IGNITING THE PASSION IN REFUGEES TO LOOK HOMEWARD

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"A man's country is not a certain area of land, of mountains, rivers and woods, but it is a principle, and patriotism is loyalty to that principle."
—George William Curtis

Ensconced in their new environment, away from the fear of war, violence, and persecution by Azerbaijan, refugees of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) tend to become rather ambivalent about returning to their homeland, especially after laying some roots in their host country, such as being employed there, sending their kids to school, etc.. In a situation like this, they need to be reminded that their homeland, whether free or occupied, needs them.

An extensive search of the literature was conducted to find an important factor(s) to induce refugees to repatriate. In this article, we shall discuss that factor, which has the power to persuade some of them to repatriate, to bend their steps toward Artsakh, their ancestral homeland of millennia.

Ideas have changed the world; ideas can also help the beleaguered people of Artsakh. So, let us explore the factors behind repatriation.

After a deep search, I have discovered that refugees repatriate for one of the two or both categorical factors: material and non-material (i.e., spiritual) reasons or both.

At the top of material and non-material reasons is the belief that it would be safe and secure to return home. In the absence of such a feeling, the refugees would refuse to consider returning back to their country currently occupied by Azerbaijan..

Material Factors. Material incentives are self-explanatory; they include such things as comfortable shelter, satisfactory paying jobs, good schools for their kids, monetary assistance from both the host country as well as from international refugee organizations given to them. If these factors are not satisfactory in a foreign land, and if the danger of war, violence, and persecution has subsided, refugees tend to repatriate.

Incidentally, I have a very refined husband and wife couple (Mr. Sergey and Mrs. Elmira Apresyan) of refugees from Askeran, Artsakh, staying in my small summer house in Garni, Armenia. They are nostalgic of their home and orchard. When their home and orchard were shown on the Google Map, tears welled up in his eyes. Six years ago, they had planted 200 persimmon trees on a hectare of land. The dream orchard had begun to produce a commercial crop now, but they had abandoned everything to save their lives from the genocidal Azerbaijani army invasion of their homeland. From their expressions of Artsakh, they sound to be very patriotic. If they are somewhat assured of living in Artsakh to be safe and secure again, they would be most likely willing to repatriate.

Non-Material Factors. The foregoing incentives may not be sufficient to sway comfortably settled

refugees in exile to repatriate. The refugees should feel that they are returning to their safe and secure status quo before displacement by war, violence, and persecution.

There must be other reasons to induce the refugee to look homeward. Patriotism is at the top of the reasons to repatriate. Love is a spiritual non-material thing.

Let us look at the main reasons for the largest Ukrainian war refugees faced with repatriation. Since the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, more than 18 million Ukrainians have traveled abroad to escape being a casualty. Despite the tranquility in foreign lands, most citizens have returned or are planning to return to Ukraine. Why?

According to a survey conducted by the Ukrainian Institute for the Future in 2022, more than 60 percent of the survey respondents will return because of their family ties. As to the survey question whether the Ukrainians miss their homeland, the researchers concluded that "We cannot ignore the fact that many Ukrainians are sincere patriots and miss their homeland immensely. Love for our native land is woven into our DNA, because from a young age we know that 'There is no Ukraine, no second Dnipro.' Therefore, most people plan to return home."

As the above study indicates, patriotism is a major factor for the Ukrainians for their repatriation. Patriotism seems to be a powerful stimulus to propel individuals into actions, which may even prove to be risky. Compared to the Ukrainian refugees, however, the refugees from Artsakh have the plausible fear of being massacred by their conquerors who have had a track record of genocides committed against the Armenians.

Many famous and infamous leaders in history like Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Genghis Khan, Hitler, etc. have inspired their soldiers to fight the "enemy" by resorting to patriotism. Cadets at the West Point in the United States study the strategies and tactics of the above-mentioned generals for a successful graduation from this world-famous military academy.

Tariq Ibn Ziyad (after whom The Rock of Gibraltar is named), was an Umayyad commander who initiated the Muslim conquest of Spain and Portugal in 711-718 A.D. used the fear approach, however, to make his soldiers fight the Spaniards by saying: "The enemy is standing in front of you, and the sea is behind you," meaning they had no choice but to fight the enemy in order to survive. Despite the employment of fear in some instances, the historical use of patriotism has been very effective in time of war and in peace.

In the area of persuasive communications, social/psychology scholars of various disciplines have studied Aristotle's rhetorical triangular appeals for over hundred of years. Essentially, Aristotle proposed that in order to be able to influence the audience one can use Ethos, Pathos, or Logos. Ethos stands for source credibility; pathos appeals to the emotions; and logos appeals to the logic or reasoning of the audience.

There is no controversy about the use of ethos. The speaker must be credible, of good character so

that listeners would trust him or her and follow the instructions given. However, in the pathos and logos appeals, their effectiveness depends on the nature of the audience.

The differential effectiveness of pathos and logos depends on the type of the audience. If the audience were highly educated and experienced in certain areas under discussion, logos would be better to use. However, for the masses of people with little to moderate education, pathos would excel. Hitler capitalized on pathos appeal in every fiery speech he made.

Patriotism is the quintessential example of the use of pathos appeal to persuade people to come to the rescue of their country facing challenges..

Patriotism As a Pathos Appeal. In the calculus of patriotism, there is expending of time, effort, energy, and even sacrifice of life.

What is patriotism? This term has been in use since the Ancient times. Then, as now, it refers to love of country. To use patriotism as a persuasive communication tool, we should know about it more than the simple standard dictionary definition.

The standard dictionary definition reads patriotism as “love of one’s country.” This captures the core meaning of the term in ordinary use; but it might well be thought too limited and in need of fleshing out.

Thus, many authors and scholar over the years have defined patriotism more widely. Patriotism can be defined as love of one’s country, identification with it, and special concern for its well-being and that of its compatriots.

Philosophers in the 20th century, on the other hand, have expanded its meaning to include another important dimension to it. In the first philosophical book-length study of the subject, Stephen Nathanson in his book titled *Patriotism, Morality, and Peace* (1993), defines patriotism as involving:

1. Special affection for one’s own country
2. A sense of personal identification with the country
3. Special concern for the well-being of the country
4. Willingness to sacrifice to promote the country’s good

The 4th dimension, "Willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good," expands the definition of patriotism of previous scholars.

For centuries leaders have used this term to inspire their people, especially their soldiers, to overcome challenges facing the nation in times of peace and in war.

Drawing upon scientific research conclusions, we should first find someone regarded as a trustworthy person with high credibility and reputation like a statesman or a stateswoman (not any of the 44-Day Armenian generals) to appeal to the patriotic spirit of the Artsakh refugees.

Patriotism should not be referred to a political virtue, but to a spiritual attachment to one's nation, to one's heritage, to one's homeland.

Let us remember the ultimate, unique reason for refugee repatriation would be patriotism, which cannot be exchanged with any material incentives.

The main theme of the persuasive communication (e.g., speech) should focus on patriotism, pride, children, and freedom. Here are some suggestions of examples of what to include in the rhetorical presentation:

Dear Armenians of Artsakh, I want you to know that I am aware of the difficult choices facing you since you escaped from home to avoid war, violence, and persecution. One of the major decisions is repatriation, the voluntary return to your country of origin --when conditions permit, when it would be safe and secure to go back.

1. You did not just leave behind a place on the map of the world, but a homeland made of memories, relatives, and dreams for your children.
2. You'd feel proud of yourselves for being patriotic for repatriating to your ancestral homeland.
3. Your kids will respect you for the patriotism to enable your children grow up in their own native land.
4. No matter how well your children become acculturated in a foreign land, they would still feel like persons without a country when they grow up.
5. Armenians around the world would respect you for your patriotism to repatriate to Artsakh and to never abandon hope of one day it will be free again because of your sacrifices today.
6. Let us serve as examples to others to emulate our patriotism and follow suit to burn fire in our heaths again to warm up our memories of happy days in our beautiful Artsakh homeland.
7. Now is the right time for your children to grow up in their homeland for they would be bent and malleable for embracing patriotism, love for Artsakh, to emerge and grow in their hearts at later times.
8. The destiny of Artsakh is in your hands. If we abandon Artsakh today, we may never regain it in the future. So, please state your allegiance to your native land by promising to return to your home, garden, and community when the opportunity presents itself.

Always try to emphasize the pathos appeal to stir up, to rouse them to action.

Since our beloved Tigran The Great, Armenia has lost vast swaths of its ancestral lands to the belligerent nomadic tribes bursting out of Central Asia to loot the civilized world. Due to the disunity of the Western world, thus far no stop has been put to these kinds of conquests by looters even in the 21st century world. A glaring example is the West stood on the sideline when Azerbaijan bombed and shelled Artsakh into submission.

Nevertheless, an attempt must be made to stop the further loss of land, any well-thought

persuasive communication should be cogent and to the point of repatriation, otherwise another province of the Armenian nation would be lost to the plundering "Turkbaijan".

The leaders of Artsakh, Armenia, Diaspora, the international refugee organizations including Azerbaijan should work together to mitigate repatriation of the refugees of Artsakh to go back to their homeland safely and securely. Oh, yes! It is better to be a dreamer than a hopeless deadwood "despairer."



A teacher is working with her young students in a shelter during Azerbaijan's bombing and shelling of besieged Stepankert in 2023.. These impressionable, the future population of Artsakh, would be dispersed in the diaspora. These young children are destined to become victims of assimilation when their parents move to foreign countries. Repatriation is a must if we were to entertain the hope for a free and independent Artsakh one day in the future.

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To access his previous articles open the search engine 🔍 *of the website and insert his name.*

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