VARIETIES OF MUSLIM NONVIOLENCE:
THREE MUSLIM MOVEMENTS OF NONVIOLENCE AND PEACE BUILDING

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Religiously based nonviolence varies in motive, intent and interpretation. John Howard Yoder outlines a variety of religious nonviolence in his book *Nevertheless*. Muslim nonviolence is not addressed in the book. Identifying a distinctly Muslim understanding of nonviolence requires an appreciation of aspects of peace building that are emphasized in Islam. Muhammad Abu-Nimer has formed a framework for identifying and encouraging nonviolence and peace building in an Islamic context. By applying the basic outlines formulated by Yoder and the framework developed by Abu-Nimer to three cases of Muslim movements of nonviolence, this paper identifies distinct variations of religious nonviolence and peace building that have been developed and practiced by Muslims. The first case is historic; the Khudai Khudmatgar sought independence from Great Britain through nonviolent demonstrations and civil disobedience. The second case puts emphasis on the peace building vision of Islam by examining a movement developed in contemporary Turkey. The followers of Said Nursi and the Gülen Movement collectively support “the middle way”, education in both science and religion and opportunities for dialogue as a means to build peace locally and globally. The third case of religiously based nonviolence practiced by Muslims is that of
the Shi’a led movement for democratic reforms in Bahrain, which uses collective action and protests to draw attention to the need for social change. Each movement demonstrates distinct approaches to nonviolence and peace building. In each case, the leadership frames the commitment to peace in Islamic terms. And in each case those who commit themselves to the movement do so through their understanding of the way they, as Muslims, should justly relate to one another and the world. This paper demonstrates Islam’s unique characteristics that have enabled Muslims to pursue a common purpose and make change in a nonviolent manner.
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INTRODUCTION:
ETIC AND EMIC APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF
NONVIOLENT MOVEMENTS PRACTICED BY MUSLIMS

When approaching the relationship of religion and peace building, there are those who will argue that religion creates identity tension, division and hostility. From this viewpoint, it is often claimed that religion is near to, or even at the heart of, most wars. While religion can, and has been, used to justify aggression, war and violence, others argue that religion is an avenue that promotes generosity, patience, higher purpose and the common good. In reality, religion has the capacity to bring out both the best and the worst of humanity.

This paper highlights cases of religiously based nonviolence and peace building that have been developed and practiced by Muslims. Three movements are examined. The first is the historical case of Abdul Gaffar Khan and the Khudai Khudmatgar movement, which used Islam to unify the resistance to the occupying forces of Great Britain. Their success has been credited to Islamic values of patience and forgiveness. The next case highlighted in this paper is actually two movements that interlink through the thinking of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and his impact in contemporary Turkey. Followers of Nursi, including Fethullah Gülen who has his own followers, are committed to a culture of positive action and tolerance that build peace. The third case is that of Bahrain today. Bahrain’s opposition movement is active in protests and demonstrations seeking democratic reform. At the time of this paper’s writing, Bahrain’s opposition movement carries the stress of maintaining a peaceful movement under, sometimes violent, governmental resistance.
Three different movements are featured in this paper. Each is nonviolent and each finds strength for the practice of nonviolence in Islam. The fact that Islam is central in each case does not mean that the movements practice nonviolence in the same way. In fact, the movements’ goals, process, leadership and articulation of Islam are each distinct. John Howard Yoder began the task of identifying a taxonomy of what he called “varieties of religious pacifism” in his book *Nevertheless.*¹ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a scholar in conflict resolution and peace building, has identified different approaches to the study of nonviolence in Islam as well as produced a framework for Islamic principles of nonviolence and peace building.² Using Yoder’s taxonomy and Abu-Nimer’s framework, this paper sets out to identify and categorize varieties of religiously based nonviolence and peace building practiced by Muslims.

By applying already existing categories to distinct autonomous social movements, this paper uses an etic approach to identify cases of nonviolence and peace building. The concept of an “etic” approach, and its opposite, an “emic” approach, is borrowed from Kenneth Pike’s linguistic studies and expanded upon by David W. Augsburger in cross-cultural analysis.³ When referencing anthropology, the etic approach assumes that ideas, concepts or systems are universal across cultures and identities. The etic approach is applied by an observer external to that which is studied. The method, model, idea or system in an etic approach is usually imported from observations in other studies. On the

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other hand, an emic approach seeks concepts, models or ideas that emerge internally from those in the immediate observed situation. In an emic approach the observer begins from unawareness, and works inductively seeking patterns specific to the present case.

Sensitivity to the etic and emic approaches allows the scholar to be able to use the already developed models (etic) of nonviolence and peace building, while recognizing the ideal is an emic understanding of specifically Islamic forms of peace building in distinct contexts.

The challenge of the etic and emic approaches become clear when examining the vocabulary typically used for the field of peace building. An etic approach may assume a universal understanding of terms. Yet in the case of Muslim peace building, terms such as pacifism, quietism, nonviolence, peace building, peace keeping and justice are culturally and religiously dependent. In particular, the word “pacifism” does not carry moral ground among Muslims. Ralph E. Crow and Philip Grant write:

In the Arab world, pacifists are accused of abandoning both a concern with redressing social grievances, and a commitment to changing unjust structures in favor of discussion, negotiation, and compromise. Supporters of Arab nonviolent political struggle are adamant in denying all assertions that nonviolent methods in any way contribute to tolerating oppression, or perpetuating any existing system of injustice.4

An emic approach recognizes that Muslim variations of nonviolence will be different from those developed in another context. In the study of Muslim based nonviolence, the scholar must respect the parameters developed by those practicing nonviolence.

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4 Ralph Crow and Philip Grant, Arab Nonviolent Political Struggle in the Middle East, ed. Ralph E. Crow (Westport, Conn.: Lynne Rienner Pub, 1990), 79.
in their own right. In this way, while still using the etic approach, the scholar must make room for the emic understanding revealed by each distinct case.

The vital nuance in using an etic method in studying cross-cultural interaction is to stay open for an emic method to develop over the course of time. Much like the study of language (from which the “etic” and “emic” models developed) there may be universal cultural expressions, yet the depths of fluency are found in the distinct and unique cultural lexis. For this reason, this paper is not an end product. It is a beginning point, looking for similarities in nonviolent movements. Yet, it is most likely in the variations of these movements, that is the emic developments, that new approaches of greatest value will be found.
CHAPTER 1
A TAXONOMY AND FRAMEWORK OF RELIGIOUSLY BASED NONVIOLENCE

This paper sets out to identify varieties of religious nonviolence that are practiced by Muslims. To do so, it will look to the work of two scholars who have identified distinct, religiously motivated nonviolence and peace building. John Howard Yoder’s work, *Nevertheless*, proposes 29 varieties of religious pacifism most of which he takes from studies of nonviolence rooted in Christianity. Mohammed Abu-Nimer created a Framework for Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam.

John Howard Yoder’s Varieties of Religious Pacifism

To begin, this paper identifies some of Yoder’s 29 variations of religiously motivated pacifism that at least in part, come into play in the chapters that follow. In each of Yoder’s variations, he identifies the pacifism’s axioms, which are the core tenets that make that variation distinct. Then Yoder identifies its shortcomings, those characteristics that either make the variation impractical or against its own premise. Finally, in each case Yoder identifies what he calls “nevertheless”, where he argues for those aspects of the pacifism that make the variation better than having no nonviolent leaning in the first place. His list is not exhaustive of all nonviolent possibilities; however, the variations he lists give a starting point for identifying religiously based nonviolence.

*Pacifism of Christian Cosmopolitanism* is one hinged on the axiom that there is a true moral imperative which is for the common good of humanity. This variation of nonviolence involves having a moral (religious) leader who holds the global perspective
and is highly regarded so as to have influence on society. “... in the name of God, morality, and humanity (the moral leader) speaks even to (non-believers) about what constitutes well-being for everyone in his parish, the world.”¹ The moral authority must have confidence that there is the possibility of peace and expresses that confidence to the faithful and to society at large. Yoder’s example of such a moral authority is the Catholic Church with the pope the moral leader whose parish extends to include the entire world. The approach of this leader is to weigh in on issues of war and violence, as well as other moral issues, in favor of that which is for the common good of the entire world. The moral leader sees that all of humanity is one community, so argues that squabbles along the way do no good for the whole of the community.

Yoder sees a number of shortcomings for Pacifism of Christian Cosmopolitan. He questions whether there can be moral teachings, of nonviolence or anything else, that are evident to everyone including those without religious faith. He goes on to wonder, if there are such moral teachings, whether those self-evident teachings don’t give the impression that religious authority is irrelevant.² Nevertheless, he says, Cosmopolitan Pacifism is a better option than a provincial approach to peace in which peace for one’s own people can be at someone else’s expense.³

A just war approach to violence or nonviolence falls under Yoder’s Pacifism of the Honest Study of Cases. This version of nonviolence examines case by case situations

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¹ Yoder, Nevertheless, 17.

² Yoder also objects to Pacifism of Christian Cosmopolitanism because it roots its nonviolence in pragmatism: war doesn’t help the common good so it’s best not to do. Yoder seeks a pacifism which outright holds all killing is wrong and therefore war is absolutely wrong.

³ Ibid., 15-21.
in which war may or may not be permitted.\(^4\) Generally speaking, for an honest study of cases to work effectively, there needs to be a commitment to a criterion that can be applied accurately in each occasion in which it is called upon. In recent years, with the development of indiscriminate weapons and large-scale destruction, many who might have justified war in the past no longer hold to its use because there is no means to ensure the safety of the innocent. The shortcomings of *Pacifism of the Honest Study of Cases* are that there is no clear tool for measuring the integrity of right or wrong in a given conflict. It also puts some people in the position of making moral decisions for other people and calls into question whether those nations with a strong military have to be the world’s policemen. Nevertheless, the honest study of cases recognizes moral judgment that is higher than even the most powerful state.\(^5\)

On the other extreme from the *Honest Study of Cases* is what Yoder calls *Pacifism of Absolute Principle*. The absolute principle is hinged on the axiom grounded in religious belief in a revelation that does not permit violence. The Anabaptists are examples of this type of pacifism. The Gospel accounts of Jesus are nonviolent which leads Anabaptists to an understanding of Christianity that transcends life or death. In 1527, Switzerland’s Anabaptist, under persecution from the Catholic Church due to their refusal to acknowledge infant baptism, published the Schleitheim Confession, which claims:

\(^4\) Articulating the Just War tradition as a nonviolent approach, George Weigel writes “Far from being an obstacle to nonviolent resolution of conflict, then, the just war tradition, in its formal criteria… and in its logic, gives a highly developed moral warrant to conflict resolution through other than military means, even as it holds open the moral possibility that the defense of innocents and the pursuit of lasting peace may, at times, require the proportionate and discriminate use of armed force.” George Weigel, “Religion and Peace: An Argument Complexified,” in *Resolving Third World Conflict: Challenges for a New Era*, ed. Sheryl J. Brown and Kimber M. Schraub (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1992), 178.

Christian's citizenship is in heaven… the Christian's weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldlings are armed with steel and iron, but the Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God.  

The shortcomings of Pacifism of Absolute Principle are that it relies, not simply on the revelation, but on the interpretation of the revelation. Yoder indicates the problem of multiple absolutes: is it worse to kill or to lie? In addition, an absolute about not taking life may not translate into consistent respect for life. Nevertheless, Yoder argues, often the arguments in favor of war are expressed in simplified absolute terms. By keeping nonviolence an absolute, the advocate of nonviolence can counteract the blunt and oversimplified arguments in favor of war.  

Nonviolent Social Change may be the most visible of the varieties of nonviolence that Yoder outlines. This variation is recognizable in the actions and social change made through leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi. Yoder identifies three advantages to this form of nonviolence. First, it is an action that can be taken by the poor and weak to resist their oppressors. Second, the action gives moral dignity to those who practice it, regardless of its effectiveness. Third, by ending the violence, it removes the pretense that could allow the oppressor to oppress again. Nonviolent Social Change relies on the axiom that it is in everyone’s best interest for society to achieve justice. It demands the oppressor recognize their own humanity while recognizing the humanity of the other. The oppressor chooses to stop the oppression which allows the oppressor to save face. The shortcoming of Nonviolent Social Change is that it relies on the oppressor

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7 Yoder, Nevertheless, 32-37.
having a conscience. Yoder asks what happens if the oppressor has no conscience. Nevertheless, the dignity given to the oppressed, who often have no other alternative, makes this variation most appealing when a specific social change is needed.\(^8\)

Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement are examples of what Yoder calls *Pacifism of the Virtuous Minority*. This variation of nonviolence sees pacifism as a vocation. Monastic life is another example of the virtuous minority. This variety relies on the individual’s call to pacifism, and not everyone has the same moral call. Morality is virtue based and therefore not appropriate to generalize to everyone. Often, those who practice this form of nonviolence see themselves in a prophetic (as in: visionary or herald) role. The shortcoming is that it seems to advocate moral relativism and implies that a revelation for one may not be applicable in real life for all. The risk of a virtuous minority is that the follower will become complacent or self-righteous.\(^9\)

Along the same lines of virtue is the variation called *Pacifism of Virtue* which Yoder simply describes as “Being Peaceable”. He looks to Stanley Hauerwas’ *The Peaceable Kingdom*. Virtue ethic focuses on the individual, or society, making the choices and asks who this body wishes to be. *Pacifism of Virtue* puts focus on each choice and the intentional decision to be the actor the body wishes to be. “The rejection of war is not derived from a pragmatic calculation nor from a principled deduction. Instead, it comes from being the kind of human for whom violence against one’s neighbor cannot even arise as a possible choice.”\(^{10}\) The shortcoming of Pacifism of

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\(^8\) Ibid., 52-55.

\(^9\) Ibid., 77-83.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 130.
Virtue is how hard it is to pin down. It’s largely descriptive so not a crisp simple ethic. Nevertheless, the virtue of nonviolence can counter balance the virtues easily manipulated to argue for war (temperance, courage, justice and prudence). By cultivating a character of virtue, each individual decision becomes easier to make. It also frees the nonviolent faithful from needing to defend hypothetical cases that do not exist in real life.\textsuperscript{11}

Yoder identifies two specifically non-Christian varieties of religious nonviolence. \textit{Pacifism of Consistent Self-Negation} is Yoder’s view of an Asian pacifism rooted in the nature of illusion and in acceptance of suffering as a spiritual discipline.\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Pacifism of Rabbinic Monotheism} is a specifically Jewish form of nonviolence. Radical monotheism is at the heart of this nonviolence in which the faithful cannot take matters into their own hands to wage a righteous war. Yoder is particularly interested in \textit{Pacifism of Rabbinic Monotheism} because of its impact on first century Christians who were also nonviolent.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Mohammad Abu-Nimer’s Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam}

In Abu-Nimer’s encompassing work, \textit{Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam: Theory and Practice}, an overview is given of the three main approaches to the study of peace and nonviolence in the Muslim context. Most theorists on peace, nonviolence and pacifism in Islam fall into one of the following three schools of thought: Studies of War

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 130-133.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 117. Yoder’s \textit{Pacifism of Consistent Self-Negation} does not do justice to the complexity and depth of some pacifisms coming from Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism. They are not the subject of this paper but merit more explanation in their own right.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 122-125.
and Jihad, Studies of Just War and Peace, and Studies of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence.\(^{14}\)

The first group focuses on the *Studies of War and Jihad*. This group begins with a hypothesis that religion lends itself to war and violence and Islam does so especially. Often their theories overemphasize the role of violent jihad in Islam.\(^{15}\) They look only at occasions in which violence has occurred in the name of religion and conclude that the occasions of violence represent all the faithful, who then appear devoid of nonviolent conflict resolution. Often these same theorists deny Islam’s compatibility with democracy.\(^{16}\)

Abu-Nimer’s second group of theorists is those who study *Just War and Peace*. This group holds that Islam allows for violence in defined parameters. These scholars wrestle with the term “pacifism” as in the complete opposition to war even if it means living with injustice. In most cases the scholars of the Just War and Peace approach conclude that the Qur’an allows for war in some circumstances and therefore a Muslim cannot be an absolute pacifist. Still, the allowance of war in some circumstances does not keep these theorists from advocating for Islam as a source of nonviolence. The reluctance with which the Prophet endorsed violence after his move to Medina is taken as


\(^{15}\) “For the most part, the concept, practice, and experience of jihad in the modern Islamic world have been overwhelmingly defensive. The predominantly military use of the term continued into relatively modern times. In the Ottoman Empire the city of Belgrade, an advance base in the war against the Austrians, was given the rhyming title *Dar al-Jihad* (House of Jihad)... One could cite other examples in which the word jihad has lost its holiness and retained only its military connotation. In modern times both the military and the moral use of the term have been revived, and they are differently understood and applied by different groups of people. Organizations claiming the name of Jihad at the present day, in Kashmir, Chechnya, Palestine, and elsewhere, clearly do not use the word to denote moral striving.” Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, Reprint ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004), 36-37.

an indication that a Muslim should be equally disinclined toward violence. These scholars spend a great deal of time examining the parameters or occasions in which war may be considered permissible. They examine the use of jihad particularly in *dar al-harb* (territories of war) that may call upon violence.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s commentary on war offers the beginning of just war guidance. “War is permissible in self-defense, and under well-defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour (but not relentlessly), but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah.”\(^17\) Once peace and freedom is restored then the injustice is remedied and the fighting must stop. Such scholars cite the Qur’an “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.”\(^18\)

The third approach to peace and nonviolence in Islam are the scholars who are engaged in *Studies of Peace Building and Nonviolence*. Where other theorists put emphasis on the cases in which war may or may not be justified, these theorists emphasize the Islamic means of building peace. Qamar-Ul Huda, a scholar of Islam for the US Institute of Peace, writes that too often Western observation of the Islamic approach to justice over emphasis the political nature of Islam and conclude that the connection between Islam and political life can only lead to radicalism. In fact, Huda argues, the religious mandate to bring justice into all aspects of public life can be the means to bring peace. He asks: “Why is it there is a predisposition to fixate on conflict-

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\(^{17}\) Ibid., 28.

driven news items and not on peacemaking efforts in Muslim communities?"19 The emphasis on the extreme situations in which Islam may permit war has taken precedence, in Western media and even western scholarship, over the far more common and useful approaches to living faithful lives that build peace.

The Muslim theologian Abdul Aziz Sachedina argues that the intrinsic nature of Islam and public life is a strength of Islam. Added to that strength is the Qur’an’s vision of a pluralistic society. These two distinctly Muslim characteristics make Islam especially capable of living in a pluralist world with peace building capacities. Sachedina cites the Qur’an:

We have revealed to thee as We revealed to Noah, and the Prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave David Psalms, and Messengers We have already told thee of before… Messengers bearing good tidings, and warning, so that humankind might have no argument against God, after the Messengers; God is Almighty, All-wise.20

The shahadah affirms the oneness of God. With that recognition, the above passage points to God’s intention that there be diverse prophetic revelation and to varying communities. While Judaism and Christianity are exclusive, Islam embraces both pluralism and “the principle of inclusiveness”. According to Sachedina, these characteristics of Islam should counsel accommodation, not conflict, among competing claims to religious truth in religiously and culturally heterogeneous societies.21

Pluralism is central in Islam and its approach to peace building.

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20 Qur’an 4:163.

Theorists in this third category (*Studies of Peace Building and Nonviolence*) put less emphasis on the justification of war in the Islamic history and emphasize the Islamic values that point toward a nonviolent ethic. Abu-Nimer proposes a five-part paradigm for Islamic nonviolence:

1. The historical context of the Qur’anic revelations has changed and so should the use of violence as a means to resolve differences.

2. The enormous changes in the status of the Muslim community in the global system and in local communities undermine the efficacy and long-term viability of violent means.

3. Global interdependencies – social, economic, and political – have rendered impractical the use of violence.

4. The new global realities, including advanced weaponry systems and increasingly destructive forms of warfare, oblige Muslims – indeed all people – to abandon violence.

5. As a minor element in the life of the Prophet and in the scripture, violence should be of no greater importance to Muslims today than it was then.\(^{22}\)

Abu-Nimer sets forth a taxonomy of Muslim approaches to peace, recognizing three approaches: The Study of War and Jihad, The Study of Just War and Peace and The Study of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence. Grounding himself in The Study of Peacebuilding and Nonviolence, he sets forth a framework for Islamic nonviolence. Abu-Nimer proposes values, principles and beliefs which are rooted in Islam which also support peace building.

A central call for a Muslim and Muslim society is to establish a just social order. All ethical behavior must support a *pursuit of justice*\textsuperscript{23}. In Islam, working for justice is considered action for the cause of God.

\begin{quote}
O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

Abu-Nimer points out that contrary to some popular belief, nonviolence and pacifism is not inaction, submission or passivity. It is, in fact, the struggle for justice. “Nonviolent strategies can dissolve the structural violence embedded in certain social conflicts, thus going beyond superficial tinkering or temporary solutions, which may defuse tensions while preserving an unjust system”.\textsuperscript{25} The Muslim priority of the pursuit of justice is a beginning of the framework for Muslim Nonviolence.

The next principle of Islam that points toward nonviolence is social empowerment by *beneficence, kindness (ihsan) and doing good (khayr)*.\textsuperscript{26} The Prophet advocated for kind action especially for the poor and vulnerable for in his youth he was an orphan. The straight path is one of goodness and kindness, not one of power. “Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: they are the ones to attain felicity.”\textsuperscript{27} A Muslim is to do good deeds for

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\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 48-55.
\textsuperscript{24} Qur’an 5:8, 16:90 and 4:135.
\textsuperscript{25} Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building*, 55.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 55-57.
\textsuperscript{27} Qur’an 3:104 and 2:62.
\end{flushright}
more than simply one’s parents or family, but to be kind to the poor and orphans. Social and economic justice is so important that to work for these causes is equivalent to worshiping God. Through zakah and voluntary charity Muslims recognize both individual and collective responsibility to do good and build a just society. Muslim values of beneficence, kindness and doing good lead the faithful to recognize the role of the collective which is central in building a framework for peace and nonviolence.

Muslims believe in the universality and dignity of all humanity. The Qur’an states that humanity is God’s vicegerent on earth and the most dignified of all creatures. “We have indeed created man in the best of molds”. This universality of all humanity treads on the space for violence against one another. The whole of humanity is molded to Allah’s favor; to harm a part is not in Allah’s favor. In addition, it is considered good to protect the pride of all people, acknowledging their dignity as the most exalted of all creatures.

Islam gives no privilege based on race or tribal association. There is equality across humanity.

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is well acquainted (with all things).

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29 Qur’an 4:36-37.
30 Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peace Building, 57-58.
31 Qur’an 95:4, 2:30, 17:70 and 7:11.
33 Qur’an 49:13.
There is no special treatment given to any Muslim regardless of race or tribe. The only criteria to judge a person’s worth is by faith and good deeds. Abu-Nimer states that Islam works to create a family of all humanity rooted in the equality of all.

The Qur’an says “If any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.”\textsuperscript{34} Islam respects the sacredness of human life.\textsuperscript{35} In doing so, Islam forbids the waste or destruction of resources that serve human life. Oftentimes these resources are catalysts of war and violence. In recognizing that human life is sacred, Islam makes priority the needs of human life and addresses them, affirming their importance, when they are sources of conflict.

For Islam, the purpose of the Qur’anic revelation and of the faith itself is to live in peace. This quest for peace\textsuperscript{36} is both social harmony and the submission to God in all things. Peace is a physical, mental, spiritual and social state of being in harmony with God and one another. During the Meccan period of the Prophet’s life, in which Muslims were the minority, he waged a nonviolent campaign of resistance for self-defense. His teaching particularly emphasized patience and steadfastness in the face of oppression. In spite of torture, accusations of blasphemy, and humiliation he continued to instruct his followers to pray and hope for peace. The Qur’an says “Allah is with those who patiently persevere.”\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} Qur’an 5:32.
\textsuperscript{35} Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peace Building, 59-60.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 60-62.
\textsuperscript{37} Qur’an 8:46.
Islam promotes *peacemaking*.\(^{38}\) The Qur’an says:

> If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just). The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy.”\(^{39}\)

Abu-Nimer says that this verse is often used by those who oppose a pacifist voice in Islam because it seems to approve of violence. Still, he sees the passage as one that advocates for mediation and just third-party interaction. The value of addressing needs outright, instead of resorting to aggression, violence or bigotry is central in Islamic peacemaking.

*Forgiveness* (*afu*)\(^{40}\) as well as *mercy* (*rahmah*) are central in Islam. Mercy is the most frequently cited attribute of God. “The forgiveness that vanquishes hatred and anger is a prize virtue in Islam, greater even than justice.”\(^{41}\) Retribution is usually associated with forgiveness. The balance of retribution with seeking forgiveness leads to restoration of the just society.

In Islam, the intent to do good and right action is not enough. The faithful Muslim must actually do the *deed and actions*\(^{42}\) intended. Abu-Nimer says a Muslim will be judged by God in areas of responsibility. (1) Responsibility to God in keeping the


\(^{39}\) Qur’an 49:9-10.


\(^{41}\) Qur’an 42:40, 24:43 and 7:199.

religious obligation. (2) Responsibility to oneself; to live in harmony with oneself. (3) Responsibility to humanity and living in harmony with others. The Qur’an states: “On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow Love.”

The role of patience (sabr) and fortitude is utmost in Islam and invaluable in peacemaking. In Arabic, the word sabr has many meanings including a thorough (not hasty) approach, one that is systematic, persevering, steadfast and firm in purpose. “But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil – then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.” Patience means maintaining a cheerful attitude of acceptance under less than ideal circumstances. Patience is also associated with sacrifice in order to follow one's faith. Patience is important in peacebuilding because of the time, energy and toil that goes into long term change.

The Ummah – the community of the faithful – has been a part of Islam since the time of the Prophet. Central in the idea of the Ummah is that collective consideration, support and action are each good. The Ummah provides a platform for solidarity and collaborative action. Peacebuilding relies on efforts to resolve problems through collaboration and consensus instead of competition between individuals. Abu-Nimer gives an example from the Hadith. The Prophet told the faithful to help their brother, regardless of whether he is oppressor or the oppressed. The people asked what to do if he

44 Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peace Building, 71-73.
46 Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peace Building, 73-75.
is an oppressor. The Prophet responded that the right thing to do for his own sake is to prevent him from oppressing others.\textsuperscript{47}

Islam does not support authoritative, competitive or confrontational procedures for coming to decisions or governance. Instead, the Muslim is to practice mutual consultation (\textit{shurah}) as well as consensus building (\textit{ijma}). Muslim governance should be on principles of \textit{inclusivity and participatory process}.\textsuperscript{48} A Muslim is expected to use persuasive reason to bring understanding and resolution to the community. “(Leaders are those) who harken to their Lord, and establish regular prayers; who conduct their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance.”\textsuperscript{49} Some scholars argue that these principles of mutual consultation and consensus building make Islam opportune for democratic processes.

Finally, \textit{pluralism and diversity}\textsuperscript{50} are among the core Muslim values that aid in nonviolence. The Qur’an repeated commands for the faithful to accept the ‘other’. “If Allah so willed, He could make you all one People: but He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases: but ye shall certainly be called to account for your actions.”\textsuperscript{51} The Qur’an encourages tolerance of diversity in gender\textsuperscript{52} in race and

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 73.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 75-77.
\textsuperscript{49} Qur’an 42:38.
\textsuperscript{50} Abu-Nimer, \textit{Nonviolence and Peace Building}, 78-80.
\textsuperscript{51} Qur’an 16:93 and 3:64.
\textsuperscript{52} Qur’an 49:13 and 53:45.
language. Such acceptance brings people together to better work toward the common good in a nonviolent manner.

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53 Qur’an 30:23.
A historic incident of nonviolence rooted in Islamic teaching is found in British occupied India in the land that is today Pakistan near the Hindu Kush mountains. In this place, among the Pathans, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan led the Khudai Khudmatgar movement to nonviolent activism that demanded the British attention and respect. The nonviolence practiced by the Khudmatgar activists was rooted in unity, honor, courage and patience. Khan and the Khudai Khudmatgar’s emphasis on these virtues echo the framework presented by Abu-Nimer, particularly the universality and dignity of all humans, solidarity and collaborative action. The Khudai Khudmatgar approach was one that utilized, what Yoder calls, nonviolent social change.

In his article, Radical Islam and Nonviolence: A Case Study of Religious Empowerment and Constraint among Pashtuns, Robert C. Johansen reflects on the transformation of Pathans from violence to nonviolence. He suggests the change comes through what he calls “cultural reversals”. These cultural reversals are characterized by social conditions bringing the followers of a faith to re-examine their understanding of the religion. Traditional symbols are used in a new way which give them greater power and allow the faithful to reframe their condition in light of their faith. In theological terms, Kahn can be said to have developed a new hermeneutic, one that considered the revelation and tradition of Islam yet it interpreted it in different contexts. This allowed new understanding and moral imperatives which were, until that point, neglected.

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The History of Khudai Khudmatgar

The North-West Frontier Province\(^2\) (NWFP) held strategic value for the British when the British seized the region from Punjabi Sikh rulers in the mid-nineteenth century. The British used the NWFP in today’s Pakistan, as a buffer between the expanding Russian empire and their own imperial territories. Before, the British, dynasties from India, Kabul and Iran had each maintained claim to the region only to find the Pathans violently resistant to occupation.\(^3\) For the British, the Pathan reputation was reinforced when in 1842 a lone British officer, William Brydon, was permitted to survive a battle with the Pathans in order for him to warn of the horrors of Pathan vengeance when he returned to Britain.\(^4\) The independent spirit of the Pathan was due, in part, to the constant occupation from dynasties and empires. Charismatic Pathan leaders framed Islam in violent language to motivate their countrymen in the name of vengeful jihad against the infidel.

Pathan society may have seemed lawless to an outsider, however, the region was actually governed by a code of ethics developed since the 16\(^{th}\) century. *Pukhtunwali* formed from a combination of Islamic law and Pathan custom. Under *Pukhtunwali*, Pathan society was structured in a descending hierarchy of tribes, clans, sub-clans and lineages. Organized by paternity, a daughter often married the brother of her father thereby maintaining the family and clan status. Under ethical code of *Pukhtunwali* the highest of value is placed on honor. The defense of honor brought strong loyalties for

\(^2\) North-West Frontier Province was renamed Khuber-Pakhtunkhwa in 2010.


family, clan and tribe. At the same time, it also brought vicious retaliation when family, clan or tribe was transgressed upon, which at times fragmented the society.⁵

The traditional economic system of Pukhtunwali is called wesh. Mukulika Banerjee’s studies of the area, economy and its history explains that when the Pathan settled in the area (probably in the third decade of the sixteenth century) the land was allocated between tribes, then clans and their subsections. The tribe was the proprietary unit. In cycles that lasted between 5 and 30 years there were periodic redistribution of land. “The redistribution involved not only individual shares but those of entire tribal segments, and it thus lead to movement of entire groups to new lands.”⁶ Therefore the wesh system prevented any person or clan from permanently benefiting from the best land. Banerjee points to the wesh system as reflecting the ideology of egalitarianism and the honor central in Pathan ethics.⁷

When the British seized control of the Pathan lands along with the whole Indian subcontinent, they found a society bound with honor. Tribes often feuded with other tribes and a particular kind of honorable revenge called badal perpetuated a violent fragmented society. The British took advantage of the divided society to claim justification for their harsh rules, rejection of traditional social order and lack of generosity in dealing with the region. While under traditional Pukhtunwali ethics leadership, authority and land distribution was temporary and dependent on situations understood and supported by Pathan society. The British imposed their own permanent

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⁶ Ibid., 185.

⁷ Ibid.
systems of authority and status. The British gave land to those who were loyal to the empire thereby securing certain *khans* allegiance.\(^8\) “Between 1868 and 1880 the British Administration in the Frontier set out rules concerning land ownership, rents and payment of tax. This codification brought increasing rigidity to the social structure and reified strata.”\(^9\) As time under occupation passed, Pathans became tenants in a foreign system without permanent rights. The lack of rights grated at the social fabric of the Pathans whose honor was challenged by growing poverty. As honor was threatened feuds increased, compounding the British prejudice that the people in the NWFP could not govern themselves.

**Khan Abdul Ghaffar Kahn**

The British occupation had broken the traditional economy which fragmented Pathan society at the time of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Kahn’s birth in 1890. Kahn was born into an educated and influential Pathan family in the Mohammedzais tribe. Khan’s father was the khan of a village, Utmanzai, about twenty miles north of Peshawar.\(^10\) Upon finishing school\(^11\) Khan was invited to join “the Guides”, a prestigious military group of Pathans who served the British Empire. According to Khan’s biographer, Eknath Easwaran, Khan nearly joined until he recognized the understated disrespect the British

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\(^8\) “The most important innovation introduced by the British land policy in India was the concept of ownership itself. Previous arrangements had given people different rights in the land and to its produce. But when the British idea of ownership was enforced, someone came to own the land more or less to the exclusion of everybody else. A prominent feature of these reforms was that the British wanted to create a landlord class in their own image.” Jansson E, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunstan*. Uppsala, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1988. 43 (cited) Banerjee, “Justice and Non-Violent Jihad,” 186.


\(^11\) Ibid., 6. Kahn received his education in a Christian mission school and was impressed by the care his headmaster gave the Pathan students.
paid the native soldiers. Khan declined the offer. His vision for his people began to formulate. “I consider it a crime to be a slave. Therefore, until we establish in this country a true people’s government under which every community secures equal opportunities for expansion, you will find me struggling for freedom, no matter who dominates the scene.”

In 1926, seeking political, social and economic reforms through autonomy from the British, Kahn laid out a political party. In 1929 the Khidai Khidmatagar (Servants of God) became the direct action branch of Kahn’s political party.13

Khan knew he had to unite the fragmented Pathan society before a successful social movement could be created. To do so, he called upon the Pukhtunwali and Islamic ethics. He challenged his people, questioning how they could claim to be brave in the feuds with one another when the discord only strengthened the British rule. “How could a man be truly of honour when he had allowed the British to reduce his women and children to wearing rags…” Khan asked. With an emphasis on unity among the Pathans, he demanded that those who joined the Khudai Khidmatagar be free from feuds. If a person was in a feud he had to reconcile before he was permitted to join.

Mukulika Banerjee researched and interviewed members of the Khidmatagar movement for the article Justice and Non-Violent Jihad: The Anti-Colonial Struggle in the North West Frontier of British India. When asking former Khidmatagar activist, Sarfaraz Khan, how feuds were resolved he shared a story:

12 Ibid., 181.


(Khan) told us that one way to settle disputes was to put a knife and rifle in the hands of our enemy and ask him to kill you. ‘If he spares you, he said, then you can become a Khudai Khudmatgar.’ When my father made this appeal, his enemy fell to his knees and kissed my father’s feet. He also decided to join the movement and more people from his *khel* (clan) also joined the movement… And these were lasting ties… we became brothers.\(^{15}\)

Joining the Khudai Khudmatgar not only resolved feuds, it also realigned loyalties. Members committed themselves to the movement which superseded the loyalty to family and tribe. Lt. Muhammad Wali shared when “we were asked our names we said *Khudai Khudmatgar*. When we were asked where we came from we said Sardaryab (where our main provincial center was situated).”\(^{16}\) The unity of the movement led to marriages beyond the traditional clan lines. Mohammed Pir Sher Shah explained to Banerjee “now, we lauded inter-marrying”. Khan set the example by marrying his daughter to an urban Peshawari. In Pathan culture, marriage represented an end of enmity; bride-prices were dropped in favor of the unity created by family marriages.\(^{17}\)

**Khudai Khudmatgar and Nonviolence**

The British had prohibited residents of the Settled Districts going to the Tribal Areas in the mountains. Khan defied the law and started schools sharing a message of an opposition to the British through Muslim principles. “To my mind, educating the people and serving the nation is as sacred a duty as prayer.”\(^{18}\) While historically, non-Muslims and Muslims (including many Pathans) viewed Islam as a religion that approves of

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 188.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 189.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier*, 84.
violence, Khan’s outrage with the British was formulated and expressed in non-violent terms. Khan formed his understanding of Muslim non-violence based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad when he chose to take Mecca by peaceful means. He said:

> There is nothing surprising in a Muslim or a Pathan like me subscribing to a creed of nonviolence. It is not a new creed. It was followed fourteen hundred years ago by the Prophet all the time he was in Mecca, and it has since been followed by all those who wanted to throw off an oppressor’s yoke.\(^\text{19}\)

Khan emphasized particular behaviors or virtues that a Muslim should emulate. He called *sabr* (patience or endurance) the “weapon of the Prophet”. Muhammad and the early Muslims had fled to Medina to wait out a time when Mecca was ready for the Islamic message.\(^\text{20}\) As Khan looked to his own Pathan people, he saw a lack of *sabr*, which was evidenced by the vengeful culture that perpetuated violence and divided the society. Khan viewed non-violence as the only means to unite the Pathans.

Under Khan’s leadership the Khudai Khidmatgar worked to make itself the world’s first nonviolent army. The Khudai Khidmatgar had an officer corps as well as a network of *jirga*, or elected committees based on the *Pukhtunwali* system which served as an unofficial parliament for the Pathans.\(^\text{21}\) They were disciplined, practiced and prepared, yet they remained unarmed. There were three conditions for membership in the Khudai Khidmatgar. A member must speak Pushtu, he or she must commit to not joining another organization and each must take this oath:

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 103.

\(^{20}\) Johansen, “Radical Islam,” 60.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
1. I put forth my name in honesty and truthfulness to become a true Khudai Khidmatgar.

2. I will sacrifice my wealth, life and comfort for the liberty of my nation and people.

3. I will never be a party to factions, hatred, or jealousies with my people; and will side with the oppressed against the oppressor.

4. I will not become a member of any other rival organization, nor will I stand in an army.22

5. I will faithfully obey all legitimate orders of all my officers all the time.

6. I will live in accordance with the principles of nonviolence.

7. I will serve all God’s creatures alike; and my object shall be the attainment of the freedom of my country and my religion.23

8. I will always see to it that I do what is right and good.24

9. I will never desire any reward whatever for my service.

10. All my efforts shall be to please God, and not for any show or gain.25

The fifth obligation deserves a particular note. The obedience of a Khudai Khidmatgar is to legitimate authority. This primary obligation of the Khudai Khidmatgar was a religious one. A Khudai Khidmatgar must submit to God’s authority, not a civil or imperial power. Although Hindu-Muslim unity was one of their objectives, the Khudai Khidmatgar was specifically Muslim. Hindus were welcome to join, but when there were

22 Another translation reads “shall not furnish security or tender apology in the nonviolent fight.” Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence, 133.

23 Another translation states “I shall serve all humanity equally. The chief objects of my life shall be attainment of complete independence and religious freedom.” Ibid.

24 Another translation reads “I shall always observe truth and purity in all my actions.” Ibid.

25 Ibid., 133-134.
complaints of the movement’s being too Islamic the leadership defended its Islamic identity saying it was unifying for the vast majority of its members and of the population.26 Turkish scholar, Halide Edib, points to the meaning of the party which translates “Servants of God”. “The name of the Society once more brings us to the psychology of the Muslem (sic). The first allegiance must be to the supreme ‘Idea’ and not a symbol of it… that is what makes Abdul Ghaffar Khan what he is.”27

The Khudai Khidmatgar developed in a manner isolated from Gandhi’s satyagraha movement and only later did Khan begin to be called the “Frontier Gandhi”. However, by March 1919, when the British passed the Rowlatt Acts making wartime restrictions on the land, Khan encouraged the Pathans to join Gandhi’s call for a day of fasting and prayer. Under Khan’s leadership the Pathans committed to the nonviolent direct action and left the city of Peshawar for Utmanzai. Trains and buses stopped running; shops were closed as were government offices and factories.28

The British declared martial law, ransacked Utmanzai while holding the villagers at gunpoint and arrested Khan. The British moves to control Khudai Khidmatgar leadership backfired. Khan became a hero in the eyes of Pathans who quickly gave him the title of Badshah Khan (King of Kings).29 Khan would be arrested numerous times in his leadership,30 yet with each arrest the Khudai Khidmatgar was strengthened in their resolve to overthrow the British through nonviolent means.

26 Ibid., 135.
29 Ibid., 81.
In 1930, the Khudai Khidmatgar made the political decision to affiliate with the Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{31} There were differences between the parties. While Congress was strictly secular, Khudai Khidmatgaran pledged themselves not just to a policy of nonviolence, but to the creed of nonviolence with religion at its core. The flag used in Pathan demonstrations was slightly different from the *satyagraha* flag used by the Congress party. While the Congress party flag had the *charkha*, a spinning wheel representing the physical labor which all are expected to contribute to the movement,\textsuperscript{32} the Khudai Khidmatgar flag held a crescent of Islam.\textsuperscript{33} The Pathans were largely illiterate, relying on word of mouth to coordinate the movements. Women were encouraged to participate in demonstrations.\textsuperscript{34} Holding copies of the Qur’an, women would stand facing the armed police or they would lie down in straight lines as a nonviolent demonstration against occupation.\textsuperscript{35}

On April 23, 1930 the British again arrested Kahn in the town of Naki. True to Pathan honor, the people of Naki pledged themselves as Khudai Khidmatgar. That same day, in Peshawar, nonviolent protests arose. “The crowd behaved with great restraint,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 81. Khan spent half his life in and out of prison. Khan inspired and led the Khudai Khidmatgaran from prison. He called them to transparency and right action even when mistreated. It was said he turned down any special treatment shown to him in prison. Amnesty International declared Khan “Prisoner of the Year” in 1962. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*, 156.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 136.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Khan discouraged women wearing the veil, emphasizing that “God makes no distinction between men and women. In the Holy Koran, you have equal share with men. You are today oppressed because we men have ignored the commands of God and the Prophet. Today we are followers of custom and we oppress you.” Dinanath G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle*, (Bombay: Popular Pakistan, 1967), 101-102.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*, 134-136.
\end{itemize}
collecting the wounded and the dead.”³⁶ The British began to open fire on the crowds yet the Khudai Khidmatgar neither backed off nor resorted to violence. Harvard expert on nonviolence, Gene Sharp, describes “When those in front fell down wounded by the shots, those behind came forward with their breast bared and exposed themselves to the fire… and all the people stood their ground without getting into a panic.”³⁷ On that day alone, an estimated two to three hundred people were killed.

In late April of 1931 the Khudai Khidmatgar was able to temporarily take over the city of Peshawar by setting up an alternative government. The Pathans refused water-fees required by the British opting instead to pay Khudai Khidmatgar officers to meet the needs of the people. As the Pathans took over, soldiers of Garhwal regiment, who were employed by the British, saw that the Khudai Khidmatgar never resorted to violence. The soldiers refused to fire upon the unarmed men and women who were peaceably setting up governance of Peshawar. Outraged by the Garhwal soldiers’ defiance a British Civil Servant wrote:

Hardly any regiment of the Indian army won greater glory in the Great War than the Garhwal Rifles, and the defection of part of the regiment sent a shock through India, of apprehension to some, of exultation to others.³⁸

The popularity of the Khudai Khidmatgar only increased. In 1932 there were 10,000 in one prison alone,³⁹ and by 1938 there were over 100,000 Khudai Khidmatgaran across the NWFP.⁴⁰ The British were known to arrest and flog members of the Khudai

³⁶ Easwaran, Nonviolent Soldier, 122.
³⁷ Ibid., 123.

Khidmatgar. They would send them into streams in the middle of the harsh winter. At
other times they were forced to strip naked in public. The British sacked villages, burnt
crops, destroyed stored wheat and confiscated property. Lt. Muhammad Wali recalled to
Banerjee that his ribs had been broken but “even then I did not resort to violence. We
removed the British by our patience. Nonviolence gives a strength of mind.”

Through all the aggression, there is no record of violent reaction from the Khidai Khidmatgar.
Banerjee found that even sixty years later, surviving Khudai Khudmatgar consider
themselves nonviolent activists rooted in the revelation of the Qur’an.

Achieving independence may have been a victory for non-violence but the Khidai
Khidmatgar strongly opposed the partition of India and Pakistan (East and West). There
was great disappointment when Congress approved the creation of two separate states.
The Khidai Khidmatgar fell into the West Pakistan region, putting them under the
leadership of the Muslim League. The Muslim League had opposed Khidai Khidmatgar,
their non-violent methods and the popularity of Badshah Khan. Over the following 30
years, Khan would spend over half in prison and 7 in exile. Members of the Khidai
Khidmatgar were also imprisoned, exiled and had their land confiscated.

The Khudai Khudmatgar as Islamic Nonviolence


opened the Afghan border to Pakistan so mourners could cross the Khyber Pass and attend his funeral.
Ibid., 11-12.

45 Johansen, “Radical Islam,” 64.
Gandhi’s first visit to the NWFP was not until 1938 where he found the Khudai Khudmatgar already committed to what he called *satyagraha.* The Khudai Khudmatgar maintained their honor by committing to nonviolent action because they prize all people at the level of faith. Gandhi wrote that he was “…struck by their transparent sincerity, frankness and utmost simplicity…. They had come to believe in truth and nonviolence not as a policy but as a creed.”

Abu-Nimer identified the Islamic value of the universal dignity of all humanity. Turkish scholar, Halide Edib, identifies Khan’s understanding of universal dignity:

> Although (Khan) based his simple ideology on religion, his interpretation of it was so universal, that instead of separating the Muslims from the rest of the world, he tried to make them so that they could cooperate with their fellow-men for the good of all.

Edib explains that for Khan the ultimate responsibility is not to Khudai Khidmatgar as an organization but to God and, by extension, to his fellow man. The sense of pride and justice that is at the core of *Pukhtunwali* is broadened to defend the pride and dignity of all persons, even the one who oppresses. Khan called the Pathan people to put aside their differences in order to unite against oppression. In doing so, the Khudai Khudmatgar live the principle Abu-Nimer articulates as solidarity and collaborative action.

Khan emphasized the Muslim virtues of patience (*sabr*), fearlessness and truthfulness. Each of these attributes took priority in the ethical life of the Khudai Khidmatgar over vengefulness which was already so present in *Pukhtunwali* ethics. Khan turned the teaching around to model a form of faith that emphasizes forgiveness

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46 Gandhi’s specific articulation of nonviolence rooted in truth.


48 Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* 143.
and patience, a teaching that had not always been emphasized in Islam among the
Pathans. Khan wrote:

Great troubles were given the disciples (of the Prophet). They were made to lie on the hot sand: a rope was put on their necks and they were dragged in the streets. Because of patience, the (Muslims) succeeded and God gave them rule from East to West. You would say that these are old stories and relate a new one. I am going to relate a new story now. Last year… Khudai Khidmatgar were thrown from the upper stories of their houses, horses were run upon them, but they remained silent. Our Khudai Khidmatgaran were killed by machine guns but we observed patience. They entered into our houses but we observed patience, our youths were troubled… but we observed patience. Ay brethren, the result of that patience was that the Pashtuns became famous in the whole world.49

The Khudai Khudmatgar try to model the patience with which Muhammad awaited Mecca’s change of heart. Khan frames the life of Muhammad in a new way that promotes forgiveness and nonviolence. Abu-Nimer’s vision of Islamic peace building involves such new interpretations. Abu-Nimer writes “As a minor element in the life of the Prophet and in the scripture, violence should be of no greater importance to Muslims today than it was then.”50

Patience and forgiveness are also emphasized in Abu-Nimer’s framework for nonviolence in Islam. The patience of personal sacrifice for the common good is prized in Islam. Abu-Nimer cites the Qur’an:

And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient. And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots. For Allah is with those who restrain themselves. And those who do good.51

50 Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peace Building, 40.
51 Qur’an 16:126-128.
With this passage\textsuperscript{52} we see that there may be justification for a desire for revenge yet the one who practices the faith most virtuously is the one with patience. Abu-Nimer references Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s writing on this Qur’anic passage:

\begin{quote}
In the context this passage refers to controversies and discussions, but the words are wide enough to cover all human struggles, disputes, and fights. In strictest equity you are not entitled to give a worse blow than is given to you. But those who have reached a higher spiritual standard do not even do that… Lest you should think that such patience only gives an advantage to the adversary, you are told that the contrary is the case: the advantage is with the patient, the self-possessed, those who do not lose their temper or forget their own principles of conduct.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

Such an understanding of Qur’anic teaching points to John Howard Yoder’s variety of \emph{Pacifism of the Virtuous Minority}. This is a call to respond to God as God demonstrates himself to be. Patience and forgiveness are closer to God than impatience and vengeance. Maintaining the inner virtue revealed by God sets some believers apart. In this case, the Khudai Khudmatgar adopt an interpretation of Islam which puts a high priority on the individual commitment to nonviolence and patience.

The actions and commitment of the Khudai Khudmatgar also share the characteristics of \emph{Pacifism by Absolute Principle}. From the approach of absolute principle (as Yoder laid out) the commitment to universality and patience take priority

\textsuperscript{52} Banerjee also speaks to the higher calling to forgiveness saying “The first half of the following \textit{sura} is often quoted to justify the link between Islam and violence, but the inclusion of its last four lines provide the complete picture:

\begin{quote}
We ordained therein for the
Life for life, eye for eye,
Nose for nose, ear for ear,
Tooth for tooth, and wounds
Equal for equal. But if anyone
Remits the retaliation
By way of charity, it is
An act of atonement for himself” Qur’an 5:45.
\end{quote}
Banerjee continues... “In this light, forgiving the enemy was an act of courage and will, rather than cowardice.” Banerjee, “Justice and Non-Violent Jihad,” 196.

\textsuperscript{53} Abu-Nimer, \textit{Nonviolence and Peace Building}, 72.
above any strategic need for force. Joan V. Bondurant points toward this absolute ethic when she says in *Conquest of Violence: The Gandian Philosophy of Conflict*: “The Pathan warrior was persuaded to substitute for the certainty which he found in the rifle and dagger, a faith in the power of a moral force.”54 The certainty of the right action rests in the revelation of the Qur’an interpreted toward nonviolence.55

Yoder’s variations are not mutually-exclusive. The elements of *Pacifism of the Virtuous Minority* and *Nonviolence by Absolute Principle* do not negate the strong elements of *Nonviolent Social Change* found in the Khudai Khidmatgar. Perhaps because it was a successful movement for social change the Khudai Khidmatgar fit the image well. Nonviolence was the tool used by the weaker of the parties. It gave moral dignity to the Pathans, helping them to unite with a changed view of honor. The British, who had used Pathan propensity to violence to justify their iron hand rule, had to recognize the humanity of the Pathans and make changes that acknowledged the common dignity. The example of the soldiers of Garhwal regiment who would not shoot the unarmed occupiers of Peshawar show the effective techniques of nonviolent social action. For the Garhwal soldier to fire upon an unarmed Pathan would mean his neglect, not just of the Pathan, but also of himself as one who cares for another human.

54 Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*, 142.

55 Most sources document that Khan and, by extension, the Khudai Khidmatgar were absolute pacifists. However, Mukulika Banerjee's interviews indicate there may have been exceptions. Banerjee found that some Khudai Khudmatgar set aside the feuds only temporarily in order to defeat the British. Surviving Khudmatgar activist Ajab Khan in Charsadda said “Violence is an intra-Pukhtun affair. With the British it was different... we adopted non-violence.” Banerjee, "Justice and Non-Violent Jihad," 190, 194.
CHAPTER 3

BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI, FETHULLAH GULEN AND HIZMET

In most cases, when seeking examples of nonviolence and pacifism, the movements sought are those which are developed in response to oppression. Yet, as Abu-Nimer qualifies, Muslims often take a different approach to peace building. Abu-Nimer identified three approaches to Islam and peace building. The first two (War and Jihad and Just War and Peace) had to do with war and justification of war. The third approach, Peace Building and Nonviolence, is about the meaning of peace and the tools Islam holds for building a peaceful society. To examine religiously based peace building practiced by Muslims, two interplaying movements, both in contemporary Turkey, provide distinct means of interaction and interfaith understanding. These movements provide opportunities for a scholar to identify what it means to build peace in Islam. These are movements that hold a vision for a peaceful and just society and take positive action to achieve such a society. The first of these, the Nur Movement, represents the followers of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960), whose greatest work is Risale-i Nur, a six thousand-page commentary on the Qur’an. The other movement, hizmet, which means “service”, is also called the Gülen Movement, after the inspiration of Fethullah Gülen (1941-present) who is an educator committed to tolerance, dialogue and understanding.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

During the Ottoman Empire, political leaders and Islamic authorities shared a mutually beneficial relationship characterized by the ulema which oversaw all education while the rule of law was based on sharia. According to demographer Justin McCarthy,
World War I was more devastating to Anatolia than to all of Europe. Between the years 1914 and 1923, 20% of the Anatolian population died and another 10% became refugees.¹ Once the empire fell, new models of governance were investigated.² Young people were studying in Europe and returning with new ideas of secularism and the separation of religion and politics. The term “secular”, laik in Turkish, in an Anatolian context, has meant progressive (faith in science), modern (European) and nationalist.³ Unlike the United States, Turkish secular came to mean a state opposition to religion in which the state limited religious influence.⁴

In 1915 the Ministry of Justice took over sharia courts and eliminated the ulema. Then, in 1924, the Caliphate was abolished and a state office, the Directory of Religious Affairs, was established to oversee Islamic affairs. The Ministry of Education took over the madrasas. At the same time, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was leading the resistance of the invading Greek forces. Turkish independence was won in 1923 with Ataturk the new leader espousing a modern nation-state founded on secular principles and distinct from

¹ War’s secondary loss – disease, starvation and exposure – took the greater number of victims than did aggression, battles and violence. “In some eastern provinces, one-half of the inhabitants died and a further one-half of the survivors were refugees.” Justin McCarthy, Muslims and Minorities: the Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 118-121.

² Helen Rose Ebaugh, The Gülen Movement (New York: Springer, 2009), 14. A constitutional monarchy was established with the backing of the Young Ottomans (the predecessor of the Young Turks) only to have the parliament and constitution dissolved a year later by Sultan Abdulhamid II.


⁴ Ibid.
the Ottoman Empire. The following year, Anaturk would declare that Turkish nationalism, not Islam, was the uniting element of the Turkish people.⁵

Ataturk and his Kemalist followers closed the dervish lodges and forbad the Sufi orders. He forbad Turkish traditional dress, the fez, turban and the veil. Turkey began using the Gregorian calendar and Sunday became the day of rest. In Turkish, the Arabic script was replaced with Roman letters and words with Arabic or Persian roots were altered to Turkish roots. The ezan was chanted in Turkish, not Arabic, and the Qur’an was interpreted to Turkish and printed in Latin. Polygamy was outlawed in 1926. Islam was removed from the constitution in 1928 and in 1937 it was replaced with secularism.⁶

The philosophical underpinning of Turkish secularism is positivism. A product of the enlightenment, positivism approaches the human condition as one of social evolution away from religion and superstition toward a truth found only in rational thought and scientific knowledge. This Turkish ideology became called “Kemalism”.⁷ Education, economics, family and dress were governed by rational principles. Yet, the state did not remove Islam all together. In fact, being Muslim was still a central characteristic of being Turkish. Islam was seen as a part of the collective history.

In this way Islam in Turkey was put in service to the state. There could be an image of Islam, one that believers could rally under, yet any “truth” of Islam was considered inferior to the secular “truth” which was found in science. The religious, especially men

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⁷ Ibid., 16.
and women from rural areas, would recognize symbols of their faith in the public sphere but religion was relegated to private piety.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nur Movement

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in the eastern Anatolian city of Bitlis at the end of the Ottoman Empire and served in the Empire’s military. Initially he caught the eye of the rising political leadership when he published nationalistic brochures. However, he fell from grace when his religious views – that God is to be credited with the new nation’s success, not individual accomplishments – brought him the label of “reactionary”. Nursi’s religious views continued to be suspicious to the Kemalist leadership. He spent much of his life either in prison or in exile.8

Nursi dedicated his life to raising religious consciousness through understanding the revelation of the Qur’an in a modern context. Nursi expert, M. Hakan Yavuz, explains that Nursi interpreted the Qur’an as abstract lessons creating moral ideas for the faithful to pursue. He did not read the Qur’an as a contextual piece; instead, he saw in the modern day a distinct context for which the Qur’an must be interpreted and applied. Nursi’s life saw the fall of the Ottoman Empire, increased Western colonization, Kurdish/Turk/Armenian communal fights, secular and religious tension and Muslim conflict with Christians and Jews. Yet in spite of the contentious experiences of the “other”, Nursi identified Islam as a source of peace building, tolerance and human dignity in a largely intolerant world.9

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In Nursi’s own self-understanding, his life was divided into three parts: Old Said, New Said and the Third Said. Each phase framed Nursi’s developing philosophy of faith and the political life. The Old Said fought in the military, became a prisoner of war, escaped and worked for the government. The New Said developed alongside the rampant secularization of the newly formed Turkey (1923). New Said ended political participation and returned only to his religious life, closed off to politics and advised his followers to do the same. Nursi biographer, Sukran Vahide, describes the transition to the New Said “Some of those who followed his sermons have recorded that they differed from what they were accustomed to hear from him, with his concentrating on the fundamental tenets of belief, such as divine unity and the resurrection of the dead.”

Nursi demonstrated his change to the New Said by dressing in traditional Islamic dress in defiance of the efforts of the state to forbid religious dress.

The Third Said involved returning to the role of religion in political life. Asma Afsaruddin explains that the Western dichotomy between public and private spheres is often perceived as incompatible with Islam. Nursi’s approach to the role of religion was to encourage the moral development of individuals to include both public and private right judgment. A Muslim is morally bound to bring ethical behavior and judgment to all spheres of life. Yet it grows in society only by individuals practicing personal morality,

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10 Nursi also wrote Shaykh Said, who sought his support for a revolt against Anatolian dictators, that jihad could not be waged brother against brother. “Our only salvation at this time is to offer illumination and guidance through the truths of the Qur’an and belief; it is to get rid of our greatest enemy, ignorance.” Sukran Vahide, “Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur,” in Globalization, Ethics and Islam: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, ed. Ian Markham and Ibrahim Ozdemir (Burlington, Vt: Ashgate Pub Ltd, 2005), 17-18.

11 Ibid., 17.
not by state sanctioned religious codes. According to Nursi scholar, Hakan Yavuz, there was always support for democracy in Nursi’s political views. He defined democracy as “a system that is based on principles of participation and the rule of law.”

During the communal tension between Kurds and Armenians, as a Kurd, Nursi’s wisdom was called upon with the expectation that he would defend the Kurds. Instead, Nursi emphasized the universality found in Islam to support the Christians saying the “right to liberty and equality of these Christians is granted by sharia”. He said that vengeance was the real enemy. Even in cases in which the Christians appear to be enemies, the Muslim is to see that the rage and ignorance that have overcome the Christians are the enemies they must fight, not the Christians themselves. It is too easy for the faithful to be overcome by rage and violence. He said “Our enemy, that which is destroying us, is ignorance… poverty… and enmity. If the Armenians have opposed us out of hatred, they have done so under the leadership of these corrupters.”

Nursi’s work toward peace is committed to overcoming the corruption of the positivist world that, he says, is rooted in ignorance of God’s role in the world. In his Damascus Sermon in 1911, Nursi points to six sicknesses that have held Muslims from progress since the Middle Ages. They are:

FIRSTLY: The rising to life of despair and hopelessness in social life.

SECONDLY: The death of truthfulness in social and political life.

THIRDLY: Love of enmity.

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13 Yavuz, “The Sufi”.

14 Ibid.
FOURTHLY: Not knowing the luminous bonds that bind the believers to one another.

FIFTHLY: Despotism, which spreads, becoming widespread as though it was various contagious diseases.

SIXTHLY: Restricting endeavour to what is personally beneficial.¹⁵

It is ignorance, of both God and science, which must be overcome to bring peace. Nursi sought to combine the three branches of education in Turkey: the medreses, which teach traditional religion, the mektebs, which are the secularist schools teaching modern science and the tekkes the schools of Sufism.¹⁶ Consolidating education helped bridge the space the positivist world was placing between science and religion.¹⁷

Zeki Saritoprak echoes the vision of Nursi as a means to obtain world peace. The efforts to overcome ignorance move beyond the ignorance of science to a determination to know other peoples and cultures. The Qur’an says “O mankind! We have created you male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. The noblest of you, in the sight of god, is the best in conduct. God is the Knower and the Aware.”¹⁸ These differences that God has created are a means to better know God and


¹⁷ Bekim Agai, “The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethics of Education” in Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 52. Nursi sees science as one of the four ways a person can come to know the existence of the Creator. The other ways of knowing the existence of God are through the Prophet Muhammad, through the Qur’an and through humanity’s conscious nature.

God’s intention for creation. They are should not be seen as problematic or divisive.\textsuperscript{19} Nursi encouraged his followers to pursue dialogue with Christians because he saw a need for unity among those who believe in God to resist the anti-religious secularism coming from Europe.\textsuperscript{20} “It is time to end hatred and animosity. The two World Wars have shown how ugly animosity is and how it can be destructive and wrong. It has been proved that there is no benefit from hatred.”\textsuperscript{21}

Nursi interpreted the Qur’an in ways that took the modern world into consideration. Nursi admitted that violence was a part of Islamic history and that friendship with Christians was discouraged at times.\textsuperscript{22} He responded that those verses were from times of brutality in which Islam risked extinction. He wrote that those times have passed; Islam and Christianity should no longer see themselves at odds. Now is the time to come to build unity and know civilization.

During the time of the Prophet there was a sizable religious revolution. Everyone’s ideas at that time were inevitably concerned with religion. People hated and loved each other soley on the basis of religion. Therefore, a close relationship with non-Muslims was considered a form of hypocrisy. Today there is a civilizational and secular revolution. The human mind is occupied by civilizational progress and worldly life.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 33. ; Yavuz, “Towards an Islamic Liberalism?” 592. From Nursi’s perspective there were two Europes influencing the world. One “follows the sciences which serve justice and right and the industries beneficial for the life of society through the inspiration it has received from true Christianity.” Nursi appreciates this European influence. The other, however, he sees corrupting society, bringing ignorance and harmful philosophy. This second Europe is the one that advocates positivist philosophy.


\textsuperscript{22} Qur’an 5:51.

Nursi envisions that knowledge and education are the foundation of unity as God intends for all people to live. “Unity cannot occur through ignorance” Nursi said “Unity is the fusion of ideas, and the fusion of ideas occurs through the electric rays of knowledge.”

Saritoprak points to *mizaj-i İslamiyet*, which he translates as the “chemistry of Islam”, to be at the core of unity as understood in Islam. A Muslim is to have positive relations on three different levels: positive relations among all Muslims; positive relations among all peoples of faith; and, Nursi stresses, positive relations among all people. Nursi draws the analogy that love among people is like a mountain, while enmity is like a child with a temper throwing rocks. An educated person would choose a mountain over a handful of rocks. So it is with the knowledge of God: with knowledge of one other and God’s creation, a person will choose positive relations over hate and enmity.

Nursi emphasized the importance of the “middle way”. He saw the polarities between the religious and science as inappropriate for Muslim life. Christians and Jews were not to be perceived as the “other” and opposite of Islam. Instead, all are faithful to God and responsible to resist extreme secularism that excludes religion. Nursi did not advocate simplistic reading of religious texts saying there are more

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26 Voll quotes Nursi in reference to Sunni and Shi’i differences: “Too much or too little of anything is not good. Moderation is the middle way... O Sunnis, who are the People of Truth, and Alevi, whose way is love of the Prophet’s family! Quickly put an end to this meaningless, disloyal, unjust and harmful dispute between you... Since you are believers in Divine Unity, it is essential to leave aside unimportant matters which necessitate division while there are a hundred fundamental sacred bands between you which command brotherhood and unity.” Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” 254.
than one right way to interpret the Qur’an. The interpretation of the Qur’an “cannot be restricted to one or two meanings like man’s speech, the product of his limited mind and individual will. It is because of this that innumerable truths contained in the Qur’an verses have been expounded by Qur’anic commentators.”

John Voll argues that, by seeking the “middle way”, Nursi is neither absolutist nor relativist. From this perspective, “… God’s revelation presents truth to all people, but, because of their different capacities, times and contexts they will understand that truth in different ways.”

But bridging this gap, Voll posits, Nursi covers the space between modern approach to truth (with one method using scientific investigation) and post-modern (with the emphasis on perspective and perspectives on “truth” which are bound to time, space and experience). Nursi is neither modern, nor post-modern, but a lynchpin between the two with a commitment to unchanging truth while dependent on perspective.

This “middle way” speaks to the moderation central to the concept of “positive action” (musbet hareke) in Nursi’s teaching. Nursi never encouraged revolt, violent or nonviolent, against the Turkish government. Indeed, in spite of large numbers of discontent people, the Kemalist government had little oppositional collective action. The positive action advocated by Nursi involves patience, social

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28 Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” 256.

29 Ibid.

30 Although Nursi encouraged loyalty to religion and to state, the Kemalists failed to grasp the nuance. Nursi was accused of inspiring revolts and imprisoned on multiple occasions.
harmony and a commitment to a society in which a life of religious virtue could be lived. For Nursi, jihad means the commitment to faith on a personal level, which in turn, inspires others and transforms society from within. Nursi was not involved in politics; instead he was committed to the spiritual development of the individual person for the good of society.

Nursi was committed to public order and security as a part of positive action. Those things that disrupt the order are negative action and not part of Nursi’s Islamic system. Patience, humility and gratitude are positive. Their opposites, impatience, pride and rebellion are vices that lead to negative actions. One of Nursi’s final lessons to his students emphasized positive action and public order:

Our duty is positive action, not negative action. It is purely to carry out the service to belief in accordance with Divine pleasure, and not to interfere in God’s duty. We are charged to respond with thanks and patience to every difficulty within the positive service to belief, which preserves public order.”

Nursi was not silent in the face of injustice. He was vocal in his opposition to policies of Abdulhamid II, which he felt went against religious beliefs. He strongly

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31 Gavin D. Brockett, “Collective Action and the Turkish Revolution: Towards a Framework for the Social History of the Anaturk Era, 1923-38,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 47-58. Gavin D. Brockett outlines the few occasions of attempted collective action in his article for *Middle Eastern Studies*. Brockett identified movements in Kayseri, Maras, Erzurum, Rize (1925), in Menemen (1930), in Brusa (1933) and in a few other locations in 1935/1936. The Erzurum protest, which was particularly about the right to wear religious dress, came under fire from local gendarmes killing as many as 23 protesters. In other demonstrations, protestors were sentenced to prison terms and others to death. According to Brockett, Mustafa Kemal feared grass roots uprising, especially those motivated by traditional Islamic symbols, because he himself had used such popular sentiments to defeat the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph. Once he was in leadership, he advocating his brand of secularism. “It seems that the Kemalists, confident of the superiority of rational nationalism, evidently believed that given a chance Turks would desert these ‘reactionary’ institutions.”


33 Ibid., 103.
opposed the anti-religious policies of the Kemalists, which he saw as encouraging atheism. Reflecting Nursi’s commitment to positive action is his support for the 1955 Baghdad Pact, which was signed by Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and the United Kingdom, for its cooperation between Muslims and Christians. Commitment to articulating an Islamic vision rooted in individual practice constituted positive action.

With Nursi’s encouragement, his followers formed study groups and established study centers primarily in urban Turkey near universities. Mehmet Salih Sayilgan describes the study centers as a modest apartment or townhouse furnished with carpets, couches and collections of *Risale-i Nur* as well as secondary commentaries on Nursi and his writing. Because they are close to universities, students often live in the centers, read Nursi’s writing together, eat meals together and share in the care of the center. As disagreements arise, students learn conflict resolution through consultation (*istikare*), which Nursi strongly advised as a Qur’anic principle. Strong bonds come from these study centers and historian Gavin D. Brockett credits them with peacekeeping in Turkish society:

There can be little doubt... that life in provincial urban centers provided an important foundation on which peaceful collective action was constructed, for social cohesion can be attributed to a shared identity among Muslim residents of the same quarter.

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34 Ibid., 111. Turner translates a line from Nursi’s *Risale-i*: “Forge your swords out of science and art, and base them on the wisdom that is in the Quran.”


37 Brockett, “Collective Action and the Turkish Revolution” 59.
Yavuz and Esposito give background of the Nur Movement in their introduction to *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*. There they write “The Nur movement uses the values and norms provided by Islam to channel conduct in a certain direction, promotes the circulation of information and knowledge, and shapes long-term interaction within a framework of trust and mutual obligation.”\(^{38}\) Doing so, Yavuz and Esposito tell us Nursi and his followers have developed a new “vernacular modernity”\(^{39}\) which can maintain loyalty to the state while supporting an Islamic way of life.

Following Nursi’s death in 1960, the Nur Movement has maintained its emphasis on personal morality and positive action while members fragmented in its implementation. The Turkish state began to seek a new nationalist-religious partnership against communist ideologies (as well as the less moderate Arab-centric radical Islamism). For many followers of Nursi, the partnership has been welcome while others were concerned about compromising Nursi’s message with involvement in politics.\(^{40}\) According to Yavuz, in all, with their differences stemming from Kurdish nationalism and Kemalism to the role of media in modern life, there are eight major Nur communities.\(^{41}\) The community most internationally involved is the Gülen movement.

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\(^{38}\) Yavuz and Esposito, "Islam in Turkey," xxvii.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement

Fethullah Gülen was born in a small farming village near Erzurum in eastern Turkey. His father was an imam and his mother defied the Kemalist state by teaching children the Qur’an. Gülen’s early years were influenced by a Sufi teacher, Sheikh Muhammed Lutfi Efendi, who introduced Gülen to the writings of Nursi. Gülen received a secular education and in 1959 he passed the state exam to become an imam. Gülen was appointed to a kestanepazari (a dormitory and Qur’anic school) of Izmir where he sought a means to share religious instruction and a better understanding of Islamic identity with the youth. He oversaw camps that taught basic Islamic principles, Islamic knowledge and Nursi’s writings. The work he completed caught the attention of wealthy Muslims seeking means to maintain the Muslim identity of Turkey. With their financial help, Gülen was able to establish houses for Islamic teaching and dormitories for students in secular education ensuring that they could also receive religious instruction. Students often studied the Qur’an along with the writings of Nursi and Gülen.

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41 The eight Nur communities today are: Kurdoglu Cemaati, Mehmet Kirkici, Mustafa Sugur, Yeni Nesil, Gülen movement, Yeni Asya, Med-Zehra and Zehara Eğitim ve Kultur Vakfi. Yavuz, Turkish Islam, 17.


43 Ibid.


45 Ibid.,
Like Nursi, Gülen was concerned that the strict secular system was undermining young people’s ability to make ethical decisions. Nursi identified three enemies of Islam (ignorance, poverty and internal division) and pointed to knowledge as the key to overcoming each. Gülen took up Nursi’s challenge of the science/religion dichotomy of Turkish society. He argues that natural science was a part of Islamic education in the ninth through eleventh centuries, the time that Islam was at the forefront of development. However, in the twelfth century (under the Seljuk Empire, 1040-1194), philosophy and the natural sciences were forced out of the medreses and Islam lost strength. In his book, *Understanding and Belief: The Essentials of Islamic Faith*, Gülen wrote:

Science also can be described as comprehending what things and events tell us, what the Divine laws reveal to us, and striving to understand the Creator's purpose… There is no reason to fear science. The danger does not lie with science and the founding of the new world it will usher in, but rather with ignorance and irresponsible scientists and others who exploit it for their own selfish interests.

Bekim Agai suggests that the general assumption in Gülen’s writing holds that war and violence comes from people who are educated in science but lack the ethical knowledge needed to make moral decisions. Violence, such as that which came out of World War II and since, result from people who know the natural world, can control the natural world yet lack the ethics to take responsibility for that power. For Gülen, Islam holds

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46 Fethullah Gülen, *Understanding and Belief: The Essentials of Islamic Faith* (Izmir: Kaynak, 1997), 23. Since the Catholic Church was opposed to certain scientists, Gülen argues, Muslim feelings of inferiority to the West also contributed to this false dichotomy.


those tools of respect for the natural world that can lead to power and highly developed philosophy, while ultimately recognizing the role of God and the need for the faithful to submit to divine laws.

Gülen has hoped that with integration of faith and science Turkey can have a “golden generation”: one that is educated in modern science while committed to religious belief. His vision, coming through the teachings of Said Nursi, is an educated Islamic umma (community), which fully participates in the world. Gülen’s golden generation contrasts the Kemalist secular ideal of a society that keeps religion isolated from public life. Gülen and his followers are committed to education as a religious obligation. He was able to persuade donors who would normally give to the building of mosques to build schools instead. He looked at the whole world as a mosque in need of greater appreciation and knowledge.

Meanwhile, the Turkish political system found practicing Muslims to be allied against communist ideologies of the West. With lessening animosity (though certainly not non-existent) from the state, Gülen could begin to think of change, development and peace on a collective level. He began his emphasis on hizmet (service) to community and, later, to the world. It is hizmet (still called the Gülen movement by many) that unifies the followes of Gülen.

In the 1990s, the Gülen movement moved beyond Turkey. By 1999, Gülen’s followers had hundreds of dormitories, 150 private schools and an additional 150 education centers. At the turn of the millennium, there were an estimated 26,500 students

50 Ibid., 50.

51 Ibid., 58-59.
assisted by Gülen and his movement worldwide.\textsuperscript{52} Within Turkey, Gülen was controversial for this blend of studies that the secular state advocated keeping separate. By the late 1990s there was recognition that education was molding social change creating a Turkish society clearly rooted in Islam while participating in secular life. Again even goes so far as to say “Gülen in effect has produced an Islamic discourse that links Islam so strongly with education that one can speak of an ‘educational Islamism’ that is opposed to political Islamism.”\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{Hizmet} projects receive their funding from individuals in local groups who seek means for positive action locally, domestically and at the international level. After Turkey had outlawed Sufi practice in the madrasas, a new social circle was established called cemaat. Such groups blend spiritual practice, religious devotion and some nationalism. The cemaat form subgroups called sohbets, which have no formal membership. Individuals gather, read the Qur’an, reflect on Qur’anic commentary and search for service projects for the group to financially support. The sohbets are ordered by neighborhood, by gender and by profession. They meet once or twice a week\textsuperscript{54} in groups of 10-12 people.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{54} Ebaugh, \textit{The Gülen Movement}, 47-49. Sometimes groups will meet once a week with those who are newly interested in the Gülen movement and a second time with those who have been personally committed over a period of time.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 50-51. Most small groups are gender-segregated. Like their male counterparts, the female groups read the Qur’an, reflect on Gülen’s writings and make financial contributions to Gülen projects. Often women will make handcrafts that they sell with the proceeds going to projects they decide upon. M. Curtis, “The Women’s Side of the Coin: The Gülen Movement in America, a New Turkish American Community Taking Root,” Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice, \url{http://fethullahgulenconference.org/houston/read.php?p=womans-side-gulen-movement-america-new-turkish-american-community} (accessed August 10, 2012).) Maria Curtis has found, among Turkish women living in the United States, participation in the Gülen movement

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The emphasis on youth as the future of society is central in Gülen’s thinking. Yet the Gülen Movement, as it has developed internationally, is committed to combating ignorance and educating throughout life. Gülen promotes dialogue as a means to educate oneself and others while building a world of understanding and peace. For Gülen, “dialogue means the coming together of two or more people to discuss certain issues, and thus, the forming of a bond between these people.”

Followers of Gülen support dialogue in many fields including dialogue among intellectuals and on the media and politics; but particularly the Gülen Movement encourages intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Gülen also uses the Turkish word *hosgoru*, which is translated “tolerance” in English. However, the English understanding of tolerance may not suffice as it is understood in English. David B. Capes uses broader translation of *hosgoru* to include “respect,” “mercy,” and “tolerance.” Zeki Saritoprak articulates *hosgoru* as “to see what is good in others.” Of primary importance to this understanding of dialogue is the relationships built between the participants. In reference to interfaith dialogue, Gülen emphasizes what it is not. Dialogue is not proselytizing; it is not a debate in which the merits of each faith are compared; and it is not an attempt to create a single world helps with their adjustment to the new culture. Often women come to the new country with their husbands whose profession sends them abroad. While the men may connect with others through their professional lives, the women have a harder time. Those who have been in the country for some years and speak the language find themselves serving as “adoptive mother and sister figures” for those who have just arrived. In addition, in Curtis’ study, women reference Said Nursi’s saying that the United States may be the ideal place for Muslim-Christian dialogue. For them, being in the United States is a means to live out Nursi’s vision.

religion.\textsuperscript{57} The emphasis, then, is on understanding, appreciation, trust building and cooperation.

The situation of violence, insult and hatred, Gülen says, is worse today than ever before. These relationships that are built through dialogue create a culture of peace. In his article “Longing for Love,” he writes:

\begin{quote}
It seems that we have forgotten how to act like human beings. We easily become enraged and filled with hatred; we crush others if we are powerful enough. If we are not, then we do not hesitate to defame them, damaging their dignity with all the power of the media and the facilities at our disposal. Violence is everywhere, as savage as, or perhaps even more atrocious than, that caused by any barbarian. … why are you hesitating? Having reached a critical intersection in human history… let us speak out for "love" and "brotherhood and sisterhood"! Come and let us show the entire world the privilege of being human with all the colours and patterns! Come in genuine love and dialogue at a time when hatred and revenge have darkened the face of our world!\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

Gülen refers to “People of Heart” who welcome the other with generosity and respect. Loyalty, fidelity and trust reinforce each other in the Gülen Movement. Loyalty (\textit{vefa}) comes out of friendship that shares in the same activities and personal investments. Fidelity (\textit{ikhlas}), as Gülen frames it, is two fold. Fidelity begins with unity in the community. The second part is the mystery of one’s relationship with God and all the actions (\textit{hizmet}) that come from that relationship. So fidelity in Gülen’s terms has to do with the integration of personal spiritual practice into a community of other who also take their personal relationship with God seriously. From loyalty and fidelity trust can be


built. Trust, then, is what strengthens society and build citizens who can continue to build a just world.59

The Gülen movement has seen success. One simple ways of creating relationships of dialogue has been documented by Martha Ann Kirk’s writing about “sister families” in Turkey. There have been over 37,000 people killed through violence in southeast Turkey since 1980. When 30 more people were killed in 2007 the Hizmet, with the encouragement of Gülen, sought the root causes of the violence and division in the society. A landmine in southeast Turkey killed Raife Doganar’s husband while he tended the family’s sheep. Doganar was a widow with four children under ten years old and facing a life of poverty. Behcet and Arzu Balik, along with their two sons, were connected with Raife Doganar and her family through the hizmet established NGO, Kimse Yok Mu.60 When Arzo was asked if she was afraid to bring her family to the slum where the Doganar Family lived, Arzu replied, “If we don’t do this, who will do it?” The Baliks said they felt ashamed that they were out of touch with the suffering of others. “If we don’t go, people will stay separated. Humans need relationship,” Arzu said, “If we could all cooperate with each other, there could be peace in the world.” The word spreads


60 Ebaugh, 86-87. “Kimse Yok Mu”, meaning “Is Anybody There” began as a reality television program following the 1999 earthquake on the Gülen inspired television station, Samanyolu. The program featured paired families in which the earthquake devastated one and the other helped them reconstruct their home and lives. The program resulted in generous donations creating the aid organization Kimse Yok Mu overseen by followers of Gülen. “Somalia's Brightest Compete for Education in Turkey,” Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement) Fethullah Gülen, http://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/2011/09/somalias-brightest-compete-for.html (accessed October 8, 2012). Today Kimse Yok Mu helps victims of natural disasters worldwide. Their international work has included addressing the needs of often forgotten, drought plagued, long-time conflict area of Somalia. Kimse Yok Mu has provided scholarships for 350 Somali students to study in Turkey.
and now the Baliks’ neighbor wants to be a sister family. Those who witness the value of *Hizmet* point to the personal investment in the project and the friendships built that create loyalty.

Saritoprak reflects on the global levels of dialogue and solidarity created by the Gülen Movement in his paper *Fethullah Gülen and His Global Contribution to Peace Building*. There are dozens of inter-faith dialogue centers worldwide. In 1999 Saritoprak helped found the “Rumi Forum for Interfaith Dialogue” in Washington, D.C. Members of the Turkish-American community spent their own money and voluntarily painted walls and floors for reasons that did not benefit themselves personally. Saritoprak looks at it as communal solidarity referencing a computer engineer who said he volunteered because he sought “solidarity with other people to build peace.” Within a few years the center was one of the best of its’ kind in the United States. Today the Rumi Forum works with six major projects designed to help people to come to know one another and thereby build peace. The Rumi Form establishes relationships with churches, sponsors trips to Turkey, organizes conferences, shares cultural activities, hosts Ramadan programs for political leaders in Washington D.C. and works with community leaders in peace building especially within the Islamic context.

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63 Ibid.
dialogue as a means to create friendship and relationships that then can promote a culture of peace, understanding and Gülen’s concept of tolerance.

Gülen and his followers are not without their critics. Initially both he and Nursi were perceived as reactionaries. Many in Turkish society suspected a hidden agenda to return to a religious state and institution of sharia. Over time, though, such accusations have died down, particularly with Gülen’s move to the United States in 1999. To ask me despite the distance, Gülen has, at least spiritual impact, on many parts of society. His followers have established schools, universities, newspapers, magazines, hospitals, hotels, a bank (Bank Asya which follows laws of Islamic banking\textsuperscript{64}) and an NGO. He has been accused of having plants in the police.\textsuperscript{65} Some feel there is too much power in the hands of just a few. Gülen is often described as a recluse\textsuperscript{66} with some wondering who will follow him in leadership.\textsuperscript{67} Gülen says that financial transparency is important, he encourages his followers to root themselves in Islamic service (hizmet), not in his personality.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{64} For details on Bank Asya and Islamic banking see Daniel W. Skubik “Fetullah Gülen, Islamic Banking and Global Finance” (paper prepared for Fourth Conference on International Corporate Responsibility, Doha, Qatar, November 16-18, 2008), \url{http://secure.pdcat.net/icr/content/icr_2009_0004_0289_0304} (accessed October 9, 2012).


\textsuperscript{67} Ebaugh, \textit{The Gülen Movement}, 122.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 122 and 124.
Nursi, Gülen and the Gülen Movement (*hizmet*) as a variety of Nonviolence

In searching for the way that the followers of Nursi and Gülen fit into a framework for nonviolence, the movements are best understood in Abu-Nimer’s category that studies *Peace Building and Nonviolence*. Nursi particularly emphasized the *universality and dignity of all people, pluralism and diversity* and *patience*. Gülen carries the framework further by emphasizing *beneficence, kindness and doing good, solidarity and collaborative action* and *peacemaking*. In addition, Gülen emphasizes the importance of a community of the faithful, the *Ummah*, who address problems through cooperation and feel a responsibility for the well being of one another and the broader community.

At first glance, Nursi might be an advocate of Yoder’s Pacifism of Absolute Principle. Sayilgan tells a classic story of the compassion of Old Said during his time as a soldier. Nursi had been tortured and left in the cold by a certain prosecutor. Nursi was about to curse the man until he saw a little girl pass by. He asked who the child was. Upon learning that she was the daughter of his prosecutor he chose not to wish ill-will on the man. Nursi explained that if something happened to the man, his daughter would be hurt by the action and that he could not, as a Muslim, bring harm on the innocent.\(^{69}\) Nursi’s regard for the universality and dignity of humanity is reflected in his recognition of the impact his vengeance could have on an innocent child. Nursi’s principle is positive action and his axiom holds that even the person who is the worst enemy is still a part of the unity of God and His creation. The true enemy is not a person, it is that which causes division in God’s creation. With that

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\(^{69}\) Sayilgan, “Constructing an Islamic Ethics of Non-Violence,” 49.
understanding, the faithful desire is to participate in positive action should not be in opposition to the enemy. Positive action should be used to persuade the opponent to align himself to just behavior.

In spite of Nursi’s commitment to the universality and dignity of humanity, he would probably not define himself in terms of an Absolute Principle. Nursi was adverse to absolute answers. His principle of the “middle way” brought an understanding that circumstances contribute to the right action in a given situation. Sayilgan quotes a hadith that Nursi references to understand that time and place impact morality:

O my companions! You are in a time in which if you did not fulfill one tenth of God’s commands you would perish. However, there will be a time in which if a Muslim fulfills one tenth of God’s commands he will be saved.70

It is quite possible that Nursi would agree that violence hurts the innocent and therefore is unjust. However, Nursi’s teaching on the “middle way” indicates that the circumstance must be evaluated on its own merit and not responded to with an absolute principle. He may always be opposed to violence, and yet not principally opposed to violence.

A great deal of Gülen’s approach to social action is based on Nursi’s advocating “positive action” and the “middle way”. An expression of Gülen’s middle way was his response to the Gaza Flotilla. On May 31, 2010, Israeli soldiers killed nine men aboard the Turkish ship, Mavi Marmara, as they attempted to bypass Israeli security to deliver aid to Gaza. The action had all the characteristics of Yoder’s Nonviolent Social Change. Those who participated were deliberately provoking the Israeli military. They were

doing so in order to draw attention to what they felt was an unjust occupation of Gaza. From the participants perspectives, by sailing to Gaza the activists put Israelis in the position in which Israelis had to confront their own humanity and willingness to stand in the way of humanitarian aid. In this approach, the delivery of aid would have been an acknowledgement of the dignity of Palestinians in Gaza. Most activists who use Nonviolent Social Change would argue that the norm, the secure way things are, must be disrupted in order to bring justice. These activists argue that to refrain from disruption of the status quo is to be complicit in the injustice.

Gülen did not approve of the Gaza Flotilla. He expressed disappointment in what he saw as “a sign of defying authority”. According to The Wall Street Journal, activists approached members of the Gülen movement before the ship left Turkey. Gülen indicated he would only support the aid flotilla if they received permission from Israel. He described the end result as “ugly” and put responsibility on the flotilla organizers. Similarly, Gülen did not support women activists in October of 1998 when they formed a human chain across much of Turkey (crossing Asia into Europe in Istanbul) in opposition

71 It is worth noting that, at the time of this paper’s writing, Turkish civilians are in danger, with some fatalities, from the Syrian civil war which has crossed the boarding into Turkey. While Turkey considers military response, Gülen has made no public statement for or against military involvement.

72 Gülen has not made public statements on Gaza today. He may or may not have sympathy for the cause that lead to the Gaza Flotilla. If he has sympathy, Gülen’s reaction to the Gaza Flotilla could point to a kind of Islamic quietism. Quietism is a distinct type of nonviolence which, some say, was used by Muhammad and his followers. Abdulaziz Sachedina. “Justification for Violence in Islam,” in War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions, ed. J. Patout Burns (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 148. Sachedina explains that quietism is the action taken when aggressively seeking justice is not opportune. Quietism is considered a temporarily stage until the community can regroup and strengthen itself to strive for justice. The time in which the Muslim community was a minority in Mecca is an example of quietism according to Sachedina. In other words, Gülen may be waiting until an opportune time to address the needs of Gaza and seek peace in a manor that is not “ugly”.

to the secularist laws forbidding the head scarf. Again, he sided with a position of moderation, encouraging women to leave the head scarf if it were best for their, and their families’, welfare.  

Instead of Nonviolent Social Change Gülen and his followers might fit what Yoder calls Pacifism of Christian Cosmopolitanism. Like the Catholic Church, Gülen and his followers recognize a human community beyond the adherents of Islam. They believe that the desire to get along will bring peace. The key is to have goodwill (“positive action” and the “essence of Islam”) toward all people. Our shared humanity provides the moral imperative to work for peace. Perhaps the Gülen movement would best be categorized as Nonviolence of Muslim Cosmopolitanism.

Abu-Nimer’s emphasis on Peace building and Nonviolence is helpful to conceptualize Gülen’s thought (and movement) as a nonviolent actor. Gülen echoes Abdul Aziz Sachedina approach to peace building primarily as an embrace of diversity. Sachedina cites the following Qur’anic verse:

We have revealed to thee as We revealed to Noah, and the Prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave David Psalms, and Messengers We have already told thee of before… Messengers bearing good tidings, and warning, so that humankind might have no argument against God, after the Messengers; God is Almighty, All-wise.  

Sachedina promotes an understanding of the shadhadah that recognizes that God’s oneness affirms diversity. Gülen’s emphasis on hosgoru (tolerance) as well as his followers’ active participation in dialogue points to a peace building technique. Gülen

74 Fred A. Reed, Anatolia Junction: a Journey Into Hidden Turkey (Burnaby, Canada: Talonbooks, 1999), 245.

75 Qur’an 4:163.

76 Sachedina, The Islamic Roots, 23
follows Nursi’s lead in a commitment to knowledge. For Gülen, it’s is knowledge of one another as well as religious knowledge that matters.

To view the Gülen movement as a peace builder and advocate of nonviolence, one must look to the axiom that God is one and those who honestly follow God are unified in God’s plan. That unity is found through knowledge of God and of one another. For Gülen peace building is to be temperate and patient, faithful to the authorities and to limitations of time and place. Like Yoder’s Pacifism of Christian Cosmopolitanism, Gülen and his followers recognize a greater community and they believe that peace is possible.

The Gülen movement accentuates the variety of approaches there are to nonviolence and peace building in Islam. Scholars point to Nursi and Gülen, and their followers, as models for Muslim nonviolence and peace building. An outside observer runs the risk of an “etic” error in claiming nonviolence must be in response to an external oppressor. Such a limited understanding of nonviolence has been culturally created. In contemporary Turkey’s case, the adversary has been a philosophy that sought to politically control Islam. The positive action of the followers of Nursi and Gülen are leading in faith-based peace building by Muslims.

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77 Zeki Saritoprak, “Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience,” The Muslim World 95, no. 3 (July 2005): 413-27.

CHAPTER 4

BAHRAIN’S MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Religiously based nonviolence walks a fine line. On one hand, religion can serve as the source of commitment to something higher than oneself. Religion can be the source of selfless bravery and that to which pride must surrender. On the other hand, religion runs the risk of identity politics. It is easy for believers to see those like themselves as good and of pure motive while those who believe differently are devious and without ethics. Religion can unify a movement, but runs the risk of unifying against another. Even if religious faith serves only principles that sustain justice, patience, forgiveness and compassion, those outside the faith can still feel suspect of the religious identity of those who disagree with them.

The Shi’a initiated nonviolent movement in Bahrain teeters to maintain resolute virtue, collective constraint and non-exclusive identity. Advocating for democratic reform, the movement uses what Yoder would label as nonviolent social change. Bahrain’s population is 70% Shi’a and was a part of the Persian empire until 1783 when the Sunni Arab Al Khalifa family took control of the tiny island country. In the 1950’s it was the Sunni population (not the Shi’a) who grew discontent with the British influence. The Al Khalifa family and the British authority sought Sunni support by favoring Sunnis in employment and other opportunities. Concerned that the Sunnis might inspire Shi’a discontent, the government sought alliance with the Arab population by giving the Sunni


Arabs employment and trade preferences and nurturing an Arab fear of a Shi’a revolution. The British approach was effective, resulting in Sunni suspicion of Shi’a opposition. The Sunni suspicion has remained even through the British withdrawal in 1971. The Iranian Revolution only enhanced the fear of a sectarian Shi’a uprising.\(^3\) As an opposition member explained it “After 1979, there was an increase in sectarianism and the government took advantage by turning national demands (for democracy) into sectarian demands.”\(^4\)

The fragmentation of Bahraini politics is not simply along sectarian lines. Some of the present day discontent reflects the tension within the Al Khalifa Monarchy. At the time of independence, Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa took the unelected role of Prime Minister while his brother Sheikh Isa bin Salman al Khalifa became emir (in 2002 the role changed to king). Over the following thirty years, the throne became a ceremonial position with the Prime Minister in control of politics and economy of the state,\(^5\) particularly building relationships with merchant families in the private sector.\(^6\)

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4 Akbari and Stern, *The Triangle of Conflict*, 42.


The last five years of Emir Isa’s reign were characterized by increased violence between the monarchy and the civilian population, particularly the Shi’a majority who sought democratic reforms. What began as protests demanding an elected National Assembly and freedom for the jailed activist Sheikh Ali Salman escalated to violence as demonstrators and a police officer were killed. With each march, the Bahrain government reacted with a heavy hand. The funerals of protestors became further instances for demonstration that then led to more arrests, accusations of government torture, and deaths. By 1995 the situation had worsened with unemployed Shi’a scapegoating the foreign born Sunnis who they accused of taking the limited opportunities for employment in Bahrain. A Pakistani video shop worker was killed by arson. The following year saw the deaths of other Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis all burned to death by angry Bahrainis. Parked cars, shopping centers, hotels and small shops began to be targets of bombs intended to express popular discontent with the limited economic and political opportunities offered Shi’a.

On March 6, 1999 the Emir Isa died unexpectedly. Sheikh Isa ascended as emir, following his father’s reign. The new emir was not content with the ceremonial role of

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Historically, Bahrainis are not known for violence. Aileen Keating notes in Mirage: Power, Politics, and the Hidden History of Arabian Oil, when, in 1914, the British compiled an Intelligence Report identifying the possible resources Bahrain might provide the war effort the report showed there were probably no more than 300 rifles. Most of those were damaged from the climate, and “no more than half a dozen men with any idea how to use a rifle at over three hundred yards”. Bahrainis were “unwarlike and has a dread of ships’ guns. The sheikh and his family are supposed to keep up to 500 armed retainers, but most of these are more familiar with a coffee pot than a rifle.” When Britain launched its war with Turkey from Bahrain’s soil the “common people” opposed being brought into a conflict that did not concern them. They reacted with “a certain amount of 'religious' feeling”.

the throne and sought means to take power from his uncle the Prime Minister. Emir Hamad made steps to align himself with the Shi’a majority. He visited the homes of Shi’a religious figures and hosted daily Majlis in his home so that those who had opposed the monarchy could openly discuss their discontent. In the first year of Emir Hamad’s reign, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, Bahrain’s most prominent opposition leader, was convicted of espionage and inciting social disorder. In an effort to win Shi’a support, the day after the conviction Emir Hamad granted Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri pardon.9

Bahrain issued a new constitution in 2002, which appeared to liberalize the political system making the country a constitutional monarchy. Hamad changed his title from emir to king.10 However, once in effect, it was evident that the new constitution only served to maintain the authority of the monarchy. The new government consisted of an elected lower house but an appointed upper house with the power to change or void any lower house decisions.11 Discontent has continued to rise over a decade, with the Shi’a expressing disenfranchisement. Unemployment is high, yet the monarchy invites Sunni immigrants to take the secure state jobs. Shi’a are not allowed to enlist in the military or serve in the police force. Some studies indicate that unemployment (in 2010) is between 15 to 30 percent with the Shi’a community higher than the national average.12

9 Wright, Fixing the Kingdom, 1-2.


11 Wright, Fixing the Kingdom, 5.

12 Ibid., 10.
Frustrated by political and economic conditions and empowered by the Arab Spring, the well-organized February 14, 2011 (the anniversary of the establishment of the constitutional monarchy and political reforms in 2001) demonstration was coordinated at Pearl Roundabout in Manama. Initially broadcasted via social media, over 6000 Bahrainis, primarily Shi’a demonstrators, marched with specific demands stated by an anonymous Facebook group: the “February 14th Revolution in Bahrain.”\(^{13}\) Demands included disbanding the National Assembly, creating a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution, an elected parliament with legislative authority and a limit on the governing authority of members of the royal family.\(^ {14}\)

On that first day, Feb. 14\(^ {th}\), riot police shot and killed a demonstrator, Ali Abdulhadi Almeshaima. The following day, as crowds gathered at the medical center to receive his body and protestors joined the funeral procession, police shot a second demonstrator, Fadel Salman Ali Salman Matrouk.\(^ {15}\) The deaths of the demonstrators only strengthened the opposition to the government. Pearl Monument became the gathering place for on-going protests. Updates via text messages urged others to join the movement. Organizers built tents on Pearl Roundabout; the night of the 16\(^ {th}\) saw 12,000 demonstrators in the street. Internet, television and social media carried images of happenings at Pearl Roundabout across the country and world. While protestors rallied at


\(^ {14}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^ {15}\) Ibid.
Pearl Roundabout, the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions declared a national strike to begin February 17.  

Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, son of King Hamad, called for dialogue with the opposition activists. Sheikh Ali Salman served as the opposition spokes person. Unfortunately, the Crown Prince could not rally the support of the Prime Minister and the hoped for dialogue failed. Opposition demonstrators were discouraged by dialogue without true governmental authority and by on-going government brutality. At 3 am the morning of Feb. 17th security forces began to evacuate Pearl Roundabout. About 1000 government troops ascended (armed with sticks, shields, sound bombs, guns and tear gas) on the sleeping occupiers. Three demonstrators were killed in their sleep with a fourth killed soon after. Hundreds were injured but the Ministry of Health was not permitted to leave Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC) until the Roundabout was fully evacuated. 

The brutality of the government crackdown with the deaths of four protestors outraged Sunni and Shi’a a like bringing greater support for those seeking governmental reform. With demonstrators unable to return to Pearl Roundabout, SMC became the new locus of the campaign. International media gathered to film the injured at the hospital.


17 Akbari and Stern, The Triangle of Conflict, 9 and 14. “While all government factions seek regime security, the Prime Minister considers reform as an opening to greater insecurity while the Crown Prince views reform as a source of regime security.” When the Crown Prince tried to reinitiate dialogue in July of 2011 the Prime Minister removed the Prince, replaced him with a hard-line parliament speaker, which led to the opposition’s withdrawal from dialogue.


19 Reuters, Manama, September 29, 2011. Later, in September, doctors would be arrested and accused of “stealing medicine, stockpiling weapons, occupying the hospital and... having terrorist goals” during the uprising. According to Reuters, Amnesty International called the proceedings a “travesty of justice”. Associated Press, Manama, June 21, 2012. Nine medical professionals were
Demonstrators returned to the streets marching toward the now militarized Pearl Roundabout. Some young men took off their shirts to demonstrate that they were unarmed. Meanwhile, social media served to communicate the nonviolent nature of the demonstrators to the world. International pressure urged an end to violence and encouraged democratic reform. On Feb. 19 the government removed their forces from Pearl Roundabout, allowing the demonstrators to return. In honor of the martyrs, Feb. 22 saw the largest demonstration yet with between 100,000 and 150,000 men, women and children marching for governmental reform.  

In mid-March there began to be cracks in the well-organized and sustained peaceful movement. Pro-government Sunnis attacked unarmed Shi’a students at the University of Bahrain. Shi’a demonstrators rushed to the students’ defense, neglecting their peaceful commitment. Government forces seized on the opportunity to characterize the conflict as sectarian which broke down the unity of the demonstrators. On March 14th, Saudi Arabia sent 1000 troops to protect its interests in Bahrain while supporting the monarchy. The next day, King Hamad declared a State of National Safety that imposed martial law on the country. All gatherings were declared illegal. The following day, March 16, the government again took Pearl Roundabout. It also took over SMC refusing to give medical treatment to the injured protestors. Injured demonstrators went to clinics and mosques seeking medical attention. The government arrested over 1000

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21 Ibid., 5-6.

22 Mainly: oil and the concern of Iranian involvement among the Shi’a demonstrators.
demonstrators and, on March 18th, they destroyed the Pearl Monument that had been at the center of the movement until that point. While evacuating the square, one protestor used an SUV to kill two police officers. The violence initiated by the opposition captured on camera and quickly spread worldwide undermining the nonviolent image of the movement.

The Shi’a Al Wefaq National Islamic Society (Al-Wefaq) is the most organized and largest of the movements who are advocating for reform of the Bahraini governance. In spite of receiving government permits for all demonstrations, they, like all opposition demonstrations in Bahrain, are often tear-gassed. Al-Wefaq reaches out to victims of torture and their families. Sheik Salman is their General Secretary and has consistently called for peaceful protests in spite of the government’s heavy-handed response.

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24 Al-Wefaq held 18 seats in the parliament but resigned them during the height of the February 14th demonstrations. Akbari and Stern, The Triangle of Conflict, 21 and 35.


27 Alfoneh, Between Reform and Revolution, 6. In 1994, at the age of 29, Sheik Salman was arrested alongside Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri who was pardoned by Emir Hamad in 1999. Sheik Salman was a leader in youth riots protesting the decline in the standard of living that affected the Shi’a more than the Sunni elites.

protests as proving the monarchy’s inability to deal with the true democratic desires of
the people. He has urged his followers to continue their protests, “Let’s make it very
clear to the whole world that the people of Bahrain are protesting in a peaceful and
civilized manner, whilst the regime is confronting these protests with excessive
violence.”

Under martial law (March 15-June 1, 2012) dozens of Shiite mosques were
destroyed and a number of protesters died in jail. In anticipation of new protests
following the lifting of martial law, Sheik Ali Salman rearticulated the demands of the
opposition. “We want a constitutional monarchy, not a republic. We are for gradual
move to a democratic system we are not against the ruling family.” The monarchy has
maintained that their concern is that Iran has been an instigator and motivator of the
opposition. Sheik Salman responds to such accusations saying, “We have national
demands that have nothing to do with Iran. We are proud of being a sensible, mature and
progressive political movement that doesn’t need to take instructions from Iran or any
other country.”

Sheik Salman’s demands have continued to emphasize peaceful action.

Killing is refused in our religion. We don’t want to kill anybody. The
only group that wants to do killing is this regime. Our blood is valuable.

29 “Sheikh Ali Salman Calls For Continuation of Peaceful Movement,” Bahrain Justice and
misrepresenting the protests citing news organizations, like the BBC, who reference the
demonstrators’ use of Molotov cocktails. In fact, Salman argues, there are tens of thousands of
protesters who are not violent, but the reporters focus on the occasions of violence that do not
represent the whole of the movement. He urges the demonstrators to present themselves so
peacefully that the media cannot but report on the peaceful protest.

30 Andrew Hammond, “Interview - Bahrain Shi’ite Leader Says Backs Royal Family,” Reuters,
May 29, 2011.

31 Ibid.
It is true that we are in a middle of a battle but our blood and pain has value. What we need is wisdom and political forecasting. The strongest path to victory is the one where people adhere to a peaceful approach, whilst insisting on their demands.\textsuperscript{32}

He argues that the regime attempts to falsely portray the movement as one of violence, sectarianism and with a desire to overthrow the monarchy. In fact Al-Wifaq has stated their demands in the Manama Document. In it, the opposition makes five demands: 1) an elected government; 2) fair electoral districts which meets the “universal principle of one person, one vote”; 3) a parliament with a single chamber for legislative and regulatory powers; 4) a trustworthy judicial system; 5) a security structure (police and military) for all with training in human rights.\textsuperscript{33} The movement must not give room to claims of violence, sectarianism or revolution. It must be so peaceful that the whole world witnesses its peace. In a speech on June 11, 2012 Salman proclaimed:

\begin{quote}
I do not like to hear “down with someone” or “death to someone”. It's a request for the sake of our uprising and our wisdom. Just to let you know (Field) Marshall... we are all children of the Prophet Mohammed and his family; children of the best human brought to this earth. You have to know that we have been raised to prepare for death. You have to know that with only two words of a Fatwa, this nation would give tens of thousands to martyrdom. What I say is not about adopting force, nor is this a threat or challenge. We are right and you treated us with injustice, so do not ever think that what you have done will stop us from demanding our rights... you can never break a civilized nation that is insistent on getting its rights. There is no special benefit for Shi’ites only, or Sunni’s, or Islamists, or Liberals. Freedom and democracy will achieve in our country soon.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Bahrain Justice and Development Movement (June 7, 2012).

\textsuperscript{33} A translation of the full text of the Manama Document is available on the Al-Wifaq website: \url{http://alwefaq.net/index.php?show=news&action=article&id=5934}.

Al-Wifaq’s leading influence may be due to the support the opposition group receives from the highly respected Sheikh Isa Qassim. According to a document made public by WikiLeaks, Sheikh Isa Qassim is considered the most respected cleric in Bahrain. The WikiLeaks document, dated July 8, 2008, quotes Sheikh Isa as having declared “If Sunnis were the ones discriminated against, I would stand up for them more than I stand up for Shi’a.”

WikiLeaks also notes that Bahraini citizens will not tolerate insult to Sheikh Isa Qassim and respect him for his consistent support even when outside of Bahrain. In 2003, Sheikh Qassim led a nationwide demonstration, uniting Shi’a and Sunni, against the US invasion of Iraq and other peaceful protests during the US offenses of the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

Sheikh Qassim has been outspoken on the non-sectarian approach to the opposition protests. He has demanded an approach to collective action that addressed the lack of representation and social inequality as a situation harmful to all Bahrainis and not in terms of Shi’ites verses Sunnis. Soon after the demolition of Pearl Roundabout, in his March 4, 2011 Friday sermon, Sheikh Qassim reiterated the common religious virtues used in peace building saying: “The criteria that govern our movement are the principles

35 Alfoneh, 6. Sheikh Ali Salman was studying in Qom and more interested in soccer than politics until he was “deeply moved” by a religious and political talk given by Sheikh Qassim in 1985. Sheikh Qassim claims that he remains outside politics, yet his support for reform is clear in his Friday sermons.


37 Ibid. Alfoneh, Between Reform and Revolution, 2-3. Qassim’s theological studies were in the Shi’a city of Najaf, Iraq in the 1960’s, a time and place of high Shi’a idealism.

38 Ibid., 7.

of the Sharia – justice, the national interest, national unity and non-sectarianism.”

Sheikh Qassim’s Friday sermons continue to articulate a vision of a peaceful popular movement that demands the government address the concerns of the people. In October of 2012 Sheikh Qassim posited what he saw as “two logics” at play in Bahrain. One, he said, is the “logic of unilateral authority” which uses politics as a tool to control people, keeping them ignorant, engaging them into “chaos and bloody fights according to (the authorities’) needs.” The other, he says, it the “logic of reason, conscience and religion.”

This second logic is the one of the people who yearn for freedom. It is neither violent nor vindictive. “The peaceful popular movement of the people of Bahrain presented a good example of adhering to the peaceful approach, this embarrassed the authorities that are trying recklessly to drag the people into violence.” Sheikh Qassim goes on to accuse the press of misconstruing his statements to imply he advocates violence.

“Personally” he says “it is impossible for me to call for violence neither directly nor indirectly. My religion is my deterrent, I cannot accept violence against Muslims and all humanity.”

Another theological voice for nonviolence in Bahrain is not a person on the ground today. Grand Ayatollah Muhammad ibn Mahdi Hussaini al-Shirazi was born in Iraq, though he never held Iraqi citizenship. Instead he identified with the city of Karbala.


where he was raised. It was in the Battle of Karbala, in 680, that the grandson of Muhammad (and third imam in Shi’a Islam), Imam Husayn ibn Ali was martyred in a struggle for justice against the Umayyad dynasty. Imam al-Shirazi wrote about what he called the “Islamic movement” to unify all Muslims across nation or territorial boundaries. Key to Imam al-Shirazi’s Islamic movement is the priority of nonviolence. Al-Shirazi wrote that “violence is a part of the army of ignorance.” He saw nonviolence as the condition that can cultivate virtue, bringing sustenance and comfort to the soul. Al-Shirazi refers to nonviolence as a “weapon of the soul… more powerful than the weapon of the body.” Al-Shirazi writes of nonviolence throughout the prophets:

The nonviolence of the prophet Abraham defeated King Nimrod’s violence, and Moses’ nonviolence defeated Pharaoh’s violence, and Jesus’ nonviolence defeated Herod’s violence, and the nonviolence of the Messenger of God defeated the violence of the pagans’ great knights.

He sees the modern day, particularly after the United States used nuclear weapons, and the use of weapons of mass destruction, as calling on nonviolence even more than in the times of the prophets because “the dangers of war have increased in a way unimaginable.” Al-Shirazi looks to three effects of war that are often not considered. First is that war leaves people disabled for the rest of their lives. Second, war has a

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45 Halverson, Searching for a King, 93.


47 Al-Shirazi, War, Peace and Non-Violence, 116.

48 Ibid., 13.
profound economic impact. And third, war causes a decline in civilization “… for warring nations and those connected to them and indeed all the nations of the world.”

War is overcome and peace attained through political, economic and social awareness. These three areas of awareness are central in the Islamic movement that Al-Shirazi advocates.

Al-Shirazi’s life was not without tension. Shi’a clergy were targeted by the Baathist regime in Iraq. In 1969 his older brother, Hassan Al-Shirazi, was arrested and tortured. He fled to Beirut where he was tracked down and murdered by Iraqi agents. Two years later Muhammad Al-Shirazi and his family fled to Kuwait. Following the Iranian Revolution, the Al-Shirazi family moved to Iran however they encountered theological conflicts with Grand Ayatollah Khomeini. Al-Shirazi opposed Khomeini’s ideas of velayat-e faqih (guardianship of the jurist) that, he said, would lead to dictatorship. Instead, Al-Shirazi advocated shurat al-fuqaha (council of jurists), which would allow clerics to be peers with one another without one single authority.

Al-Shirazi was outspoken in opposition to the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). The Khomeini (and later Khamenei) regime began persecuting Al-Shirazi and his followers. Al-Shirazi refused to acknowledge Ayatollah Khamenei’s succession to leadership saying he lacked the religious credentials to hold the office. In 1996, al-Shirazi’s two sons were arrested.

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49 Ibid., 14.
50 Ibid., 17.
51 Halverson, Searching for a King, 96.
52 Ibid., 97.
and tortured by Khomeini’s agents.\textsuperscript{53} Al-Shirazi died suddenly in Qom in December of 2001.

Followers of Al-Shirazi are called \textit{Shiraziyyin}.\textsuperscript{54} In Bahrain, the \textit{Shiraziyyin} have united under the opposition party Islamic Action Society (also called Amal).\textsuperscript{55} On July 9, 2012 Bahrain’s Office of Political Associations Affairs announced the dissolving of the Islamic Action Society, citing “trespasses, breaches of law and violation of peaceful political action practices” as the reasons for the forced disbanding.\textsuperscript{56} The Office of Political Associations Affairs warned other political parties that such disbanding could be imposed on other groups as well. Opposition groups, including rival opposition party Al-Wefaq, expressed outrage at the forced dissolution.\textsuperscript{57} Amal’s chairperson, Mohammad Ali al-Mahfoodh, is currently in prison for what Human Rights Watch calls “speech related offenses.”\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 98.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 97.


\textsuperscript{56} “Bahrain Warns Other Parties After Amal’s Dissolution,” Peace ... Democracy ... Arms Control Weblogs, \url{http://peacelogs.com/bahrain-warns-other-parties-after-amals-dissolution/} (accessed October 29, 2012).


Amnesty International has issued statements concerning Bahrain.\textsuperscript{59} In one statement issued August 1, 2012 Amnesty says “Bahraini authorities have charged, convicted, and imprisoned peaceful protestors following nonviolent criticisms of the government.”\textsuperscript{60} Examples of those arrested include: the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab for a tweet criticizing the Prime Minister and his supporters, medical workers at the SMC for “possession of unlicensed weapons”, “inciting hatred to the regime”, “instigating hatred against another sect”, “occupation of a public building (SMC)”, destroying public property” and “calling for the overthrow of the regime by force”. Amnesty International has concluded that the accusations are unfounded and that the medical workers are imprisoned for frank interviews with foreign media in which the hospital staff accused “the government of gross atrocities against protesters.”\textsuperscript{61} Amnesty International lists additional prisoners of conscience and concerns of torture for other peaceful activists including leaders of the National Democratic Action Society and Bahrain Teachers Association.\textsuperscript{62}

When American journalist, Jen Marlowe, reported on the opposition movement in Bahrain, she identified the rising tension to keep the actions nonviolent. Marlowe interviewed activists, who are largely nonviolent, but she found anger and frustration particularly among the Bahraini youths. Holding a Molotov cocktail “This is not


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
violence,’ one of them insisted. ‘What’s violence is what they use against us, live bullets. We are defending ourselves. We’re not attacking. If they attack us, we respond.’”

Marlowe’s Bahraini guide, activist Jihan Kazerooni, explains “We started peacefully and we want to stay peaceful…. We are trying to advise (the youth) not to hold these Molotov cocktails. But, at the end, I think if the violence (against them) increases, it will be very difficult to control them.”

One additional compounding factor in Bahrain is that, because Shi’a cannot serve in security, most policemen are not only Sunni, but speak Arabic and are foreign born. Unlike other successful nonviolent actions, which have hinged on a recognition of shared humanity, the opposition and the police do not share an emotional bond brought by language, religion or nationalism.

Bahraini Opposition as a Nonviolent Movement

It remains to be seen whether the Bahraini opposition can maintain their nonviolent actions through ongoing frustration and violence inflicted upon them. The advocates of nonviolence have been strong for nearly two years and have kept the movement largely nonviolent. Sheikh Qassim echoes other advocates for what Yoder calls Nonviolent Social Change. Sheikh Qassim seeks to embarrass the regime with the opposition’s consistent nonviolence in the face of violence. Qassim, and others in the nonviolent opposition movement, seek to raise their voices on behalf of the weak in

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64 Diverse representation in the security is one of the reforms sought by the opposition.

65 Akbari and Stern, The Triangle of Conflict, 40.
Bahrain and to draw international media attention to the lack of democratic rights in Bahrain.

*Nonviolent Social Change* hangs on a commitment to common good. Its greatest adversary is the suspicion that justice is sought for one group at the expense of another. *Nonviolent Social Change*, as Yoder frames it, can only take place when dignity and respect are offered to all involved. Today in Bahrain, the conflict is sometimes portrayed in sectarian terms. The Arab Sunnis receive preference from the monarchy and the support of Saudi Arabia (and the United States who houses its 5ᵗʰ Fleet on the island country). Meanwhile, there is concern that greater Shi’a influence would align the country with Iran. In order for there to be nonviolent action that leads to just change, common humanity would need to be put ahead of sectarian favors.

Sheikh Salman, Sheik Qassim and Imam Al-Shirazi each have given voice to the common humanity. There are strong elements of Abu-Nimer’s framework for Islamic Nonviolence. *Pursuit of justice, inclusively and participatory process, quest for peace* are all present in the movement on the ground today. The common humanity emphasised by the religious leaders, recognizes what Abu-Nimer calls the *universality and dignity of humanity*. As the movement soon moves into its second year, this principle as well as *patience* will be called upon all the more.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In November of 2005, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ and the Washington, D.C. based Salam Institute for Peace and Justice released a study on “Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors.”¹ The study examines the role of faith-based, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building in Africa and the Balkans. On the outset, the study intended to only include those actors who were internationally based and Christian, Muslim or multi-faith. The authors (Tsjeard Bouta, S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana and Mohammed Abu-Nimer) reported that they had little trouble finding international actors who were Christian and those who were multi-faith. However, it was more difficult to find international actors who were Muslim. The authors chose to continue as they planned with Christian and multi-faith international actors while including national and local Muslim actors.² The difficulty of finding Muslim actors, even locally, was even more pronounced because Christian and multi-faith non-governmental organizations existed for the purpose of building peace. But Muslim peace building actors do not generally institutionalize because peace building is simply a part of a whole that is each individual Muslim’s responsibility. Moreover, the authors explain, “Many Muslims do not separate Islam from everyday aspects of their lives, they do not


² Ibid., 3.
explicitly refer to their organization or work as specifically ‘Muslim or Islamic’.”³

Individuals, often imams and sheikhs, informally lead most Muslim peace building. So while the Christian and multi-faith actors were international and institutional, the Muslim actors were local and individual.

On a basic level, the study was dealing with an issue of the “etic” approach. The institutes sought information on effective faith-based peace building in order to direct, fund and advise possible donors appropriately. However, the approach they first took, perhaps the only one that could be translated back to the donors, was one of institutional actors. In order to address the gap between the Christian and multi-faith actors and those actors who were Muslim, the authors chose to include the work of individuals, there-by recognizing the differences in approaches across cultures.

The study analyzed the work of 27 different faith-based actors. A few of their actors included:

- The Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) was founded to promote peace and address conflict in Kenya and across Africa. Muslim-based COPA participates in advocacy, education, inter-faith dialogue and promotes traditional Islamic justice called Suluh. One example of their projects was to produce videos (funded by international NGOs) of community based peace building work in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. COPA distributed the videos to those in conflict zones as well as public policy makers.⁴

- In Somalia, Idaacadda Qur’anka Kariimka (IQK) (Holy Koran Radio) is a radio station that airs programs around health and education issues “as well as daily peace messages based on Islamic values for peace, justice and tolerance.” The station focuses on peace efforts, often broadcasting

³ Ibid., 44.
⁴ Ibid., 111-112.
about reconciliation and meetings to produce dialogue. IQK publicizes charitable deeds to encourage more right action. It refuses to broadcast threats.  

- Calling themselves the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre in Nigeria, Christian pastor James Movel Wuye and imam Istaz Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa encourage dialogue, religious harmony and coexistence particularly for youth, women, religious and government leaders. Together they have co-published a book The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict to be a guide for peaceful approaches to conflict based on pages from the Bible and the Qur’an.  

The study’s authors point to developments in conflict resolution that vary across cultures. Muslim societies, in particular, have developed locally distinct tools to address conflict. In the Middle East these mechanisms are called *sulha*. In Kenya and Indonesia they are called *suluh*. And in Bosnia they are called *sulh*. In each case the term comes from the word *sulh*, which means reconciliation and peace building in the Qur’an.  

The authors also point to the role of religious leaders who see religion as an agent for peace. They acknowledge that there are many who are religious leaders but simply think peace keeping means discouraging extremism that could lead to violence. The authors found that there are also those religious leaders who approve of violence. Still, there are those who are what they call “religious change agents”. These are people who are not simply Muslim or Christian actors, but Muslim and Christian peace builders. The authors see these people as the most transformative in society.

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5 Ibid., 119.

6 Ibid., 115-116.

7 Ibid., 12.

8 Ibid., 13.
The importance of strong leadership for the vision of a nonviolent movement is clear in the cases studied in this paper. Abdul Gaffar Khan, Said Nursi, Fethullah Gülen, Sheikh Ali Salman, Sheikh Isa Qassim and even the vision of Muhammad ibn Mahdi Hussaini al-Shirazi influenced and inspired nonviolence and peace building. These are the leaders who see their role as “religious change agents” and frame religious belief in a manor that calls the faithful to action and justice with a nonviolent approach.

Wendy Pearlman poses a significant question in her book *Violence, Nonviolence and the Palestinian National Movement*. Pearlman asks why some movements choose violent tactics while others choose nonviolent. She sees that the impulse of a movement to be violent or nonviolent can ebb and flow depending on other contingencies.\(^9\) Pearlman sought those contingencies which enable a movement to be nonviolent.

Pearlman examines the importance of framing, which she describes as “… the creative endeavor by which entrepreneurs construct ideas and representations that inspire people to take part in collective action.”\(^10\) It was Khan’s framing of Pathan pride that said it was more courageous to be killed for nonviolent action than is was to take up arms and kill out of revenge. Nursi framed modernity in terms of needing to rely on God who is active in modernity, not opposed to it. And Qassim used framing to declare that the government’s use of violence reflects the weakness of their stand against democratic

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\(^10\) Ibid., 5.
reforms. Pearlman uses the term “movement elites”\textsuperscript{11} for those who take responsibility to frame the movement. In this paper, which reflects specifically on the religious dimension of nonviolent movements, the “movement elites” are the “religious change agents” Pearlman describes.

Pearlman devised a method of study called “Organizational Mediation Theory of Protest”. Her approach examines the importance of internal cohesion to a movement’s external strategy. Pearlman found three main factors that enable a movement to be nonviolent. The first factor is cohesive leadership. Clear goals and inspiration to work together are the key characteristics a leading body must supply. A movement needs one unifying body to set the agenda and to speak clear vision, especially in critical moments. The next factor Pearlman identifies is strong institutions. She defines institutions as “structures and norms that govern interaction”. Institutions govern the understanding of the movement’s parameters. Their strength is in their stability while being “increasingly adaptable, complex, autonomous, and coherent.” For Pearlman, the institution allows rival actors to commit to the same movement as long as they submit to the policies understood by the whole. A strong institution’s individual actors let go of autonomy in order to participate in collective action. Finally, the third factor in a movement’s cohesion that supports nonviolence is collective purpose. Pearlman says that the inspiration of collective purpose may be dependant on the leadership. It is the collective

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
purpose that defines the movement and carries it in the direction to which the population understands and commits.12

Pearlman uses Organizational Mediation Theory of Protest to examine the Palestinian National Movement over chapters. Each chapter covers a period of time in which the cohesion of leadership, institutions and collective purpose vary. In these periods the level of violence varies as well. Pearlman does not emphasize the religious motivations of the movement.13 Religious values may influence nonviolent or violent behavior, but Pearlman looks at the cohesion of the movements to better correlate with its nonviolence.14

In her analysis of the Palestinian National Movement, Pearlman identifies phases of violence and nonviolence among the Palestinians. Under British rule, most demonstrations remained nonviolent. With the establishment of the state of Israel, the Palestinians became a stateless nation. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) sought to unify the movement (not necessarily through nonviolence). However, outside state actors, failure to negotiate with Israel, and ideological diversity undermined the

12 Ibid., 9-10.

13 Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peacebuilding, 179. Abu-Nimer’s study of Palestinian nonviolence found that religiously based programs, coordinated by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, lead to divisiveness and often resulted in violence. Instead, Abu-Nimer says “They concentrated on one of Islam’s strengths: its focus on the practical and the everyday. That is how Palestinians express their comprehension of nonviolence: in the actions and restraints of the Intifada, not in formulations of principles.”

14 Pearlman, Violence, Nonviolence, 2.
public’s clear collective purpose. The movement lost cohesion. Rival actors emboldened to seek public support turned to force.\textsuperscript{15}

The twenty years before the First Intifada brought a resolution of purpose and established strong institutions. Under strong PLO leadership there was unity among the actors toward nonviolent strikes, unified boycotts and protests.\textsuperscript{16} The PLO held the authority to enter dialogue with Israel and the United States. However, the arrests, killing and deportation of Intifada leaders caused fragmentation. As Pearlman’s Organizational Mediation Theory explains, the fragmentation brought frustration and increased violence to the Palestinian National Movement.\textsuperscript{17}

Pearlman continues to follow the trend of the Palestinian National Movement through times of cohesion and fragmentation and the nonviolence and violence that follows. The fragmentation and rivalry within the movement can be reflected in the external interactions so that “… when Hamas carried out suicide bombings… it did not act only in opposition to the peace process. It was also driven by its competition with the PLO”.\textsuperscript{18} Frustration and disenfranchisement so increased with the fragmentation that, by the Second Intifada, young men often saw violence as the only option to have their voice heard.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 91-92.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 122. Molotov cocktails, throwing stones and burning tires were a part of the Palestinian protest. However, Pearlman clarifies, lethal violence was not a part of the Palestine institutional understanding.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 121-122.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 148.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
When analyzing the Palestinian National Movement as Pearlman has, the role of leadership, institutions and purpose toward a successful nonviolent movement is striking. Pearlman does not mention the usefulness of religion in producing a common purpose. However, the need for cohesion in leadership, the establishment of an institution\(^{20}\) and the importance of purpose is clear in the cases of the Khudai Khudmatgar, the followers of Nursi and Gülen and the Bahrain opposition movement.

The Khudai Khudmatgar relied on the vision of Khan to frame the understanding of the movement. Khan’s emphasis on forgiveness helped to overcome the fragmentation that had divided Pathan society for so long. His vision of a unified Pathan people who were committed Muslims and who wanted best for one another and autonomy from the British, provided the common purpose for the movement. Institutionally, the Khudai Khudmatgar were committed to prayer and patience in the way of the Prophet as Khan framed it. Islam played a central role in the cohesion of the Khudai Khudmatgar movement. The nonviolence of the Khudai Khudmatgar has been one of a virtuous minority. Through their commitment, others have seen the creed of nonviolence demonstrated among Muslims.

Those who follow the philosophies of Nursi and Gülen demonstrate the Muslim understanding of peace building as Abu-Nimer frames it. Gülen provides the current vision for the movement that is traced back to Nursi. There is an institutional understanding of the “middle way” of moderation and tolerance. In the movement the

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 185.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 10. Using the term “institution” as Pearlman uses it “… structure and norms that govern social interaction.”
individual submits his or her autonomy in order to contribute to the collective good. The common purpose of demonstrating Islam through “positive action” and a priority for dialogue gives cohesion to the movement. The Gülen movement has not faced strong oppositional force. The movement appears to have cohesion of leadership, institution and purpose. It serves as an example of Nonviolent Muslim Cosmopolitanism.

Finally, the Bahraini movement for democratic reform is a current nonviolent movement under strong governmental resistance. Maintaining internal cohesion will be a challenge for the opposition leadership. There is tension in its ranks, especially among the frustrated youth who are becoming impatient for change.21 In looking at Pearlman’s requirements for a movement to remain nonviolent, the leadership, institutions and common purpose must be examined. This paper has examined religious leadership. Sheikh Salman and Sheikh Qassim have strongly supported nonviolence. Secular voices of leadership have also demonstrated the priority of nonviolence.22 Cohesion of common purpose may prove to be an issue for the leadership. The religious leaders have stated they only seek democratic reform and not an end to the monarchy. But with continued frustration and the government’s own fragmentation, some of the opposition has begun to doubt the role of reform. The issue of a common purpose is compounded by accusations of sectarian motives. Thus far, the cohesion has been maintained at least to the point of

21 Ibid., 4. Pearlman makes the interesting note that in some conflicts, such as the Palestinian National Movement, the use of nonlethal weapons (such as Molotov cocktails) is a step toward violence. Whereas, in other conflicts, such as Bahrain, nonlethal is a step away from nonviolence. “For movements that espouse armed struggle, a shift toward stone throwing represents a decrease in the violent character of protest. For movements committed to electoral politics, the opposite is the case.”

22 Amnesty International, Implementation.
resisting large-scale violence against the government. Should a segment of the opposition alter the purpose to that of a revolution, it will be more difficult for the current leadership to maintain a movement for nonviolent social change.

Three cases of religiously based nonviolence were presented in this paper. In the case of the Khudai Khudmatgar, the key to nonviolence was reconciling with one another and committing to the patience required for the effects of the movement to grow. The Gülen movement, and others who have followed Nursi, adopt an understanding of the world as one in which dialogue will build relationship. Such a movement might be called *Nonviolent Muslim Cosmopolitanism*. Finally, the Bahraini opposition movement is one of Nonviolent Social Change in which the faithful commit to inclusive and democratic participatory process. These types are not the only Muslim approaches to nonviolence. Still they are three examples that have, or still are, playing themselves out in our far too violent modern world.
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