

## *Alienation of Assyrian Political Performance in Diaspora*

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Every Assyrian leaving their homeland carries with them their most treasured possessions. They also take a less visible suitcase, one that contains the ideas, methods, behaviours, beliefs, and memories stored in their brain. This “mental suitcase” may also include some aspirations, thoughts and feelings, particularly concerning politics and Assyrian nationalism which, due to tyrannical policies of today’s regimes in the Middle East, have been stored in the back compartments of their mental suitcase (subconscious mind). Once socially and financially established in Diaspora in due course they will replace personal effects with new ones, thereby giving them an appearance in keeping with their new surroundings. But what becomes of the mental baggage? Is it as easily altered as the contents of the first suitcase? It does happen in some cases; the individual thoroughly merges into the new society. But it would seem that, for the most part, this does not occur for a period of time, which may be short or long, the ideological baggage brought from the old world remains unaffected, and this has a bearing on their national and political outlook. In effect, the immigrant finds them self in Diaspora, but their brain is preoccupied with the homeland. This is what is meant by “alienation”.

Current studies in political sociology have concluded that as soon as an emigrant arrives to the new country, contents of their “mental suitcase” gush out. Emotionally and in yearning, they remember their old house, the street or the alley where they played football or marbles with their childhood friends, and the school where they studied with their colleagues. In the event of meeting on of these colleagues, the past memories will come to the present, and I believe many Assyrians have experienced such moments. Some will try to re-establish the past in a new form. Habbaniya reunion and Kirkuk gatherings are good examples. On the national and political side, the “*Return of Subconscious*” is another remarkable phenomenon of the Assyrian nationalism in Diaspora. In democratic environments, national identification that was once confined in the subconscious mind will flourish and reappear. As a result, overnight we see many “Oomtanaye” and political parties appear in the Assyrian political arena, regardless of being a “true political party” or a “one man party”. In such cases, the Assyrian immigrant soon alleges that they were always a nationalist, but the tyrannical regime rejected and oppressed their nationalism. In Diaspora, while out of the dictatorial regime’s reach, they will exaggerate their love for “Ashour” with abundance of care and loving feelings toward their nation.

As such the Assyrian will no longer live in Ashour, but Ashour will live in them, in their thoughts and their conscious minds as an important spiritual and moral element. “Ashour”, as a result of emigration, has been transferred from an objective matter to a subjective element, from a geographical factor to a spiritual motive, therefore, the spirituality of “Ashour” will reflect strongly in their national and political behaviour and performance. Such an Assyrian resembles a man who is in despair and romantically in love with the first girl that he met, but is married to someone else. You can imagine what a contradictory and confused life his may be. To be more specific, if we take a quick glance at the Assyrian Political Parties, we will easily find that for them, “Ashour” is the core of their bylaws, aims, programs and agenda.

Meanwhile, there is no reference to facts or reality, and to objective elements of the Assyrian society in Diaspora, where these parties established and perform.

Most obvious evidences of the Assyrian political alienation are the Assyrian political party bylaws. Through a quick glance on Assyrian political party bylaws, we will find that apart from the name, the philosophies and texts have been adopted from bylaws of the Middle Eastern political parties. A reference to the philosophy of political party bylaws will attest to this claim. Political scientists usually classify political parties based on many components, bylaws being the most common. In accordance with basic structures adopted in their bylaws, political parties in general are categorized into two types: First, parties which adopt cells as their basic structures, and second, those that adopt committees, sections, or branches as their basic structures. The first type created by Lenin, the founder of the Russian Communist Party and was imposed since 1920's on all communist and affiliated parties. It is convenient for the politically and socially backward countries where the totalitarian policies dominated. In such cases, the cell system which is based on a small number of members with close and very limited relations provides better security against government break ins and any pursuits against party members. Since discipline and strict commitments are necessary, the bylaws of these parties are very important elements in political performance. Most political parties of the third world countries adopt this type of bylaw including the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party, Kurdistan Democratic Party, Assyrian Democratic Movement, and Assyrian Democratic Organization.

The second type of party based on committees, sections or branches has a larger number of members, and is mostly adopted by democratic societies that are politically advanced and where political freedom is practiced. Contrary to the cell system party, the bylaw is less significant, and more flexible. Unaware of those theories, most Assyrians political parties have adopted the first type of bylaw that was carried in their mental suitcase. Such political parties and their bylaws are only workable in dictatorial environments and will not be valid and practical in democratic societies. Thus, Assyrian political parties are known to the public through one or two of their prominent members, and not their ideology, beliefs, agenda or bylaws. In other words, they are without clear and obvious guidelines, and portray a very ambiguous vision and objectives.

I would also like to reflect on two evident facts (one positive & one negative) in the life of the Assyrian society in Diaspora: First, Assyrians who live in Diaspora in general and with a few exceptions live as Assyrians and with strong feeling of nationalism. Even those who do not keep up with traditions, or do not speak the Assyrian language or those who were born in Diaspora and have never seen the homeland see "Ashour" as a strong spiritual and mental resource for their ethnic belonging. "Ashour" is reacquiring its characters of godhood in the Assyrians of Diaspora. Second, it is real and evident that social contradictions and diseases such as tribalism, denominationalism, selfish individuality and biased partiality are aggravating and in many cases are forming in national organizations or political parties and even in media.

These contradiction conditions of the Assyrians in democratic environments provide Assyrian political parties the opportunity to actively function and achieve their

national aims. Yet, most of them are following their unreachable spiritual and subjective aspirations, and completely neglecting and ignoring the practical and achievable objectives. Implementing the subjective or spiritual nature of Ashour that lives in every Assyrian's mind to the objective nature of the Assyrian society in Diaspora is something impossible. In other words, Assyrian political parties objectively exist in one dimension, yet mentally in another miles and miles away. Human performance cannot be productive when spiritual (or subjective) and material (or objective) elements are in separation. Thus, achievements of Assyrian political parties are imperceptible, and very limited in Diaspora, such as irregular newsletters, occasional press releases, and participation in an annual celebration. As a result of their failure, these political parties experience constant retreats, division, decrease in membership, and therefore, lose their credibility and popularity among Assyrians.

It is true that Assyrians are not the only ones in Diaspora establishing political parties, and struggling to secure national and human rights in their homeland. However, there are few facts that make the Assyrian case an exceptional one and different from others. First, Assyrians live and establish their political parties in Diaspora. Political parties or liberation movements of other nations are established in exile that is different from Diaspora. Diaspora is a permanent situation, a new land of citizenship for those who choose to emigrate, and not necessarily for political reasons. Diaspora soon becomes their new homeland. Exile on the other hand, is a temporary situation, and mainly a foreign land to its emigrants that are smaller in number than those in their homeland. An exiled group is normally very much politically involved in the liberation of its homeland from outside occupiers or from existing regimes, and as soon as this goal is achieved it is very likely that they will return to their homeland in order to participate in the new government or perform politics.

Second, the most exceptional fact regarding the Assyrians is that their number in Diaspora is greater than those who remain in their homeland, and the number of emigrants is constantly rising. Majority of the Assyrians live in Diaspora, and have already established themselves socially and economically in their new home in order to enjoy a stable life for an invisible future. All aspects of their lives indicate that there is no willingness to return to their homeland. Perhaps in today's times, we can hear many Assyrian politicians claim that as soon as Saddam is removed from power, they will immediately return to Iraq. Today, the phrase "*Return to Homeland*" is no more than an "emotional dream" of the alienated Assyrians.

Third, it is odd that almost all Assyrian political parties claim an independent or autonomous state for Assyrians, or they promote the "liberation of Ashour". Meanwhile, the party leaders and members are enjoying all the comforts of the West, and are trying their best to have the rest of their family or relatives that still remain in the homeland to join them. The same is true in regards to the so-called national and church leaders who are preaching to the despaired Assyrians in the homeland to withstand and bear all ordeals and sufferances for the sake of "Ashour". Meanwhile, they have already pitched their tents in the West, and are enjoying all its welfare and benefits, and are trying legally or illegally to fetch their families to join them. How do we expect our unfortunate Assyrians in the homeland to believe in such claims and appeals that are known to them as no more than "trickery tears for Ashour"? This truly is not only a national problem it is a moral dilemma for Assyrians. Such claims without any clear objectives, and no minimum sacrifices are simply "national

hypocrisies”, the clearest character of alienation of the Assyrian political performance. Moreover, there are many national claimants, who were not born in Ashour or have never been there even as a visitor and hardly know what their true claim is. It is fair to mention that a few Assyrians are involved in the national cause, and one or two members of political parties have travelled to the North of Iraq (Garbia) during recent years, and have supported the national cause in the North of Iraq financially and morally. However, these are only exceptions and conclusions cannot be reached based on exceptions.

Political scientists confirm that any nation without active political parties will mortgage its national determination to other nations, and consequently will remain a nation without a national will. As Assyrians, we cannot afford to give up our national and self- determination, or be controlled by others. We must be masters of ourselves, that is our legitimate right, and we need active and strong political parties to support this cause. Since our currently established parties are not performing adequately due to the alienation from their objective and practical reality, must we establish new ones? The number of Assyrian political parties whether in a true sense, or “one man party” or “occasional party” relative to the size of our population is rather large. The concept of “population or birth control” in demography should be applied to the Assyrian political parties. In other words, we need “political party control”. Based on history and experience, it is evident that one single party regardless of its power and strength cannot represent the entire population of a nation. As a result, the interests, national and political objectives will be jeopardized and sooner or later the nation will be led to destruction; as we have witnessed through the fate of the dictatorial regimes throughout our history. Assyrians need a small and sufficient number of real political parties proportionate with the size of their population, their economic & financial capabilities and social & cultural mentality.

In order for Assyrian political parties to succeed in achieving their goals, they must liberate themselves from their political and mental alienation. Firstly, they must replace their old, stagnant and alienated agenda and bylaws with new ones that are compatible to a life in democratic societies. They need to rearrange their priorities and find a way of balancing the objective and subjective elements of their performance. They must realize that they no longer live in Ashour, and Ashour should be the subjective element of their goals and aspirations. Their objectives and goals should be concentrated on Assyrians in Diaspora. Once they understand and put in practice the art of balancing the two elements, then they will realize that their goals are achievable. Once they achieve the goal of reviving the Assyrian society in Diaspora, only then they will strengthen the position of Assyrians who live in the homeland. Revival of the Assyrian society in Diaspora will strengthen the Assyrians in homeland, and vice versa.

I would like to use a theoretical analysis to illustrate how it is possible for an Assyrian political party to practice real politics, and achieve its political goals. Politics as any other social concept has many definitions and theories. I will use the following two definitions for our purpose. Political scientists define politics as “Demography on Geography” and as “Technique of Possible”. Demography on Geography defines politics as all things related to a population, their life, progress, and activities on a specific plot of land known as a country or homeland. Technique of Possible defines politics as a matter of wise dealings with practical choices, facts and realities. Politics

is how to use the available means and resources in dealing with facts and diverting them to a practical status, and eventually to achievable goals. Politics based on this understanding never deals with wishful thoughts and dreams. Accordingly, we can say that the Assyrian Democratic Movement (Zowaa) in the homeland is a true political party practicing real politics. Why? Firstly, Zowaa was established and is performing its politics on a plot of land that Assyrians call homeland “Ashour”. Secondly, Zowaa as a political party is using all possible and available resources to achieve practical national objectives. Thus, Zowaa has successfully achieved important objectives, many first in their kind for the Assyrian nation.

Contrary to Zowaa, Assyrian political parties in Diaspora are not practicing real politics. As a result, nearly all of their political agenda is far from being achieved. The Assyrian political parties in reality exist in Diaspora, and they should make this fact the objective element of their goals, not Ashour that is geographically so distant from the demography that they must tend to and serve. In addition, most of their activities are directed toward impossible goals, while they are neglecting the practical goals that could be successfully achieved given all the support and protection offered by the Western governments to their minorities and emigrants. Therefore, it does not come to us as a surprise when we see that our social institutions are more successful in achieving their goals than our political parties. The Assyrian Aid Society, and in particular Atra project of the honourable Dr Ashor Muradkhan, is a great and clear example in serving and protecting “Ashor”. The reason for their success is that their goals are based on reality and not on dreams and romantic thoughts.

In conclusion, for Assyrian political parties to practice real politics with achievable goals based on the balance of objectivity and subjectivity, they must realize the fact that Assyrians of Diaspora should be placed in the centre of their political arena. The issues that they need to tackle are tribalism, religious denominationalism, and other social and mental diseases. They need to encourage the Assyrians’ involvement in national causes, and their support to their brethren in the homeland. They must take on projects to assist and encourage the Assyrian youth to pursue higher education, and to sponsor cultural and linguistic projects. Moreover, the leadership and the members of the political parties must be aware of the current political events of the country that they live in, to actively lobby or nominate the individuals that they support who can benefit the Assyrian political cause. Or even take roles and positions in governmental posts as an American Assyrian, Australian Assyrian, British Assyrian or German Assyrian. This should be the path taken by the Assyrian political parties to serve and protect “Ashour” not by romantic poetry, fiery words, and meaningless slogans directed at the liberation of Ashour. Mr. Aslan Karemo is a perfect example. He is an attorney who holds a Swedish citizenship, and was a member of the Assyrian Democratic Organization (Mtakasta). He joined the Swedish Socialist Democratic Party, and in 1988, he was elected in the Swedish National Parliament, and is currently planning to run for the European Parliament. Mr. Karemo is an active Assyrian and a great supporter of the Assyrian cause in the homeland and around the world. We are in desperate need of more Aslan Karemo’s, and we are in desperate need of active and strong political parties in order to control and determine our national and political destiny.

