and refugee naturalization trends in different countries also have been taken as an indicator of citizenship openness or closure (Brubaker 1992; Dronkers and Vink 2012). Finally, quantitative scholars have created numerical indicators measuring citizenship policies, such as Citizenship Law Indicators Index (CITLAW) and Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX).

In the recent literature on state membership in Eastern Europe the concept of “citizenship regime” has gained an increasing popularity (see: Dzankic 2015: 23–27; Maatsch 2011: 2–7; Vink and Baubock 2013). By citizenship regime scholars usually mean “citizenship laws, regulations and administrative practice regarding the citizenship status of individuals. [B]ut, in addition to that, it also refers to existing mechanisms of political participation.” (Shaw and Stiks 2012: 311). Accordingly, the scholars suggest to measure citizenship regime looking at (a) a given country’s citizenship legislation defining the body of citizens (i.e. who is entitled to citizenship and all duties and rights attached to that status), (b) administrative policies dealing with citizenship matters, and, finally, (c) the official or non-official dynamics of political inclusion and exclusion. For the purposes of this paper I will take as a guidance this holistic and qualitative approach to determine comparative openness or closeness of citizenship in Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia. However, I will also comment on other relevant indicators.

I consider citizenship regimes in Azerbaijan and Moldova as comparatively permissive and those in Bosnia and Macedonia as comparatively restrictive for the following reasons:

First, legal provisions for naturalization in Azerbaijan and Moldova such as *jus soli/jus sanguinis* criteria, residence and economic requirements, and mastery of the dominant culture are more generous towards potential new citizens compared the requirements of both other post-Soviet countries and Bosnia and Macedonia. In contrast, naturalization criteria in Bosnia and Macedonia are more rigid compared to both two post-Soviet cases and other post-Yugoslav states. For example, Azerbaijan (Article 1, until 2014) and Moldova (Article 11, since 2003) are the only among post-Soviet republics that recognize unconditional *jus soli*. Conversely, Bosnia and Macedonia allow neither unconditional *jus soli* (as Albania and Kosovo) nor preferential naturalization for persons the native-born (as in Croatia, Article 9 and in Serbia, 2004, Article 11).

Mastery of the dominant culture, residence and economic requirements do not map neatly on the presented dichotomy, but also help to classify citizenship regimes. Even though all four states require

demonstrating knowledge of the state language, which always means the language of the dominant ethnic group, the neighbouring states pose the same requirement. However, in addition to this some states in the region (including Macedonia, but also Armenia and Georgia) demand applicants to take a special oath of allegiance to the dominant language, culture and traditions. Azerbaijan, Moldova, Croatia, Serbia, Albania and Kosovo (but also Bosnia) do not. Similarly, an incomplete dichotomy emerges when one compares economic requirements for naturalization across states in the region. In line with expectations, Azerbaijani, Moldovan, Croatian and Serbian laws in contrast to Georgian and Macedonian ones do not contain income and property requirements. However, usually more restrictive Bosnia and Armenia also do not ask potential citizens to prove financial credibility. The pattern repeats with residency requirements. Azerbaijan with 5 years provision is one of the most liberal states in the region, while Bosnia with 8 years and Macedonia with 15 (until 2004, then 8) are among the most restrictive ones. However, usually more exclusive Armenian law presupposes only 3 years of residence before naturalisation, while Moldovan law demands applicants to stay in the republic 10 years. Despite these exceptions, even in terms of cultural, income and residency requirements Azerbaijan and Moldova on average lean more towards inclusive citizenship, while Bosnia and Macedonia keep closer to the restrictive model.

Second, Azerbaijani and Moldovan citizenship regimes can be considered as relatively open if one looks at the legal provisions on treatment of co-ethnics. Less ethnicized Azerbaijani and Moldovan citizenship laws do not include special provisions for naturalization of co-ethnics. To compare, Armenia in Transcaucasia explicitly facilitates naturalization of ethnic Armenians lifting residency requirement. In the Western Balkans, the dichotomy between ethnicized and de-ethnicized naturalization policies does not hold as all the states in this region preferentially treat applicants belonging to the titular ethnic groups.

Third, Azerbaijan also hold relatively permissive stance towards multiple nationality not requiring applicants for naturalization to renounce their previous citizenships. In contrast, in adjacent Georgia multiple citizenship is banned by law in all circumstances. The first article of the Armenian law states that citizen of the republic “cannot be a citizen of any other state at the same time,” even though acquisition of foreign nationality does not lead to any consequences (particularly, Article 131), let alone automatic stripping of Armenian passport as in the Georgian case. Moldova and the Western Balkan states all require new citizens to renounce their previous state allegiances, thus, all being restrictive.

Forth; qualitative studies that look not only into legal status dimension of citizenship, but also in rights, identity and symbolic dimensions argue that Bosnia and Macedonia (along with Montenegro) have the most restrictive, “ethnoculturally selective” and fragmented citizenship regimes (see: Vink and Baubock 2013). Access to citizenship as well as political and social rights in these countries are distributed by governing ethnic elites along ethno-cultural lines. In addition, on the psychological level popular acceptance of the state identity and state symbols (flag, anthem etc.) in Bosnia and Macedonia hinges upon belonging to the dominate Bosniak and Macedonian ethnic groups (Dzankic 2015: 70–117). In contrast, political and symbolic space in Azerbaijan and Moldova is affected by political struggles between forces supporting more inclusive nation-building projects of Azerbaijanism and Moldovenism and those who share exclusive and ethnoculturally selective ideologies of Turkism and Romanism. Azerbaijanist and Moldovenist political parties, institutions and power networks that have managed to hold power in the two countries for most of the period since 1991 strongly advocate for inclusion of ethnic minorities (Furman 2009; Heintz 2005; Iglesias 2013; Tokluoglu 2005).

Finally, Citizenship Laws and Migrant Integration Policy indices largely confirm suggested classification, although their data are only available for the Western Balkans. In the most recent edition of the CITLAW Bosnia with 29.5 points and Macedonia with 30.8 points score the least in the region, the next closest country being Kosovo, which scores 33.2 points. MIPEX 2015 ranks Macedonia (38 points) and Bosnia (41 points) lower than Croatia (44) and Slovenia (48) and significantly lower than the EU-28 average (51). Not conforming fully to the expectations, Serbia (39 points) scores the second most unfavourable towards migrant integration in the post-Yugoslav area being sandwiched between Macedonia and Bosnia. (see: Huddleston 2016).

In other words, with all the exceptions discussed above many legal, qualitative and numerical indicators allow stating that in the post-Soviet area Azerbaijan and Moldova, the unconsolidated states with late nation-building history and recent experience of armed conflict, established the most open citizenship regimes. In contrast, in the former Yugoslavia similar experiences of nation- and state-building history produced an opposite outcome. Bosnia and Macedonia opted for the most closed citizenship regimes. This having been said, I admit that in view of already exiting inconsistencies<sup>1</sup> and future developments the offered classification needs not to be seen as forever fixed.

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<sup>1</sup> A number of these inconsistencies are discussed in the body of the text. An additional evidence against classification of Azerbaijan as less restrictive and Bosnia and Macedonia as more restrictive comes from statistics on statelessness in different countries. If usually more liberal Moldova in 2014 indeed hosted less persons under UN statelessness mandate

## Explaining Differences in Citizenship Regimes: A Literature Review

The literature on state membership, nationalism, migration and minority politics offers a number of explanations for existing differences in citizenship regimes. For the purposes of this paper I will not try to offer a classification of this literature by various scholarly traditions, because a number of elaborate typologies have been already offered (see: Dzankic 2015: 23–41; Maatsch 2011: 19–32). Rather I will focus on factors and actors that scholars usually identify as most important for forming citizenship regimes.

First, a number of scholars look at historical experiences of the state in order to account for comparative openness or closeness of citizenship policies: imperial pasts, democratic legacies, histories of immigration and emigration, legal traditions, and long-lasting problems of irredentism. Marc Howard (2006) argues that those countries that had long-lasting colonial experience and early democratic tradition tend to be more welcoming towards immigrants and minorities. In contrast, non-imperial countries and late democratizers usually adhere to restrictive citizenship principles. Patrick Weil (2001) adds to the list of factors explaining openness of citizenship *jus soli* legal tradition and experience of immigration. In his view, openness of a citizenship regime can be inherited from previous legal practices or acquired if country experiences sustained immigration over a long period and stops sending masses of its own citizens abroad.

More contested in the literature is the role of ethnic civil wars, irredentist problems and border disputes in shaping citizenship regimes. The major debate on this role starts in the generalist literature. A number of influential macro-sociologists have found that interstate competition and conflict have historically led to the expansion of citizenship to disenfranchised social strata and, thus, to social and political inclusion. Others note that the inclusion of the broad masses has often been accompanied by unrestrained nation-building, brutal cultural homogenization, and ethnic cleansing (Malesevic 2013,

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(ca. 2000) than other countries in the region, namely Belarus (ca. 6500) and Ukraine (over 35000), provisionally more liberal Azerbaijan had more stateless people on its territory (over 3500) than Armenia and Georgia taken together (ca 200 and 800). In the Western Balkans, usually more restrictive Bosnia and Macedonia had much less stateless inhabitants (ca. 100 and 750 respectively) than Croatia (ca. 2900), Serbia and Kosovo (over 3500). No consistent pattern appears, while looking at the number of pending asylum seekers' cases. However, clearly, in this respect Macedonian citizenship regime appeared in 2014 as the most restrictive in post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav space (over 1500 cases, Ukraine had around 5000 with a population 20 times as big as Macedonian one), while Moldovan one scoring as one of the most liberal (around 150 cases, less being only in Bosnia and Armenia). UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2014: 80-84. <http://www.unhcr.org/56655f4b3.html>



Mann 2005, 2012a, 2012b, Tilly 1990, 1994, Wimmer 2002). In field specific works on nationalism and migration both intrastate and interstate wars are seen as significant causes of restricting citizenship policies. A model connecting inclusive and de-ethnicized naturalization policies with the absence of ethnic conflict, border issues, and pressing ‘national questions’ has long dominated the literature (Weil 2001, Joppke 2010). According to this model, the embattled national identity of majority populations often leads to the adoption of a defensive, xenophobic stance by publics and political leaders. To the contrary, recent scholarship suggests that in many cases centrifugal tendencies or even virtual defeat of central governments in open military interethnic confrontations results in the moderation of nationalist politics and adoption of territorially-based citizenship. Particularly in new unconsolidated states civil wars and border disputes make the territorial conception of state membership, including *jus soli* principle, the only efficient means to affirm sovereignty and territorial integrity (Shevel 2017; Tabachnik 2019).

Second, starting with the seminal work of Rogers Brubaker (1992) scholars try to explain variations in citizenship policies by looking at historically rooted concepts of nationhood, dominant narratives of the nation and chronological trajectories of nationalist movements (Schnapper 2002; see also: Barrington 1995; Dzankic 2015: 45–70; Makaryan 2007; Krasniqi 2013; Shevel 2009; Vetik 1993). According to this argument, emergence of nationalist movements prior and outside of the modern state leads to predominance of ethnoculturally based concepts of nationhood, which, in turn, result in adoption of tightened citizenship laws. In contrast, nation-building projects initiated by already existing non-hierarchical and infrastructurally powerful modern states mandate adoption of territorially based civic concepts of nationhood and introduction of inclusive citizenship laws.

Third, some researchers see changes in citizenship legislation and practices as an outcome of political contestations, namely party politics. Christian Joppke (2010) argues that liberalization and de-ethnicization of citizenship in the Western Europe happens when left-of-center parties hold power, while their right-of-center opponents usually tend to be more exclusionary and favourable for the ethnic kin. Mark Howard (2006) proposes to revise Joppke’s explanation stating that left-wing parties are only able to change policies, if they do not face persistent opposition by electorally strong political right or popular rightist mobilization via referendum. In Howard’s view, the public, if consulted, tends to be hostile towards any citizenship liberalization. Analyzing preferential access of co-ethnics and absence thereof in the legislation of post-Soviet states, Oxana Shevel (2009) states that citizenship regimes reflect domestic party contestation over concepts of nationhood rather than historical legacies of nation-



building. Focusing particularly on Ukraine, she shows how post-communist left-wing political forces strongly favoured civic understanding of nation and citizenship and campaigned for introduction of dual citizenship with Russia. Rightist parties, to the contrary, advocated for ethnic nation- and state-building. They denounced dual citizenship acquired through naturalization in another country and argued for facilitated naturalization of the ethnic kin.

Forth, many scholars pay attention to the factors of *horizontal* pressure, that is influences of neighbouring states (Dzankic 2015; Krasniqi 2013; Maatsch 2011; Vink and Baubock 2013). Jelena Dzankic (2015: 119–136) shows that the politics of dual citizenship in the Western Balkans depend on contestation of nationhood and statehood by kin states as well as other neighbouring states involved. In view of Dzankic, when a state is ethnically diverse and politically unconsolidated, when its international personality is challenged and parts of its population are seen as eligible for out-of-country citizenship, the citizenship policies of this state tend to be restrictive with regards to dual nationality, at least on paper. At the same time, politically and nationally consolidated stronger states often extend their citizenship to ethnic kin abroad as means of challenging legality and authority of weaker neighbouring states (cf. Vink and Baubock 2013). In his article on citizenship in the Baltic states, Lowell Barrington (1995) argues that one of the factors driving adoption of more accommodating stance towards Russophone populations was Russian insistence, namely the threat of non-withdrawal of troops stationed in the republics since the Soviet period.

Finally, literature attributes influential role to *vertical* pressures of international organization and world-wide spread of the human rights regime. After Yasemin Soysal in her path-breaking work (1994) had emphasized international provenance of many social and political rights accruing to no-citizen residents in Western countries, several studies have explained convergence in liberalization of citizenship regimes in European countries by diffusion of international and EU legal norms (Maatsch 2011)<sup>2</sup> and EU conditionality (Dzankic 2015; Krasniqi 2013). In line with this argument, most of authors explaining lifting of restrictions for naturalization of Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia talk about political pressures from the Council of Europe, OSCE and EU (Barrington 1995; Feldman 2004; Thiele 1999; Thompson 1998; Vetik 1993)

Above I have tried to produce neither comprehensive classification of the existing literature nor exhaustive description of explanatory model in every particular work. Instead I have identified a number

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<sup>2</sup> Whether this diffusion is vertical or horizontal (state to state) remains largely debated (see: Maatsch 2011: 28–32).

of variables, which scholars single out explaining citizenship regimes. When it comes to particular models, most of studies, especially the recent ones, favour multi-causal explanations. Alexandra Maatsch (2011) explains convergence in citizenship laws in Central and Eastern European EU countries by horizontal diffusion of international and EU legal norms, while pointing to determination of leading political forces to redeem violations of human rights by the Communist regimes and states' migration experiences in order to account for divergences. Analyzing citizenship dynamics in in the Western Balkans Dzankic (2015) refers to historically rooted narratives of state and nation, institutionally embedded legal practices, ethnic elites' relations, party politics, societal symbolic conflicts, and international vertical and horizontal pressures. According to Barrington (1995), who studies citizenship in the Baltic states, explaining citizenship regime in a country one should ask a whole array of questions: Is the nation perceived as ethnic or civic? Is the state perceived as monoethnic or multiethnic? Is there a perceived threat of cultural extinction? What is the strength of minority communities within the country? What is the stance of neighbouring states and kin-states? How do international organizations react? And, finally, what position emigrants and external diasporas voice with regards to the citizenship policies? In the next section of this paper, I will show that many variables identified in the literature work in unexpected and divergent ways in Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia. Depending on how members of contemporary ruling left-wing parties evaluate the Communist past, unconsolidated post-conflict states establish either inclusive or exclusive citizenship regimes. Whether the image of *the Communist period* is positive or negative, in turn, depends on relationships of early peripheral nationalisms with *the pre-Communist* Russian and Serbian authorities.

### **Assessing the Effects of Party Competition on Citizenship Policies**

In this section I will deal with “internal” factors and, to a lesser extent, with external influences shaping citizenship in the four states. Surprisingly, most of independent variables identified in the literature work in diametrically opposite directions in cases of Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia. However, two of these variables, namely left vs. right party competition and historical trajectories of nationalism, can offer insight, if combined.

First, all the states under consideration have not experienced sustained labour migration in last decades. Since early 1990s they clearly have fallen into the category of countries of emigration as an outcome of dire economic conditions and displacement caused by armed conflicts. Only Moldova experienced relatively large Ukrainian and Russian immigration in 1950s–1970s, but even in this

republic the pattern was reversed in the 1980s and even more so in the 1990s (Brubaker 1992: 274). Despite similar experiences of emigration from all four republics, in post-independent period Azerbaijan and Moldova ended up with the most open citizenship regimes, whereas Bosnia and Macedonia opted for most exclusive ones.

Second, in all four countries the “national questions” are considered as unresolved and these unresolved national questions have led to severe territorial disputes with the neighbouring states and have caused full scale armed confrontations in the 1990s–2000s. Moreover, Azerbaijan and Moldova are both hosts to long-lasting “frozen conflicts” and unrecognized republics of Transdnestria and Karabakh. Macedonia, where disputes of state legitimacy involving local Albanian populations have been politically settled by the Ohrid Framework agreement, is still unrecognized under her constitutional name, because of protracted conflict with Greece.

Third, neither the two post-Soviet Republics nor the two Yugoslavia’s successor states have had early experiences with democracy. In all four countries democracy came in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then democratic transition here has been rocky leading to establishment of various forms of hybrid regimes characterized by limited political competition, freedom of press, and rule of law. Again, despite of these similar experiences, the two states in the post-Soviet area have had citizenship regimes markedly different from the two post-Yugoslav countries.

Two other factors, party contestation and legacies of nation-building/concepts of nationhood arguments require more meticulous consideration. At first glance, if applied uncritically following existing theoretical models, they do not offer consistent explanation. At the same time, closer inspection into contingencies of each case provides important insight into the divergences of Azerbaijani, Moldovan, Bosnian and Macedonian citizenships.

To begin with, left vs. right political competition explains restrictive citizenship in Bosnia, but is less helpful alone in understanding Azerbaijani, Moldovan and Macedonian situations. In Bosnia, current citizenship laws and practices have come as an outcome of Dayton Framework agreement concluded in 1995 between local ethnic parties, namely (Bosniak) Party of Democratic Action, Croatian Democratic Union, and Serbian Democratic Party. Bosnian politics since 1990s has witnessed overwhelming tendencies towards ethnic outbidding. Even though some reshuffling of political parties did occur, it has happened only within constituent ethnic communities and has continuously brought to power political forces professing Bosniak, Croat and Serb nationalism. As a result, no Bosnian party has been interested in introducing more liberal citizenship policies. Moreover, recently ethnic parties

cooperated on preserving restrictive and ethnically based citizenship regime in the republic in face of the EU pressures. Thus, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina restrictive citizenship can be explained by absence of the strong political left and continuous populist mobilization through exclusionary rightist rhetoric.

Nevertheless, in the cases of Azerbaijan, Moldova and Macedonia the party politics variable does not work in the expected way. On the one hand, the presence of the strong left does not guarantee liberalization of citizenship. On the other hand, more open citizenship may be introduced by a party, which is successor to the Communist predecessor, but positions itself ideologically and politically in the center. In Macedonia, the Social Democratic Union, a renamed version of the former League of Communists, governed the republic in 1992–1998 and 2002–2006. After the first free elections in 1990, the party and its partners dominated the fractured parliament and the post-independence coalition government of national unity. The first democratically elected president of Macedonia Kiro Gligorov (1991–1999) was one of the leading figures in the SDU. Throughout the whole period since 1990 the SDU has remained the main opposition party, its electoral support never dropping under ½ of the ruling nationalist VMRO-DPMNE's. Despite this, neither in the 1990s nor right after the conclusion of the consociational Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001), the Social Democratic Union tried to liberalize Macedonian citizenship regime. Qualitative assessments even say that under the SDU rule in 2002–2006 citizenship was further fragmented along ethnic lines (Spasovska 2012).

In Moldova, more inclusive citizenship practices were first introduced by centrists, not leftist. The February elections of 1994 brought victory to the Agrarian Democratic Party, which largely absorbed former Communist mid-level functionaries and managers. In spring 1994, the parliament suspended Romanian language requirements for state employees and obliterated linguistic inspections in institutions and businesses. Russian now could be used in official correspondence. The 1994 Constitution sanctioned the Republic of Moldova as multiethnic state and made unification with ethnically kin Moldova, which has been on agenda since the late 1980s, difficult. In 1995 the conflict with Turkish Gagauz minority in the south was settled on autonomist principles. The president of Moldova associated with the Agrarian Democratic Party increasingly emphasized multiethnic character of the republic and its distinctive character. Stunning return of Moldovan communists into the parliament in 1998 indeed signalled further liberalization of citizenship, but it did not give the start to this liberalization. Rather the Communists continued the political line of the agrarians, whose party collapsed after 1998 elections, and who had marshalled liberalization of citizenship so far. New

citizenship law wielded in the parliamentary confrontations between the Party of Communists and supporters of the former nationalist Popular Front dropped provisions on preferential of Moldovans. Finally, as the Communists fully consolidated power in both the legislative and the executive, *jus soli* provision was introduced in 2003 and dual citizenship was officially endorsed (King 2000: 146–206; Furman 2007; Musteata 2012).

Post-Soviet history of Azerbaijan's citizenship regime resembles Moldovan trajectory with the exception that after short-lived governance of the nationalist Popular Front under Abulfaz Elchibey (1992–1993) political system of this country was rapidly transformed first into strong presidential and then to semi-authoritarian regime. In other words, neither strong left nor any other opposition party has been able to assume influential role. It was the party of power, the New Azerbaijan, which adopted reconciliatory rhetoric, multiethnic vision of the state and finally liberal citizenship law of 1998. Similarly to the Moldovan Agrarians, the New Azerbaijan party professed centrist ideology and was composed mainly of former communist *nomenklatura* personally loyal to Heydar Aliyev, who ruled the republic throughout 1969–1982 and returned to power in 1993 (see: Cornell 2011: 81–100; Tokluoglu 2005).

In short, this brief pattern-matching testing left vs. right party competition hypothesis allows concluding that the competition rather well explains restrictiveness of citizenship in Bosnia, but fails to fully account for differences in citizenship regimes of Azerbaijan, Moldova and Macedonia. Concurrently, in Bosnia the lack of political will to liberalize citizenship has directly resulted from domination of the rightist ethnic parties in the government. However, in all Azerbaijan, Moldova and Macedonia, if not genuine leftist, at least direct successor parties to the former Communists had strong representation or even leading role in politics throughout the whole period since 1990. Nevertheless, this communality still led to different outcomes for citizenship regimes. Further scrutinizing casual links, in the following section I will critically discuss concepts of nationhood/nationalism's trajectories hypothesis. I will argue that not only leftist ideologies, but also understanding of the ethnic boundaries of the dominant group professed by the Communist successor parties, may determine decision making in the field of citizenship. These understandings, in turn, depend on perceptions of the Communist past and early histories of domestic nationalist movements.

### **Experiences of Early Nationalism and Post-Communist Social Boundary Blurring in Azerbaijan and Moldova: A Case for Interactive Explanation**

The traditional formulation of the concepts of nationhood thesis offers a dichotomous explanation. Historically rooted civic cultural idioms of nationhood lead to exclusive citizenship regimes, while their ethnically defined counterparts result in inclusive policies (Brubaker 1992). Moreover, in view of this hypothesis party politics mediator is redundant. Membership in the states with experiences of civic nationalism will always be open, whereas citizenship in the countries forged by ethnic nationalism will always be restrictive. However heuristic this theory may be, it does not hold in Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia. This is because the four states under consideration do not show on the “cultural idioms” independent variable, despite of divergent outcomes in terms of citizenship. Generally, the understandings of nation inscribed in popular historical narratives, school curricula, institutional codes, administrative practices and political rhetoric in Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia are ethnic, as everywhere in Central Eurasia (see: Barrington 1995; Brubaker 1996). This means that nations and nationalities are viewed in society as bound collectivities based on ethno-cultural similarities and endowed with impressive historical pedigrees. Furthermore, nationalist movements in the region have been ethnoculturally motivated since their very inception in the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, it is misleading to look at nationalist ideologies and concepts of nationhood in post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav area through the dichotomous lens. Empirically, along civic-ethnic continuum there exist a number of group conceptions of nationhood, which allow for different degrees of permeability of social boundaries and recognize multilayered and culturally mixed identities. These qualifications are necessary, because in Azerbaijan, Moldova and Macedonia the elites of the Communist successor parties understood boundaries of the dominant ethnic nations in strikingly different ways. Members of the New Azerbaijan Party, the Agrarian Democratic Party and the Party of the Communists of Moldova viewed titular nations in the two republics as culturally diverse, multilayered and open to external influences, even if they conceived of them in historical, ethnic and even biological terms (Cornell 2011: 257–260; Iglesias 2013; Musteata 2012; Tokluoglu 2005). In contrast, the functionaries of the Social Democratic Union emphasized cultural purity and uniformity of Macedonian nation and vigorously advocated for defence of Macedonian uniqueness. Consequently, the Azerbaijani and Moldovan elites willingly accepted and even favoured multiethnic character of the state and inclusive citizenship regime, while the SDU leadership was obsessed with preservation of the status of ethnic Macedonians as the only “constituent people” (i.e. “founding nation”) in the republic (Danforth 1996; Engstrom 2002; Poulton 2000).



In Macedonia, the Social Democratic Union right after its establishment in 1991 turned into an ethnic party, whose electoral support came overwhelmingly from Macedonians. Parliamentarians associated with the party actively supported the new constitution, which proclaimed the republic as “the national state of the Macedonian people” ignoring minorities. Later they enthusiastically voted in favour of placing the emblem of the royal dynasty of Ancient Macedonia onto the state flag. The SDU members came to argue that ethnic Macedonians can trace their origins to autochthonous populations of the ancient state portraying Albanians are newcomers. Even though diverse origins of the ethnic Macedonian culture were recognised at times, the cultural mixture was believed to have happened in pre-Slavic and medieval periods (Brown 2004; Danforth 1996; Engstrom 2002; Poulton 2000). In other words, the contemporary ethnic Macedonian identity was seen as culturally pure, unique and impermeable.

In Azerbaijan, to the contrary, members of the ruling New Azerbaijan party believed in multilayered and multicultural origins of Azerbaijani ethnonational group, even though they recognized its primarily Turkic origins (Cornell 2011: 257–260). Ceylan Tokluoglu (2006), who conducted extensive interviews with political and cultural elites in Baku, has concluded that pro-government politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals viewed Azerbaijani culture as mixed and historically exposed to Turkish, Iranian, Caucasian and Slavic influences. Moreover, they considered Russian cultural impact as positive. One of the government employees in the interview argued against perceiving Azerbaijani identity as monocultural and uniform as follows: “We share more with [Armenians and Georgians] than we do with the Turks. For example, our national costumes are the same as Armenians’ and Georgians’. Our mentality can be defined as the Caucasian mentality... rather than the Turkish mentality” (quoted in Tokluoglu 2006: 733). Such narratives expressed the official ideology of Azerbaijanism, which professed open, malleable and permeable nationhood concept rather than strictly delineated and defensive one. Serving as a counter against purist understanding of national identity by Turkists, Azerbaijanist ideology also allowed for multiethnic understanding of state and citizenry. One of the interviews with the former New Azerbaijan MP aptly illustrates emic conceptual connections between multicultural ethnic nation and multiethnic state: “The Russians are leaving but the Lezgians and the Talish have always lived here. During the PFP [Popular Front] rule the official ideology was: a Turk does not have a friend other than a Turk... If I say, a Turk is my friend but a Talish is not, then we will face separatist movements in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan was under the risk of being torn apart; they changed the name of the Azerbaijani language arguing that it was Turkish. When Heydar Aliyev came



to power he changed the name back to Azerbaijani language. Our national ideology is Azerbaijanism” (quoted in Tokluoglu 2006: 741).

In the same vein, post-Communist Moldova witnessed not only political competition between communist successors and anti-communist nationalists, but also severe confrontation between understandings of nation and state. Romanists, who advocated for unification with Romania in accordance with ethnic principle, viewed identity of Moldovans as purely Romanian. Conversely, Moldovanists argued that location of Moldova in imperial borderlands and two centuries of the Russian rule, transformed Moldovans making them more open to external world, tolerant and accepting of foreign cultures. In his interview given two weeks before the 1994 parliamentary elections the president of Moldova Mircea Snegur emphasized: “There are some voices that put in question our right to be an independent state, to call ourselves Moldovan people. More than that, even the word “Moldovan” with all its derivatives some people try to completely eliminate from our speech” (quoted in Furman 2007: 292). The communist president of Moldova Vladimir Voronin went even further constructing impressive historical pedigree of the Moldovan nation dating back to the medieval Principality of Moldova: “We, we must be proud of belonging to a people that succeeded to demonstrate the capacity to be continuators of an unique state tradition, on which foundations we reside for 650 years” (quoted in Furman 2007: 103). This Moldovan nation, in Voronin’s view, has always been tolerant and open to the Others. Different ethnic groups have contributed to Moldovan culture, but most valuable have been the Soviet influence. Accordingly, the president advocated for a vision of Moldovan state being historically a “common home” for many nationalities (Iglecias 2013, especially 101–107).

So far, I have shown that political successors to the Communist Party in Azerbaijan, Moldova and Macedonia shared radically different narratives of social boundaries of the nation and different visions of the state. The presence of strong inclusive narratives among Azerbaijani and Moldovan post-Communist elites, in turn, has led to adoption of inclusive citizenship policies. In contrast, exclusive nationalist discourses shared by members of Social Democratic Union in Macedonia, have ensured perpetuation of restrictive citizenship regime. Now, the question emerges where do the inclusive narratives come from and why they are absent in Macedonia?

As already shown above, in the four countries under scrutiny the concepts of culturally multilayered titular ethnicity and multiethnic state were coupled with the positive evaluation of the Communist rule. Only those post-Communist elites, who shared positive views of the former nationalities policies, welcomed foreign cultural influences in general. The SDU members in Macedonia

saw Yugoslav cultural policies as too permissive and insufficient for national affirmation. Oppositely, the New Azerbaijan Party supporters, and the Agrarians and Communists in Moldova praised the Soviet past and recognized the efficiency of the Communist approaches to ethnic issues in ensuring political stability and social harmony. This divergence in views between Macedonian and two post-Soviet Communist-successor parties were, in turned, conditioned by preceding history of local nationalisms. Namely, the experiences of Macedonian nationalism with the Serbian rule were much more ambiguous than the early encounters between Azerbaijani and Moldovan nationalisms and the Russian-dominated state. While Serbia had aimed to eradicate early Macedonian nationalism and Serbinize Macedonian population until this policy was reversed in socialist Yugoslavia, the Russian Empire had rather contributed to development of early Azerbaijani and Moldovan nationalisms, a policy that continued throughout the Soviet period. As a result, Macedonian nationalist thought has harboured mistrust towards foreign influences, whereas Azerbaijani and Moldovan nationalisms have been more welcoming to them.

Macedonian nationalism emerged in a strained international context. In the later nineteenth century geographical Macedonia remained among few European territories still controlled by the Ottoman Empire. National identities in this area had not developed yet. Local Slaves primarily identified themselves with kinship groups, locality or Orthodox religion. A certain understanding of communalities with other Slavic speakers might have existed, but did not play significant social role. In these circumstances, neighbouring states, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, voiced territorial and national claims over Macedonia. Pioneering individual nationalists and, later, nationalist organizations, such as Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) founded in 1893, found themselves divided over the understanding of national identity of Macedonians. Some nationalists claimed distinctiveness of Macedonian Slavs and advocated for a separated identity, while others stressed their belonging to the Bulgarian nation. The majority, however, in both groups saw autonomy of Macedonia within the Ottoman Empire or Bulgaria as a necessary step.

Witnessing Bulgaria winning ideological struggle over Macedonia, Serbian government strongly opposed Bulgarian and by extension any Slavic Macedonian nationalism in the southern borderland. Soon a doctrine claiming Serbian identity of local Slavic inhabitants and aiming at ultimate annexation of Macedonia was officially endorsed by Belgrade. In the aftermath of the Second Balkan and the First World wars the territory of today's republic was incorporated into Serbia and then Yugoslavia. In the interwar period, the Belgrade authorities zealously followed their plans of imposing Serbian identity on

Macedonian Slavs. Schooling was made available only in Serbian language, the Orthodox Church was forced to join Serbian Patriarchate, and local population was required to Serbinize their names. Serbian police and secret services waged severe struggle against sympathizers of any non-Serbian identity of “South Serbian” Slavs, particularly against members of VMRO. This repressive and assimilatory policy was changed and even reversed only after Communists came to power in Belgrade. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia understanding futility of Serbinization and fearing Bulgarian pretensions, decided by all means to encourage Macedonian nationalism. In 1944 separate Macedonian language was codified and its first primer was published in 1946. The Yugoslav government granted the republic a broad autonomy in cultural affairs and generously financed institutions tracing historical, ethnographic and linguistic pedigrees of Macedonian nation (Danforth 1995: 56–69; Poulton 2000: 50–69, 79–90, 116–120). Thus, Belgrade nationalities policies in the Yugoslav policies in fact made the major contribution to the development of Macedonian nationalism and transmission of national identity to Macedonian population. However, by 1945 Macedonian nationalist movement had already experienced mistreatment at hands of Serbian authorities. The memories of this period were rekindled in the early 1990s, which by extension led to mistrust towards Yugoslav model of cultural policies.

In Azerbaijani case, relationships between central authorities and local nationalism developed in strikingly dissimilar way. Azerbaijani nationalism itself came largely as a result of the Russian imperial rule. Incorporation of northern Azerbaijan into Russian empire was followed by a series of administrative, economic and social reforms. The liquidation of the khanate system and internal borders fostered inter-local communication and allowed to imagine country as a distinct cultural entity. Local nobility was admitted into Russian educational institutions and later absorbed by new imperial administrative structures. The Russian authorities endorsed opening new Muslim schools with a secular curriculum. Thus, it was Russian-educated Muslim intelligentsia that formed the backbone of nationalist movement in Azerbaijan (Swientochowski 1995: 14–15; Shaffer 2002: 22-23). As power of local clergy was drastically diminished by imperial reforms, the new educated class could express reformist secular views and advocate for cultural development freely. Even though Russian authorities at times ordered closure of newspapers published in what they saw as “Turkish language,” particularly when the relations with the Ottoman Empire were strained, in general nascent Azerbaijani newspapers in Russian, Persian and the local idiom were allowed throughout the whole period along with other cultural activities. Imperial police targeted radical groups, such as *Himmet* associated with the Russian Social Democratic

Workers' Party and terrorist *Difai*, but did not restrict discussions of cultural initiatives and political proposals, especially after the 1905 Revolution.

Of course, Azerbaijani nationalists resented subordinate legal status of Muslims within the empire and blamed the authorities for pro-Armenian bias. Nevertheless, for most the final goal until the start of the full-scale Russian Civil War was autonomy within reformed and democratic Russia, where Azerbaijani Muslims could form a common front with other Turkic populations. The Russia's role as a conduit of civic culture, secular education and science was appreciated by nationalists. Knowledge of Russian culture was considered as a must for every educated and progressive Azerbaijani Muslim. Moreover, Azerbaijani nationalists needed image of the Empire to emphasize distinctiveness of "Azerbaijani Turks" within broader Muslim and Turkic world. Ideas of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism were popular in Azerbaijan as well as understanding of cultural similarities with Iran and Turkey, but they led neither to the desire of establishing common political entity nor to denial of the country's cultural distinctiveness. Therefore, many nationalists were keen to point to secularism and progressivity of Azerbaijani Turks enlightened by Russian (i.e. European) culture (Alieva and Asker 2014; Balaev 1998: 13–27; Cornell 2011: 7–22; Swientochowski 1995: 25–36; Schaffer 2002: 24–32).

Compared to Azerbaijani nationalism, national movement in Bessarabia (today's Moldova) developed even later. In this rural and the least developed among Western imperial domains, where Romanian-speakers constituted less than 30 percent of urban population, peasants identified mostly with kinship group and locality all until the 1920s, if not 1940s. Although government-sponsored policies of Russification in administration, courts and religious services were inconsistent, Russian became dominant in urban and civic life. Being Orthodox Christian, local nobility enjoyed full citizenship rights in the empire, which entailed access to education, military careers and civil jobs. As a result, it was Russian-educated local intelligentsia that founded first nationalist organizations and newspapers in early 1900s. The Imperial government never denied distinctiveness of Bessarabian majority population and its cultural similarity to Romanians. Some Romanian-language newspapers were closed for propagating socially radical views, but other, more moderate ones, operated freely. Nevertheless, even these moderate newspapers failed to find sufficient readership and did not last long. Few activists advocating for closer ties between Bessarabia and Romania were marginalized and moved to Iasi, their works being allowed to cross the border.

The end of tsarist rule led to establishment of the Moldovan National Party demanding political freedoms and autonomy within reformed Russian state. Autonomist platform predominated in

Bessarabian political thought even after the convocation of a National Council in January 1918, the time when the Russian Civil War engulfed Ukraine. Threatened by developing Bolshevik offensive, the National Council soon proclaimed independence. As Romanian military units started to enter Bessarabia, divisions run deep within the National Council with regards to political future of the province. Only under pressure exercised by Romanian military did the Council vote for union with Romania in March, and finally agreed on unconditional incorporation of the province in November, 1918. Soon those, who led the National Council and actively supported unification, moved to Bucharest, where they were quickly sidelined by more experienced capital city politicians. Others, remained in the province and largely kept low profile. Intellectual elites in Bessarabia still preferred Russian over Romanian and Russian-language newspapers were more available than Romanian ones. Many shared completely indifferent attitude towards Romanian nationalism (King 2000: 18–50).

In the meanwhile, the Soviet authorities resenting loss of Bessarabia decided to establish a Moldovan Autonomous Socialist Republic on the Eastern Bank of Dnestr River in 1924. Viewing the new entity as a tool for future political incorporation of the whole Bessarabia into the USSR, the Communist officials fostered the sense of national identity among Romance-speaking inhabitants implementing “indigenization” campaign. Cultural and research institutions were established, newspapers published in local idiom multiplied and schooling became widely available in the native language. The novel national identity, however, was constructed as Moldovan and distinct from Romanian. Soviet scholars argued that Moldovans living in both MASSR and Bessarabia were a *sui generis* nation, which emerged organically as an outcome of long-lasting separation from Romania and low social status. While social structure of Romanians had been complete for centuries, Moldovans had remained peasants. Gradually, divergent class experiences have transformed Moldovans into distinct nation, whose members have developed particular attachment to their territory. As a language of working class nation, Moldovan was codified based on the local peasant speech, in contrast to French-influenced and sophisticated Romanian. After the takeover of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union, “moldovanization” continued in the whole territory of former Bessarabia (King 2000: 51–79). In other words, although the Soviet authorities opposed Romanian nationalism in Moldova, they willingly recognized cultural specificity of the Romance-speakers and actively promoted *Moldovanism*.

To summarize, the explanatory model offered in this section is as follows: First, the left-leaning Communist successor parties were responsible for liberalization of citizenship in Eurasia and Western Balkans. Second, only those Communist-successor parties, whose members understood the boundaries

of the dominant ethno-national group as blurry, tended to allow for multiethnic visions of state and citizenry and establish open citizenship regimes. Third, the presence of these blurred understandings, in turn, depended on positive images of the Communist past shared by the party members. Finally, the Communist period with its cultural policies was viewed positively only if the relationship between Russian and Serbian authorities and early generations of local nationalists had been positive. This is because nostalgia for the Communist past only emerged, when the former center of rule with its multiculturalist ideology was not perceived as a potential threat to the nationhood of dominant ethnic group.

### **Conclusion**

This paper contributes to the literature, which explains divergences in citizenship regimes across countries. It concentrates on nationally and politically unconsolidated states in Eurasia and Western Balkans, namely Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia. On the one hand, in line with the existing theories, my findings show that the left-wing or Communist-successor parties tend to push for more open citizenship policies. They also point to the fact that civil wars, contested sovereignty and territorial insecurity often help these parties both to assert power and to push for de-ethnicization. On the other hand, I find that neither contested statehood nor party competition alone can account well for existing divergences in citizenship regimes.

In my explanatory model, these factors interact with the presence of narratives about the Communist past among political elites and the actual history of local nationalist movements. Thus, the effects of the Communist and pre-Communist past, not only transition experiences should be included into multi-causal explanatory framework for ethnically divided and politically volatile countries. Specifically, I argue that the readiness of the left-wing and Communist successor parties in the moments of statehood crisis to symbolically include minorities depends on how the party members perceive foreign influences on the ethno-national culture. The elite perceptions, in turn, are shaped by actual history of the Communist rule with its policies of institutionalized multinationality. In the four cases under analysis, the Communist, that is “Russian” and “Serbian,” rule was perceived as positive and unthreatening to cultural existence of the dominant nation after independence only if the relations between the Russian and Serbian states and local nationalisms had been positive before the Communist takeover.

Notably, the findings of this article put in question most of the hypotheses proposed by macro-sociological literature on citizenship, nationalism and migration which usually proposes to account for divergences in citizenship policies across states looking at differences in concepts of nationhood (ethnic vs. civic), migratory patterns (societies of emigration vs. societies of immigration), democratic experiences (early democratizers vs. late democratizers), imperial legacies (metropolis vs. colony/non-imperial state), and legal traditions (*jus sanguinis* vs. *jus soli*). This means that scholars studying citizenship and migration in post-Communist countries need to take seriously the Communist experiences and their incarnations in social memories in the transition period. In addition, the future studies will benefit from methodology allowing for closer assessment of interaction effects between pre-Communist and Communist legacies and post-Communist developments.



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