THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE MODERN ERA:
A STUDY OF FOUR REFORMERS

by

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(Under the Direction of ALAN GODLAS)

ABSTRACT

The nature of Islamic approaches to governance has changed rapidly in the 20th century. From the 18th century, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, laid the religious foundation of a theocratic state (centered on a monarchy) that has dominated Islam. Reacting to the encroachment of the West on Egyptian society, Sayyid Qutb argued for the necessity of the use of *jihad* as means to propagate Islam. Said Nursi also reacted to the incursion of the Western world upon Turkish culture, countering with a one of non-violent struggle against such forces. From the foundation established by Said Nursi, Fethullah Gülen has advocated for a system of republican democracy that represents a potential sea change between the historic polemic relationship between Muslim Societies and the West. If successful, dictatorships and monarchies in the Middle East could be challenged with a paradigm shift away from their powers and towards democracy.

INDEX WORDS: Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, Wahhabism, Bediuzzaman Said
                 Nursi, Ottoman Empire, Tanzimat, Sultan, Mustapha Kemal
                 Ataturk, Muslim Brotherhood, Said Qutb, Gamal Nasser,
                 Milestones, Fethullah Gülen, Gülen Movement, AK Party, Turkey

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DEDICATION

This work would not have been a reality if it had not been for the inspiration of two key figures in my life. The first is my best friend and mentor, Joe Caruso. Three years ago I set a course that would radically alter my life. I determined to expand my life experience and worked towards a Masters in the field of Islamic Studies. The process has been rewarding as well as challenging. Throughout the experience it was Joe, more than any other person, who kept me pushing forward. His unwavering support and confidence in my ability to attain what I had set out to achieve has been the biggest single factor in my success here at UGA.

The second person I would like to dedicate this work to is Muhammad Islam, the Muslim cleric who spent hundreds of hours teaching me about the faith of Islam. His beautiful example of kindness, love and patience, has inspired and humbled me. It was Muhammad Islam who first suggested I ought to somehow utilize the knowledge I had gained in my life, lest it go for naught. If it were not for the day he came to my house to suggest challenging myself to go further in my life, I do not think that I would have ever had the inspiration to come back to school in my mid 40's.

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During my first year of school, Jane Pearce, Michael Ward, and Chael Mizell assured that I did not have a complete nervous breakdown and carried me through much of 2008/2009. Of particular note is Kristen Cox. The friendship I have developed with her has been nothing but a great experience for me. I owe her a debt of gratitude which I will never be able to repay.

My second year experience has been greatly enhanced by the friendship of Maryam Shaheen. I know of no other person who has figured out how to push my buttons better than her. Funny and intelligent, my conversations with her have made me grow. Similarly, lunches with Jonathan Brown during my second year have enhanced my experience. I hope and pray that this serious young man will grow in his ability to relax and have a sense of humor. We can all wish for something!

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I: Introduction

  In the modern era, the disparate constructions of Islamic thought and application in governance reflect the historical diversity of approaches towards the nature of faith and the role it plays in the structure of Muslim societies. During the pre-Colonial, Colonial and post-Colonial periods, this diversity has produced multiple camps, often in opposition to one another. By contrasting a select group of Muslim theological leaders and the movements that they inspired during this time frame, it will be demonstrated that in the current post-Colonial period the decisions made within Islamic societies vis-à-vis theology and governance and the subsequent reaction to these ideas by the rest of the world will be significant factors determining the nature of the relationship between the West and the Muslim societies, thus diminishing the historical animosities that have often plagued these societies and hence leading towards a reduction of violence and warfare.

  With the rise of the Arabian leader Muhammad b.ʻAbd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), the historic pluralistic nature of Islam would be challenged by his definition and application of the Islamic belief in the oneness of God (*tawhid*). Striking out at any other approach within the Muslim society (*umma*), Muhammad b. ʻAbd al-Wahhab led campaigns against those whom he deemed apostates of Islam (*takfir*). This unique approach towards the concept of *tawhid* became and continues to be the official state theological doctrine of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The implications of Muhammad b. ʻAbd al-Wahhab's practices are an example of an exclusivist approach to the practice of Islam, set against more pluralistic perspectives.

Subsequent to Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab, reacting to the rise of the West and modernity[1] in the 19th and 20th centuries, two activists and writers can be seen as demonstrating opposite conclusions to similar contexts. Living during the late Ottoman period and the rise of the Turkish state, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (d. 1960) sought to revitalize the Islamic faith using the power of science, reason, and piety as answers to a massive campaign to suppress the practice of the faith within the Turkish state. His reaction of "scholarly *jihad*" argued for a non-violent reaction to this suppression. With his collection of epistles written to his students and followers (*Risale I-Nur*), the *umma* was to maintain, and set, by example, the foundation for a modern day revival of Islam within modern Turkey. Across the Mediterranean Sea, an Egyptian writer, Sayyid Qutb (d.1966), reacted to similar forces of modernity and oppression by putting forth the idea that the Western model of economics, based upon materialism, lacked the base and morality and ethics, and subsequently, the model for social justice lay solely in the of the universal application of an Islamic state. In contrast to Said Nursi, Sayyid Qutb advocated a position of offensive *jihad*, if necessary, to enforce this system of justice upon the world. Although his position caused an internal split within the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Sayyid Qutb can be seen as a foundation for what many refer to today as "political Islam."

With these three different views of Islam in place, the current era can be explored through the thoughts of M. Fethullah Gülen (b. 1938) and the workings of the organization he has inspired, the Gülen Movement. Originating in Turkey, Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement advocate for an Islamic "middle way" of practicing

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[1] "Modernity" will be defined as the colonial and post-colonial period and the subsequent influence of colonization on the reformers and societies featured in this thesis.

religion and in the interaction between religions and societies. Seeking to create an atmosphere of interfaith understanding through dialogue, Fethullah Gülen advocates that through education and faith, this "dialogue of civilization" will lead to a rich cultural development of understanding which will usher in an era of reduced violence. Through the use of his economic resources, Gülen's vision of the role of the Turkish "middle way" has begun to shift the trend (inspired by modernity) away from the suppression of faith within Turkey and towards a new political alignment that can alter the direction of the historical animosities between the West and the Muslim societies.

During the 2003 elections in Turkey, Fethullah Gülen used his media service, Zaman, in order to endorse a newly established political party, the "Justice and Development" party (AK Party).[2] The AK party, although not officially involved with the Gülen Movement, represents many of the goals and aspirations of the movement's ideals. As the world watches the rise of the AK party in Turkey, the historical importance of this event should be noted: With the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, and the subsequent rise of Wahhabism, "political Islam," and various other polemical Islamic approaches, the AK party, which seeks to be a bridge between the West and the Muslim world, symbolizes the potential of a new era in the dynamics of international relations.

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[2] AK is derived from the Turkish name of the party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)*.

II: Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and Wahhabism

Two decades after a pivotal defeat of the Ottoman army at Vienna in 1683, a storm was brewing on the Empire's Eastern frontier. This challenge came from the Arabian Peninsula in the form of a religious leader and visionary named Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. Born in 1704 in the Najd region of Arabia, the revivalist challenge he presented as a theological construct marked a seed change in faith that eventually came to dominate the way the Islam is practiced for millions of Muslims in the current era. Armed with both the sword and religious zeal, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab sought to the take the *umma* back to the era when he believed true Islam had been practiced: the time of the *salaf*. Any deviation from his perceived ideal often lead to the charge of apostasy (*takfir*) against those who opposed his views, leading to the deaths of thousands of Muslims.[3]

A study and analysis of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and the movement that was influenced by his teachings must begin by an acknowledgement of the problematic nature of knowing and contextualizing the biography of his life. Sources from his lifetime are rarely, if ever, without bias. The biographies written by his supporters read as propaganda whereas those who opposed him are equally biased accounts of his life which condemn the man and his teachings and practices. From this perspective, it serves to put the events of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's life together by sketching out what these opposing sides agree upon concerning him. With this brief biography in place, the

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[3] For an historic recount of the warfare perpetrated by the Wahhabi movement see: George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004).

process of unpacking his ideas within the context of the time and his background can lead to a clearer understanding of what he espoused and how it impacts the world today.

Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab: A biographical sketch

At the turn of the 18th century the Najd region of the Arabian Peninsula was an area of tribal factions which were warring with one another for supremacy. Ruled by 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad of the house of Mu'ammar, the warring nature of the relationships between neighbouring towns was customary for the region. In 1702, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab was born in the town of al-Uyainah in this region.

The father of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's was Shaikh 'Abd al- Wahhab b. Sulayman. His father, trained in the Hanbali School of Islamic law (*fiqh*), was the town judge (*qadi*) of Al-Uyainah. 'Abd al-Wahhab b. Sulaiman raised two sons with an education that focused on traditional Islamic sciences, teaching them commentary of the Qur'an (*tafsir*) and the study of the sayings of the Prophet (*hadith)*. By the age of ten, Muhammad b. 'Abd al- Wahhab had memorized the Qur'an (*haviz*) and, having completed his education at the age of twelve, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab proceeded to perform the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina (*hajj*).

After the *hajj*, Muhammad spent two months in Medina where he was a student of Shaikh 'Abd Allah b. Ibrahim b. Saif and Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi, both scholars of *hadiths*.[4] While in Medina, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab examined the life and works

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[4] It is not agreed upon by scholars exactly what Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab was taught by these Shaikh's; while official Saudi Arabian sources speak from an authoritative perspective, the analysis that will follow this biographical sketch will demonstrate that this issue is open for debate. For an example of an official Saudi Arabian source see: George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004).

of Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. Taymiyah (d. 1328), a 14th century scholar.[5] With the

theological positions that Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab eventually came to espouse,

the influence of ibn Taymiyah can be seen: Both scholars focused much of their attention

on innovation in the religion (*bid'a*), partnership with God *(shirk)*, the oneness of God

(*tawhid*) as well as the declaration of apostasy (*takfir*).[6] These tenants comprise the core

concepts of Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab's theological doctrine.

Upon the completion of his education in Medina, Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab

moved to Basra. It was in Basra that he began to publicly proclaim his mission: to unify

the *umma* under his vision of *tawhid*. With his initial preaching (*da'wa*), a small group of

converts joined him, establishing the initial foundation of what is now modern day

Wahhabism. While in Basra that Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab was exposed to a

significant shi'a population. Witnessing shiʿism and finding its idea an anathema,

Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab launched a polemic attack on the local religious scholars

(*ulema)*, and the sufi and shiʿa minority, which lead to his violent expulsion from the city.

From Basra, Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab migrated to the town his father had

immigrated to, Huraimila. Entering a period of self censorship,[7] Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-

Wahhab utilized his time to write *Kitab at tawhid* (the book of the oneness of God),

which outlined his beliefs on *tawhid* and the practices of Islam. Citing the Qur'an and the

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[5] Ibn Taymiyah lived during a period in which Mongol rule was dominant in much of the Eastern Islamic empire. Opting to live under the traditional Mongol legal code (*Yassa*) as opposed to the *Shariah*, the Mongol rulers came under a theological attack by ibn Taymiyah. Rejecting the four schools of Sunni Jurisprudence (*madhab*), ibn Taymiyah formulated his position around the time of the original generations of the Islamic societies (*salaf*); any position that countered that of those held during the time of the *salaf* was deemed heretical innovation (*bid'a*).

   With the charge of *bid'a* against the Mongol leaders, as well as other Muslims, ibn Taymiyah utilized the declaration of apostasy (*takfir*) against those whose position did not conform to his views.

[6] After the biographical sketch, analysis will demonstrate some key differences between these two men on these issues.

[7] The nature of this censorship is debated, but will be explored as a necessary key to understanding the controversial nature of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's works.

Sunnah in each chapter, he commented upon the "Important issues of the Chapter."[8]
Sixty seven chapters of this text were devoted to *tawhid,* whereas other chapters warned
against those practices that he argued were not in accordance with the faith. Muhammad
b. 'Abd al-Wahhab defined twenty one different factors comprising *tawhid*: (including)
the recognition of God's rights over mankind; the acknowledgement that all Prophets had
given the same message of *tawhid*, as well as the importance of having proper fear of
God (*taqwa)*. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab further defined what constitutes *bid a*
(innovation) and *shirk* (placing partnership with God) in Islam. Addressing issues that he
viewed as plaguing the Arabian Peninsula, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab pointed to the
practices of: worshipping at shrines of saints,[9] seeking the blessing through sacred trees
and stones,[10] talismans[11] as well as the proper locations for the sacrificing of animals.[12]

      With the passing of his father in 1740, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's self-
censorship ended. He began to espouse his views publicly in Huraimila, converting some
in the community. As with his previous attempt at *da'wa*, elements within the town's
ulema opposed his intolerant practices. Unlike in Basra, where he was expelled, the
leaders of Huraimila viewed his mission as dangerous, so an attempt was made on his life
during the Friday congregational prayer.[13] This failed attempt forced Muhammad b. 'Abd
al-Wahhab to flee once again, this time to the town of al-Uyainah. At al-Uyainah,
Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab sought the support of the local leader, Uthman b.
Mu'ammar (d.1750). This alliance would foreshadow the structure that Muhammad b.

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[8] Sheikh-ul-Islam Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhab, *Kitab al-Tawhid* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996), 20.
[9] Ibid., 82.
[10] Ibid., 49.
[11] Ibid., 46.
[12] Ibid., 50.
[13] George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004), 43.

'Abd al-Wahhab needed in order to enforce his practices on the people of the Arabian Peninsula.

The alliance with Uthman b. Mu'ammar gave Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab a much needed resource that he had lacked before: an army. Uthman b. Mu'ammar, being a regional leader, had at his disposal an army, which he gave Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab access to. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's first demonstration of his opposition to the practice of *shirk* was to cut down a sacred tree referred to as "The Tree of Quraiwah."[14] His second action, using Uthman b. Mu'ammar's army as backup, was to destroy the shrine of Zayd b. al-Khattab, another demonstration against the practice of *shirk*.[15] But it was his third act that broke the alliance of the two men and shocked the regional governor. Although the circumstances are not agreed upon by scholars, it is agreed upon that Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab ordered the stoning of a woman who was a confessed adulteress.[16] The event led to the regional governor ordering Uthman b. Mu'ammar to execute Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. Refusing this order, Uthman b. Mu'ammar instead allowed Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab to flee the town with a small armed contingency escorting him to the town of his choosing.

Intentionally seeking out an alliance with Muhammad b. Sa'ud, the leader of the town of al-Dir'iyah, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab solidified a political and religious structure that would last into the current era. This alliance, similar to that of the alliance Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab had with Uthman b. Mu'ammar, allowed for the political

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[14] George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004), 44.

[15] Ibid., 45.

[16] For a comparative analysis of both perspectives of this incident see: Natana J. Delong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) as well as the counter viewpoint: Hamid Algar. *Wahhbism: A Critical Essay* (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2002).

governance of this new movement to be dictated by Muhammad b. Sa'ud and his

decedents, while the theological construct of this state would be determined by

Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and his decedents. Solidifying the agreement,

Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab stated to Muhammad b. Sa'ud, "Blood with blood, ruin

with ruin."[17] In 1745, an expedition against a roving band of Bedouins took place under

the guidance of Muhammad b. Sa'ud and his army. This marked the first military attack

by the Sa'ud/Wahhab alliance.

What is important to note is that from this point, the reformist movement started

by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab stood above competing reformist movements in its

aggression. While there were always historically warring factions in Arabia, his

movement used the declaration of *takfir* against entire populations of cities that were

already Muslim. Idolatry became a sin punishable by death. Although never one to

participate in battles, it was Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's religious interpretations

that set the foundations for the escalation of this violence. From 1745, a litany of battles

can be attributed to the Wahhabist movement: the 1748, raid on al-Riyad; the 1748 raid

on Tharmida and al-Riyad; the 1750 raids on Tharmida and al-Riyad:1751 al-Zulfi; 1752

al-Kharj, 1755 Huraimila, and in 1773 the capture of the eventual capital city of Saudi

Arabia al-Riyad (Riyadh) by the son of Muhammad b. Sa'ud[18].

This basic outline of the life of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab provides a

framework from which to analyze key elements of his life and religious views: What was

the nature of the relationship with his father and brother and how can this provide us with

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[17] George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004), 51.
[18] Ibid., 133-137.

a contextual understanding of the nature of his reforms? What was the reasoning behind his censorship? What can be gleaned from an analysis of the two Shaikhs he studied with in Medina? How closely do the ideas of ibn Taymiyah and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab parallel? What were their key differences? With these answers, a comparison can be made of the methodology and theology of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and modern day Wahhabism and the state of Saudi Arabia.

A Biographical analysis of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab

The relationship between Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahab with his father can begin to show the problematic nature of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's reforms. After being forced to leave Basra, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab moved to Huraimila, to live in the city with his father. Prior to this time, his father had been the town *Qadi* in al-Uyainah, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's place of birth. The move by his father was prompted by a personal conflict with the new leader of al-Uyainah, Muhammad b. Ahmad, the grandson of 'Abd Allah b. Mu'ammar, the town leader who had appointed Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's father. Although the nature of conflict between these men is not certain, what is of note is that upon his arrival to the town of Huraimila, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab began his public *da'wa* again. Fearing that his son's attempt to change people who may not want to change could endanger them both, his father was the one who asked Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab to censor himself, which he agreed to, until the time of his father's passing.[19] A historical pattern is starting to emerge: two cities (Basra and Uyainah) had expelled Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab for his *da'wa*; his

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[19] George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004), 37.

father had asked for his son's self censorship, and then his brother, Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, became one his earliest critics.

In his polemic work, *al-Sawaiq al-Ilahiyya Fi al-Radd Ala al-Wahhabiyya*, Sulayman attacked his brother's qualifications as a religious authority.[20] Sulayman's key points of contention against his brother were: There are eleven qualifications of a *mujtahid* (citing Abu Bakr), including expertise in Arabic, the sciences of the Qur'an, *hadiths* and law (*fiqh*);[21] of which Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab was lacking in all categories, disqualifying him from practicing *itjihad* and issuing *fatwas.*[22] The inability to practice *itjihad,* issue *fatwas*, and his refusal to debate scholars who opposed his theological ideas further degraded his credibility as a religious authority.[23] Concerning the declaration of *takfir*, Sulayman challenged his brother on his basis for defining who is and who is not a Muslim. If a Muslim took *shahada*, performed the daily prayers, paid the *zakat*, fasted and went on *hajj*, on what basis did Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab charged a Muslim with apostasy, declared his brother.[24] He challenged his brother to demonstrate historically any Muslim authority that ever pronounced *takfir* on an entire Muslim community and announced them to be in the Abode of War?[25]

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[20] Numerous accounts are available of the conflict between the two brothers. The official Saudi Arabian biographers argue that Sulayman later recanted his views. One account can be found in George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792) and the Beginnings of Unitarian Empire in Arabia* ed. William Facey (London: Arabian Publishing, 2004), 75. Because Sulayman's book has yet to be translated into English, the content of his work for the purposes of this paper is derived from: David Commins, "Contestation and Authority in Wahhabi Polemics," in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the State*, ed. Mohammed Ayoob and Hasan Kosebalaban (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2009), 43-45.

[21] David Commins, "Contestation and Authority in Wahhabi Polemics," in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the State*, ed. Mohammed Ayoob and Hasan Kosebalaban, (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2009), 43.

[22] Ibid., 34.

[23] Ibid., 35.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

Given the fact of the censorship during the latter part of his father's lifetime and his own brother's rejection of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's qualifications and practices, the role of his teachers in Medina also is significant because the helped shape his intellectual his intellectual and theological positions. Much scholarship has been devoted to the study of the influences that Shaikh Abd Allah b. Ibrahim b. Saif and Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi had on Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's vision of theological practices. But from this scholarship, very few concrete conclusions can be drawn because scholars are not in agreement. On one hand, the scholar Ahmad Dallal, writing in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*[26] postulates that the diversity of views espoused by the students of Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi demonstrate a teaching paradigm that would not be supportive of the exclusionary views of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. Whereas, on the other hand, Basheer M. Nafi writing in *Islamic Law and Society,*[27] refutes the position taken by Ahmad Dallal by arguing that the positions held by Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi vis-à-vis his views on ibn Taymiyah, the Sunni schools of jurisprudence (*Madhabs*) as well as *tawhid* and *shirk* are all reflected in the writings of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. Although these contradictory positions seem to lead to an impasse as to the context and influence Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's teachers had upon his positions, the fact that Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi was initiated into a Naqshbandi Sufi order (*tariqa*)[28] should indicate that, although al-Sindi was an influence on his student's thought process, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab demonstrated an

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[26]Ahmad Dallal. "The Origins of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113 no. 3 (Jul-Sept., 1993): 341-359.

[27] Basheer M. Nafi. "A Teacher of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi and the revival of ashab Al-Hadith's Methodology," *Islamic Law and Society* 13, no. 2 (2006): 208-241.

[28] Ibid., 216.

independence of thought and a proclivity towards the rejection of scholarship that sat outside the realm of his own interpretation of faith.[29]

   While studying in Medina, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab explored the life and thoughts of the 8th century Muslim revivalist Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. Taymiyah; Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab placed much merit on ibn Taymiyah's work, even if much of what ibn Taymiyah's beliefs were largely ignored by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. Much research has been done analyzing the influence of ibn Taymiyah perspectives on Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and certainly the two revivalists had commonality in their writings. Both men focused much of their efforts on the concepts of *tawhid, shirk, bid'a* and *takfir*as well as the rejection of the four *madhabs* in favour of the original sources, the Qur'an and the *hadiths*, and the practitioners of the faith during the period of the *Salaf.* But there are distinctions that separate each man as well, especially their views on *bid'a* and *shirk*. On the issue of *bid'a*, traditional scholars (including ibn Taymiyah) categorize *bid'a* into categories, dependant upon the nature of the innovation.[30] These distinctions are as follows: *bid'a* that is good (*hasana*), praiseworthy (*mahmuda*), bad (*sayyi'a*), and blameworthy (*madhmuma*).[31] Muhammad b.   Abd al-Wahhab does not address these categories; instead, he narrows *bid'a* down to aberration (*dalala*).[32] Further, and more importantly, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab argued that *shirk*, according to his definition of the term, led automatically to the charge of

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[29] There is a problematic theological point to the independent thought process of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab as will be shown in the conclusion of this section on the analysis of his life and ideas.
[30] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-Rom, "Bid   a".
[31] Ibid.
[32] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-Rom, "Wahhabiyya".

apostasy,[33] while ibn Taymiyah's position on *shirk* stated that the believer who is practicing *shirk* could be reformed back into the faith.[34]

Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's *Kitab al-Tawhid* reduced centuries of the development of Islamic knowledge into one small volume. Further, the alliance of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab with Muhammad b. Sa'ud led to a campaign of violence against Muslims. We can also see that the conclusions he drew from his education were rejected by his father and brother, did not mesh with his own teachers, and does not precisely reflect the teachings of ibn Taymiyah. In fact, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's brother's charge of a lack of qualifications is demonstrated in *Kitab al-Tawhid*. Throughout Islamic history, scholars have produced voluminous amounts of writings about the Qur'an, Muhammad, *fiqh*, *kalam, tafsir, falasfa,* and *tasawwuf*. These sciences, developed over centuries of scholarship, represent a profound amount of knowledge and approaches to the faith. Set against this example, the seminal work of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, is a short one-volume work, broken into chapters that meagrely manage to cover five pages, at most. He thus stripped the traditions and scholarship down to a reductionist core group of select principals which are at the heart of the issues that the world faces today.

Wahhabism and the Modern state of Saudi Arabia

During the 18th century, the Wahhabist movement strengthened its internal alliance by intermarriage between decedents of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and

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[33] Hamid Algar. *Wahhbism: A Critical Essay* (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2002), 20-21.
[34] Recent scholarship has pointed to the notion that, although historically considered anti-Sufi, ibn Taymiyah, was in fact, opposed to those Sufis that he deemed to have innovated outside the bounds of the practices of the faith, and that ibn Taymiyah, had in fact joined a Sufi order and was buried in a sufi cemetery. See Hamid Algar. *Wahhbism: A Critical Essay* (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2002), 10. See also: Caterina Bori. "A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyah," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 348.

Muhammad b. Sa'ud. While this helped to solidify the structure of the movement, external conflicts with other Arab groups (both ethnic and religious) as well as conflicts with the Ottoman Empire vying for supremacy on the Arabian Peninsula kept the Wahhabist, or any other group, from a position of dominance. This competition throughout the century limited the influence and expansion of the Wahhabist and the theological position that they sought to enforce. The first half of the 20th century saw this waxing and waning of the influence of the movement shift into a direction of dominance for the Wahhabis.

During the Colonial period, the British had made it a policy to undermine the authority of the *ulema* in each of the territories they came to dominate.[35] In effect, the British had, through their imperial quest, destroyed much of the traditional *ulema* of Islam. In the midst of the First World War, the leader of the Wahhabists, Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Saud (d. 1953), sought an alliance with the British in order to strengthen his position against those seeking to weaken the Wahhabist movement. The British, seeking to crush the Ottoman Empire during the conflict, chose to side with both al- Sa'ud and his rival, Hussein b. 'Ali (d. 1931) in an effort to "divide and conquer," using each leader in their campaign against the Ottomans while at the same time maintaining control over the two men and their armies.[36] The British, fearing the zealous nature of the Wahhabists, attempted to strengthen the position of Hussein b. 'Ali,[37] but in a demonstration of inept foresight, the British miscalculated the strength of al- Sa'ud

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[35] To read an analysis of this history, see: Zaman, Muhammad Qasam. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
[36] John S. Habib. "Wahhabi Origins of the Contemporary Saudi State," in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the State*, ed. Mohammed Ayoob and Hasan Kosebalaban (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2009), 62.
[37] Ibid.

army-- The Brotherhood (*Ikwan*). This army, during and after World War I, managed to wage successful campaigns against its rivals in Arabia, including Hussein b. 'Ali, which helped to solidify the position of the Wahhabists on the Peninsula.[38]

With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (and hence, the threat to Wahhabi hegemony) shortly after World War One, the young Saudi state established a basis from which Wahhabi ideals could be propagated. Although having established a foothold in the realm of statehood and international relations, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in its pre-oil infancy, suffered from severe economic turmoil.

While these events propelled the Wahhabist *ulema* into a position of supremacy early in the 20th century, a more significant discovery affected the power structure of the Middle East: the discovery of oil in the 1930's on the Arabian Peninsula. After British negotiations for exploration and drilling rights failed, an American businessman, Charles Crane, successfully negotiated a 30 year contract to explore the Eastern region of the Peninsula.[39] With the oil flowing out of Saudi Arabia, and the money flowing in, the House of Sa'ud and the Wahhabi *ulema* now had the economic resources with which to strengthen their position. In short, the thread of colonialism, modernity, and the West served as a spring board for the reforms of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's vision of a reductionist form of Islamic theology. His often violent polemic against views and practices other than his own, which had never came to dominance until the alliance with the British during WWI, would enter the 20th century having helped to defeat the dominate force in the Muslim world, the Ottoman Empire. Supplanting the authority of

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[38] The *Ikwan*, took their inspiration not only from Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and his campaigns, but also from an the *Khajiri*, a militaristic sect that fought against Ali during his Caliphate.

[39] An important aspect of the contract signed by the American Oil company, Sunco, explicitly states what would become American foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia: Criticism by the contractor of Wahhabism was forbidden and was designated an internal matter for the Kingdom.

the Ottomans, the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia currently uses its resources to propagate Wahhabism globally. Thus, a minority sect from the Najd region of the Arabian Peninsula has radically altered Islam in the contemporary era, setting up challenges for the Muslim world and the globe at large.

III: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Whereas Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's historical biographic accounts are mired in bias, the life of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is well documented which helps to contextualize how the environment in which he lived played a significant role on the development of his thoughts on religion and politics. With the declining Ottoman Empire, Said Nursi advanced a position on the role of governance in the Islamic state, a position that would eventually have three distinct phases. In his initial stage of ideological development, Nursi advocated for a Democratic Republic that enshrined *Shari'a* law in a new constitutional system. Using Qur'anic scripture, Nursi argued that the way forward was through this system that would have at its forefront social justice. With the rise of the Ataturk Government in 1923, and its efforts to suppress religious practices as an answer to modernity, Nursi transformed into the stage of the "New Said," shifting away from the sphere of politics, viewing it as a corrupting influence on the faith and state. The last phase of Nursi's political and religious development (the "Third Said") mixed the concepts of his previous two phases, allowing for political action and involvement, but not at the expense of faith. His advocacy of non-violent resistance towards the reforms of the Kemalist regime allowed Nursi to lead the Islamic community through a time of great oppression, and allowed it to survive. It is through his actions and words that we can see the foundations of an Islamic revival in the modern state of Turkey.

The Tanzimat reforms

        With the challenges rising from the West, the Ottoman Sultan's sought to address the issue of modernity by issuing a set of radical reforms. In 1839, sixteen-year-old Abdul Mejid succeeded his late father in his role as Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. The late Sultan had witnessed the Ottoman Empire decline under his leadership and fall behind a modernizing Europe.[40] The young Sultan sought to resolve the issue of the empire's decline by instituting the "reorganization" reforms (*Tanzimat*).[41] The *Tanzimat* reforms implemented by the Sultan attempted to modernize the Ottoman state on two primarily levels. One was structural, the other culturally. On a structural/economic level, Mahmud II and subsequent Sultans developed a railway system, a banking system with a paper note monetary system, and a university system in the Western secular style of education, as opposed to the traditional religious educational system that had been the primary system in the Ottoman state. But the *Tanzimat* had a far greater impact socially for two primary reasons. One was the replacement of an Islamic code of law with a model based upon the Swiss civil code. This, in turn, had an outcome that split the empire, laying the seeds for dissident and disparate movements to arise. With the gradual switch to the Swiss Code, a major aspect of Ottoman religious identity was replaced, the elimination of the *millet* system that gave special rights to Muslims in the Empire over members of minority religions. The elimination of the *millet* system was opposed by many sides within the Empire. Muslims, losing their privileged status, protested. Non-

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[40] Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morow Quill Paperbacks, 1977), 473.
[41] Ibid., 637.

Muslims, losing their status, were now equal citizens with all the responsibilities that entail, specifically the requirement of military service in the Sultan's army. This inclusion of non-Muslims in the army of the Sultan not only served to anger non-Muslims, it threw the army into a new quandary. How would it be possible for non-Muslims to fight side by side with Muslims in a *jihad* on the orders of the Sultan?

Other aspects these reforms addressed were the Sultan(s)' attempts to modernize and to have a competitive footing with Europe. There were two other motivating facts in play: First, the Sultan, having initiated these reforms in 1839 had taken the Empire into debt to obtain the material aspects of the reforms. This debt was primarily to Britain and France. The second motivating factor was to appease these countries with reforms that would please their foreign offices.[42]

As a result of these reforms, religious and non-religious movements arose in reaction to these historic innovations. Springing from the reforms was the Young Ottomans, a group of reformers/revolutionaries who supported the reforms, but not the monarchy of the Sultan. This group was not solidified in its position on either religion or nationalist identity, but from them came significant contributors towards the changing of the Sultanate and eventually, the Caliphate. One of the primary leaders of the movement was Namik Kemal; heavily influenced by French philosophy and politics, Kemal steered the organization towards a secular constitutional democracy, with the aim of the elimination of the Sultan's power. Namik Kemal led the Young Ottomans in what is referred to as the First Constitutional Era. In 1878 and 1879, the Young Ottomans

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[42] An interesting side note in this history is that, because of the equal status given minorities in these reforms, an early group of Jewish settles were legally allowed to start purchasing land in Palestine in the mid 19th century.

managed to form a parliamentary system of government that was briefly supported by the

Sultan. This period lasted for just over 12 months, but it set the stage for the reformists.

Within the framework of reform and debate during the last decades of the Ottoman

Empire, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born.

The religious development and politicalization of Said Nursi

In the context of the contentious nature of Turkish politics and society, Said

Nursi began his education which would eventually combine both his religious views with

his desire for the knowledge and application of modern science. In his early life,

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was often intellectually confrontational. At the age of nine, he

was given the opportunity to seek out a formal religious education, studying under Molla

Mehmed Emin Efendi at his *medrese* in the village of Tag. Shortly after his arrival, Said

was asked to leave the school because of confrontations he was having with a fellow

student.[43]   Later in his life, he referred to these years as his "(old) Said" phase.[44] Said

Nursi reflected upon this, "When I was ten years old I had great pride in myself, which

sometimes even took the form of boasting and self praise; although I did not want to, I

used to assume the air of someone undertaking some great work and mighty act of

heroism."[45] The tenacious ability to intellectually defend his positions served Said Nursi

through out his life. With this great intellectual capacity[46] he took it upon himself to

study the classical sciences that were not being included in the curriculum of the Ottoman

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[43] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 6.

[44] Jeremry Walton, "Islam in Modern Turkey: An intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi," *The Muslim World* 98 (2008): 389.

[45] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 6.

[46]Ibid., 12.

Empire's *medreses*; these subjects covered chemistry, geography, and mathematics. [47]

His knowledge of Islam and all of its subsequent sciences challenged the authority of the

local *ulema* in Eastern Anatolia. [48] His intellectual reputation in the Kurdish area of the

empire earned him the name Bediuzzaman Said Nursi "The Wonder of the Age" by his

former teacher Molla Fetullah Efendi. [49]

In the late 19th century, Nursi observed the Ottoman elite debating a myriad of

issues. What was the role of religion in the state? How should the Ottoman state react to

modernity and a rising European hegemony?[50] Within the *ulema* there were those who

welcomed the idea of the westernization of the state. [51] Nursi answered these questions by

laying much of the blame at the feet of the *ulem*a, whom he felt had strayed from the

tenets of the faith and, therefore, allowed the practice of Islam to fall out of touch with

the modernizing world. [52] The conflict with the *ulema* prompted Nursi to move to the

town of Mardin where he was introduced to the works of Namik Kemal, a reformer who

had debated many of the merits of the *Tanzimat* reforms decades earlier. In Namik

Kemal's work, "The Dream," he called for "a society and country of the future, which is

free, whose people are sovereign, citizens are educated, and in which full justice and

rights are established."[53] Nursi's reaction to this work was as "Someone who for twenty

years has followed it (freedom--*Hurriyet*--as opposed to despotism) in his dreams even,

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[47] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 28.

[48] Ibid., 17.

[49] Ibid., 13.

[50] Fred A. Reed, "In the Footsteps of Said Nursi," in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 37.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 22.

and had abandoned everything because of that passion."[54] The reforming environment of

Turkish culture woke Nursi to the world of politics.

Nursi envisioned a revival of Islam that combined a constitutional form of

government with Shari'a law.[55] Inspired by the Qur'anic passage,

> It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult with them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in him).[56]

Nursi interpreted this passage as opening the way to a democratic system based upon the

idea of consultation (*shura)*; this system would be implemented using a republican form

of government that included a constitution centered on *Shari'a*. Nursi argued that any

other system could only lead to oppressive despotism, and therefore did not represent the

ideal of an Islamic form of governance: "Despotism is oppression. It is arbitrary

treatment. It is coercion and reliance on force. It is one person's opinion imposed upon

others. It is ground for abuse. It is the basis for injustice. It undermines human dignity."[57]

Although weakened, this was still the time of the Ottoman Empire; it was a

Sultanate, with its various provinces run by local governors. The concepts that Nursi

advocated were perceived by the local governor of Mardin, Mutasarrif Nadir Beyas, as a

threat. Again, as with his earlier experience with the *ulema*, Said Nursi was forced to

move from the town and settled in Van to stay with Hasan Pasha.

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[54] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 22.

[55] Mucahit Bilici, "Said Nursi's Moral Philosophy," *Islam and Christian—Muslim Relations,* 19. No. 1 (2008): 89.

[56] Mushaf Al-Madinah An-Nabawiyah (trans.), *The Holy Qur'an: English translation of the meanings and commentary* (Medina: King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1989), 189-190.

[57] Mucahit Bilici, "Said Nursi's Moral Philosophy," *Islam and Christian—Muslim Relations,* 19, no. 1 (2008): 90.

Nursi's plan in Van was to establish a *medrese* to teach the traditional Islamic sciences as well as the sciences of the modern age. Nursi believed the combination of these traditional and modern sciences were part of the solution to the decay plaguing the empire as well as a response to what he perceived to be the encroachment of Western influence on the Empire.

To establish the *medreses* and to counter the influences of the west, Nursi journeyed to Istanbul to consult with Sultan Abdulhamid. He proposed establishing three *medrese*s in Eastern Anatolia, hoping to achieve his goal of educating young Muslims with the knowledge of Islam and modern science. Science was the key to Nursi, "At the end of time, mankind will spill into science and learning. It will obtain all of its strength from science. Power and rule will pass to the hand of science. Men will find their most effective weapon in eloquent expression."[58] Nursi postulated that as technology advanced, the science of mass communication would take precedence in its ability to influence, and therefore the world could be brought into Islam by using words and deeds alone, which he called "scholarly *jihad*."[59]

The arena of Ottoman politics was exploding with intellectual and reform movements as well as defenders of the traditional structure of the Ottoman state. With the collapse of the 1st Constitutional government (1877-78), a new group of reformers and revolutionaries came into existence; known as the "Young Turks," this group had varying perspectives on the nature of governance in the State. The two major competing concepts that were debated were the nature of Ottoman identity and the role of secularism and

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[58] Sukran Vahide, "Said Nursi's Interpretation of *Jihad*," in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 95.
[59] Ibid.

religion in the state. Of this group, Ziya Gokalp was a revolutionary thinker who rejected a secular model for the state. Instead, he argued for a Turkification of the state, a nationalistic identity with laws that would be based upon the idea of what it was to be Turkish. To Gokalp, there was not to be simply a secular state that gave equal rights to all citizens; rather the Turkish identity would be encoded, enforced, and should permeate the identity of not only the individual but that of the state as well. His works would have a major impact on the eventual leader of the new state of Turkey. Another reformer during this era, Enver (Pasha) Efendi, was in the camp of Gokalp as well. In opposition to the Turkification of the state was Yusuf Ackura, who argued for a secular state with all subjects being equal. Under the umbrella of the Young Turks, these men managed to form a political party known as the Committee of Union and Progress, an organization fundamentally opposed to the direct rule of the Sultan. In 1908, the CUP launched a successful coup and initiated the 2nd Constitutional Era, which limited the power of the Sultan. In 1909, a counter-coup was staged to restore the Sultan to absolute rule. Known as the "March 31st" incident, this revolt was put down by the military leader Mustafa Kemal. These events set the stage for Nursi, in his writings and speeches, to advocate the benefits of democracy, freedom and constitutionalism.

Nursi spoke out about the benefits of a democratic system for the empire and its people, emphasizing a constitutional democracy for the Ottomans ensured the principle of freedom that was a fundamental aspect of Islamic governance guaranteed by the Qur'an. In one of his earliest speeches Nursi spoke of the idea of freedom and Islam,

> Oh Freedom!... I convey these glad tidings to you that if you make the *Shari'a*, which is life itself, the source of life, and if you grow in that paradise, this oppressed nation will progress a thousand times further than in former times. If, that is, it takes you as its guide in all matters and does

not besmirch you through harboring personal enmity and thoughts of revenge…Freedom has exhumed us from the grave of desolation and despotism, and summoned us to the paradise of unity and love of nation. The doors of a suffering-free paradise of progress and civilization have been opened to us…The constitution, which is in accordance with the *Shari'a*, is the introduction to the sovereignty of the nation and invites us to enter like the treasury-guard of paradise. O my oppressed compatriots! Let us go and enter![60]

In this speech, Nursi cited the example of the Japanese, who had taken from the West their sciences and technology, but had preserved their own culture. He urged that this model should be emulated by the Muslim world, in order to further their development while preserving the traditions and beliefs that had made the Islamic world great,

We shall take with pleasure the points of Europe--like technology and industry--that will assist us in progress and civilization. However… we shall forbid the sins and evils of civilization from entering the bounds of freedom and our civilization with the sword of the *Shari'a*, so that the young people in our civilization will be protected by its pure, cold spring of life…[61]

Nursi also issued three warnings to his audience: he advised his listeners to respect any government as it worked towards developing this system; he spoke of the sickness that had infected the empire, the culture, the *medreses*, and the mosques; and he warned the Imams that their mission was to reform themselves, because they had been at the heart of the decline of the Islamic state.[62]

The "Freedom Speech" was repeated on several occasions, setting the groundwork for Nursi's argument advocating a constitutional democracy, a system that had never been attempted by the empire. In Anatolia, the ideas advocated by Nursi gave

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[60] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 54.
[61] Ibid., 54-55.
[62] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 55.

rise to skepticism on the part of the Kurdish leadership whose concern was a lack of

proper representation for the Kurds in the Turkish state.[63] A risk of rebellion was

opening up in Eastern Anatolia. Nursi, a Kurd himself, moved back to Van to allay the

fears of his fellow countrymen.

Knowing the risk of rebellion that was brewing in Eastern Anatolia, Nursi warned

of the failure that would result for the Kurds and for the new government if they took up

arms against the state.

> Oh Kurds! If through relying on force their swords are sharp, your *bey* and
> *agas* and *shaikhs,* will, out of necessity fail. And they will deserve it. But
> if, relying on reason in place of compulsion, they employ love and make
> the emotions subject to the mind, they will not fall; indeed they will rise.[64]

Utilizing aspects of this "Freedom Speech," Nursi laid out his position to the

Kurds addressing three concepts: despotism, freedom, and constitutionalism. The Kurds

were fearful of a lack of representation as well as being concerned with oppression. Nursi

defined his cause by addressing despotism, and argued that the answer to despotism was

the system of constitutionalism and democracy.

> Despotism is oppression. It is dealing with others in an arbitrary fashion. It
> is compulsion relying on force. It is the opinion of one person. It provides
> extremely favorable grounds for exploitation. It is the basis for tyranny. It
> annihilates humanity. It is despotism that reduces man to the most abject
> valleys of abasement, has caused the Islamic world to sink into abjection
> and degradation, which arouses animosity and malice, has poisoned
> Islam—and in fact sows its poison everywhere…[65]

A constitutional system, on the other hand, delivered a system of freedom and

justice, in opposition to despotism.

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[63] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 88.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

> When constitutionalism falls to the lot of a government, the idea of freedom awakes constitutionalism in every respect. It gives birth to a short of constitutionalism in every areas and walk of life, according to the calling of each. It results in a sort of constitutionalism among the *ulema*, in the *medreses* and among the students. Indeed, it inspires a particular constitutionalism and renewal in all walks of life. It is flashes of constitutionalism, then, hinting of the sun of happiness, and inspiring desire, mutual attraction, and harmony, that have caused me to love the constitutional government so much…[66]

A constitution, according to Nursi, results in the freedom spoken of in the Qur'an.

> Freedom is this: apart from the law of justice and punishment, no one can dominate anyone else. Everybody's rights are protected. In their legitimate actions, everyone is royally free. The prohibition, 'Take not from among yourselves as Lord over you apart from God (Qur'an 3:64) is manifested.[67]

Having allayed the trepidations of the Kurdish leaders, and thus avoided a rebellion, Nursi worked towards the foundation of a *medrese*, which he named *Medrestu'z-Zehra*. Even though this *medrese* was never sanctioned by the Sultan and consequently lacked proper funding for the construction of a facility, Nursi garnered a following of students whom he taught his vision for the future of the Islamic faith and the Ottoman Empire. Viewing other *medreses* as having failed the *umma* in their traditional teaching methods,[68] Nursi focused on the revival of Islam by combining science, reason and faith. "Religious sciences are the light of the heart, whereas modern sciences are the light of reason."[69] The students he taught were the initial foundation of a following that became an answer to modernity's encroachment into the Islamic world. Before this happened, though, events were brewing that altered the course of the Ottoman Empire. It

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[66]Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 86.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Fred A. Reed, "In the Footsteps of Said Nursi," in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 37.

[69] Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi "How to Read Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur," in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 89.

was the eve of the "War to end all wars," and the Ottoman Empire, "the sick man of Europe," was in the sites of many of the great European powers. Britain, France and Russia were clamoring to deal a death blow to the historic rival of their own hegemonies.

The First World War and the fall of the Ottoman Empire

With the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, the foundations of hostilities that lead to World War I were set in place. The Ottoman Empire, concerned with the traditional hostilities and intentions of Britain, France and Russia, sided with Germany during the war. World War I marked a similar path for both the State as a whole and the individual of Said Nursi. The encroachment of modernity took the form of open conflict against the Islamic State with the aim of the destruction and dissolution of the Turkish Empire. By the war's end, the Ottoman Empire had been devoured by the European powers, and a seed of radical political reform had germinated in the form of a Turkish General, Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. The effects these reforms had on the former Empire significantly altered the meaning and practice of religion within the borders of the newly founded state of Turkey.

Commissioned at the onset of the war, Nursi volunteered to set up a militia force to fight on the Russian front. This militia was comprised of his students, whom he had armed and trained before the outset of the war. Although Said Nursi and his militia performed many acts of heroism, the Ottoman army was ill-equipped to battle the Russian army. Poor roads led to a lack of communication and a critical lack of supplies; the Russian army eventually overwhelmed the unit. Said Nursi was captured and sent to the prisoner of war camp at Kosturma. Eventually, with the Bolshevik revolution threatening to overthrow the Russian state, unrest and upheaval caused chaos across all

aspects of the Russian front. Said seized this opportunity and escaped from the prisoner of war camp. Nursi traveled back to Istanbul via Vienna and received a hero's welcome. It was June of 1918, and the end of the Great War was only four months away. More significantly, the Istanbul Nursi returned to was a capital city in which vying interests sensed the inevitable collapse of the Empire, each clamoring for political power.

On October 30th, 1918 the Mudros Armistice was signed by the Ottoman government. Three weeks later, fifty-five warships belonging to the allies, four of which were Greek, the Ottoman Empire's traditional rival, anchored off of Istanbul. By the first week of December, the allies had set up a military administration. After centuries of fighting, the Europeans powers had their final victory over the now defunct Ottoman Empire. While some within the former state favored cooperating with the occupying forces,[70] elements of the former national forces, as well as other groups and activists, including Nursi himself, worked against this domination by the Western powers and their allies.

While weapons were being smuggled to Ankara and Anatolia, the staging bases of the national forces and their resistance movement, Nursi challenged the occupiers by writing against their domination of Turkish politics and religion. His aim was to expose the intentions of the British and to challenge those within Turkish society who cooperated with the British. Responding to questions put forth by an Anglican cleric challenging Nursi to defend the faith of Islam, Nursi retorted by first contextualizing the nature of the question by placing the oppression that Turkish society was experience, contextualizing his answer, which allowed him to explain the nature of his religion,

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[70] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 134.

> Someone has thrown you down into the mud and is killing you. Although he is pressing his foot on your throat, he asks mockingly what school of law you follow. The silencing answer to this is to feel the offense be silent, and spit in his face. So not to him, but in the name of truth: 1) Q. What does the religion of Muhammad consist of? A. The Qur'an. 2) Q. What has it contributed to life and thought? A. Divine unity and moderation. 3) Q. What is the remedy for man's troubles? A) The prohibition of interests and usury and the obligatory payment of *zakat*. 4) Q. What does it say concerning the present upheavals? A) 'Man has nought save that [for] which he strives' (Qur'an 53:39). 'And those who amass gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of God; announce to them a most grievous punishment.' (Qur'an 9:34).[71]

Nursi's position against the occupation, and for that matter, Western civilization was centered on his belief that the Europeans had separated religion from their societies and replaced it with a philosophical approach to governance and society. This approach,

> …takes as its point of support force, which manifests itself in aggression. Its aim and purpose is benefit and self-interest, after which everyone jostles and pushes without restraint. Its principle in life is conflict, which manifests itself in contention and discord. The ties between different groups are racialism and negative nationalism, which thrive on devouring others and which are manifested in ghastly clashes. Its alluring service is encouraging lust and passion, satisfying desires, and facilitating the attainment of whims. And as for lust and passion, they make man descend from the level of the angels to that of a beast.[72]

Nursi had grown up during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, and witnessed the domination of the occupying forces. He had argued for a democratic form of governance that could stand as an answer to the problems plaguing the now dead empire. With the rise of Kemal Ataturk, a challenge came from within Turkish culture.

The rise of Kemal Ataturk and the birth of the "New Said"

After a long period of studying Western science and philosophy, Nursi came to the realization that the search for spiritual growth through the study of these perspectives

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[71] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 150.
[72] Ibid., 159.

had led him to study the outside kernel of religion while not developing his inner

perspectives, leaving him with a "dirtied spirit."[73]

> The "old" Said together with a group of thinkers accepted in part the
> principles of human philosophy [as opposed to revealed knowledge] and
> European science, and fought them with their own weapons; they admitted
> them to a degree. They accepted unshakably some of their principles in the
> form of the positive sciences, and thus could not demonstrate the true
> value of Islam. Simply, they supposed philosophy's roots to be extremely
> deep and grafted Islam with its branches, as though they were
> strengthening it. But since the victories were few and it depreciated Islam,
> I gave up on that way.[74]

Nursi struggled with the realization that he had led himself astray in his defense

of the faith and as well as his own spiritual development, "The spiritual darkness arising

from the sciences of philosophy plunged my spirit into the universe, suffocating it.

Whichever way I looked seeking light, I could find no light in those matters; I could not

breathe."[75]

Seeking to find the solution, Nursi isolated himself on the outskirts of Istanbul

where he transitioned into the "New Said" phase of his political engagement. Reading

Futuh al-Ghayb written by Gawth al-A   zam 'Abd al-Qadir Geylani,[76] Nursi undertook

the task of opening himself to a spiritual side that he knew was underdeveloped within

himself. The process was a struggle for Nursi, and one that took several attempts before

achieving the first step. "You first of all find a doctor for yourself, and then try to cure

others,"[77] wrote Nursi about his experience,

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[73] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 164.
[74] Ibid., 164.
[75] Ibid., 165.
[76] An eleventh century (C.E.) Shaykh who lived in Baghdad.
[77] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 165.

> I took him as my doctor and read the book as though it was addressing me. But it was terribly severe; it smashed my pride in the most fearsome manner. It carried out drastic surgery on my soul. I could not stand it. I read half of it as though it were addressing me, but did not have the strength and endurance to finish it. I put the book back on the shelf. Then a week later the pain of that curative operation subsided, and pleasure came in its place. I reopened the book and read it right through; I benefited a lot from that work of my first master. I listened to his prayers and supplications, and profited abundantly. [78]

Working through this transitional phase, Nursi studied Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to facilitate the process of religious self-examination. Reading Sirhindi's epistle, *Letters* (*Maktubut*), Nursi understood the Qur'an to be the light that he had been missing. Recounting the process he had gone through to come to this conclusion, he wrote,

> Sixty years ago, I was searching for a way to reach reality that was appropriate for the present age. That is, I was searching for a short way to obtain firm faith and complete understanding of Islam that would not be shaken by the attacks of numerous damaging currents. First, I had recourse to the way of the philosophers; I wanted to reach the truth with just reason. But I reached it only twice with extreme difficulty. Then I looked and saw that even the greatest geniuses of mankind had gone only half the way, and that only one or two had been able to reach the truth by means of reason alone. So I told myself that a way that even they had been unable to take could not be made general, and I gave it up…Then I had recourse to the way of Sufism and studied it. I saw that it was truly luminous and effulgent, but that it needed the greatest caution. Only the highest of the elite could take it that way. So, saying that this cannot be the way for everyone at this time, either, I sought help from the Qur'an. [79]

In short, Nursi was undergoing a transition, struggling with his religious practices and where they had taken him to this point in his life. During his personal transition, the former Ottoman Empire, under foreign occupation, moved towards re-establishing itself as an independent state. 1917 saw the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. In 1918, a treaty of surrender was signed, and the occupation of the former Ottoman state began. The British,

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[78] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 165.
[79] Ibid., 167.

French, and Greeks sought to divide and eliminate the remnants of the former Empire.

Opening the door for a strategic opportunity, the allies made an attempt to dissolve the

Sultanate in 1920. This decision by the allies opened an opportunity for Mustapha Kemal

to make a grab for power. Under the guise of helping squelch a rebellion in the Western

part of Anatolia, Kemal retooled the army and established Ankara as a base from which

to stage a rebellion against the foreign occupiers. Throughout this process, Said Nursi

supported the rebellion against foreign occupation.

In 1923 Mustapha Kemal Ataturk came to power in Ankara, founding the modern

state of Turkey; not foreseen by Said Nursi was the direction that Kemal Ataturk

envisioned for the newly founded state. Kemal Ataturk, coming from the same camp as

Ziya Gokalp, was working on a state that was based upon the concepts of a nationalist

Turkish identity. Referring to religion as, "a purified corpse which poisons our lives,"[80]

Ataturk undertook a political and military campaign to "modernize" the state and to

suppress its religious identity.

He believed that to modernize, Turkey must throw off the shackles of traditions of

Turkish Islamic practices and culture. From the perspective of Ataturk, Turkey could not

exist in two distinct spheres of influence, that of the secular west and the traditional

orient. He adopted a polemic approach, one which sought a "separation of state from the

institutions of Islam, but also the liberation of the individual mind from the traditional

Islamic concepts and practices."[81] Furthermore, Ataturk sought to use this polemic

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[80]Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997), 65.

[81] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 64.

approach to the practice of the faith with the aim of the suppression of many religious

practices as well as an embracing of his concept of a western secular model.

Having secured the position of President of the new Republic of Turkey, Ataturk

made an attempt to influence Nursi and bring him to the side of the new government.

Understanding the influence Nursi had over his followers, Ataturk invited Nursi to the

capital city where he offered him a government post as a bribe. What Nursi witnessed at

the parliamentary assembly solidified his transition to the "New Said" who rejected

politics and political involvement.

> When I went to Ankara in 1922, the morale of the people of belief was
> extremely high as a result of the victory of the army of Islam…But I saw
> that an abominable current of atheism was treacherously trying to subvert,
> poison, and destroy their minds. "Oh God," I said, "this monster is going
> to harm the pillars of belief."[82]

In Ankara, the clash between Kemal Ataturk and Said Nursi ensued. Ataturk

accosted Nursi after a confrontation between the two in front of the Grand National

Assembly. Ataturk shouted at Nursi, "We are in need of heroic *hojas* like you. We called

you here in order to benefit from your elevated ideas, but you came here and immediately

started writing things about the prayers and have caused differences among us!" [83] To

this Nursi retorted, "Pasha! Pasha! After belief, the most elevated truth in Islam is the

obligatory prayers. Those who do not perform the prayers are traitors, and the opinions of

traitors must be rejected!"[84]

With the elimination of the Caliphate by Ataturk and the Grand National

Assembly in 1923, a series of laws were introduced to enforce their ideas of Turkification

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[82] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 169.
[83] Ibid., 171.
[84] Ibid.

upon the population laws that aimed at diminishing the importance of Islam in Turkish life. In 1924, the function of education was taken over by the state and religious courts were abolished.[85] In 1925, "Hat laws" were passed which banned any traditional Islamic dress, including turbans, which were considered by Ataturk as symbols of Islamic resistance,[86] and replaced it with the requirement of a Western dress code.[87] In the same year, all Sufi orders (*tarikats*) were banned, and many of their *shaykhs* imprisoned. Ataturk viewed the structure and influence of the *tarikats* as a direct threat to these reforms. In 1926, Shari'a law was replaced with the Swiss Civil Code, and in 1928 all mention of Islam as the official state religion was eliminated. Furthermore, Ataturk and his regime instituted laws outside the bounds of Swiss Civil code; these included the restriction of one mosque within any 500 meter radius. Any mosque that violated this law was destroyed or converted to another function. Mosques were forced to issue the call to prayer in Turkish, and the Arabic script was replaced with Latin script. Ataturk instituted "language reform" in which scholars strove to replace words of Arabic or Persian origins with words that had Turkish roots; they also attempted to establish such words of Turkish origin in both scholarly and everyday usage.

"New" Said's argument, the Nur Movement, and the "Risale-I Nur"

The events at Ankara, coupled with the anti-religious reforms of the Kemalist regime, shifted Nursi away from the world of politics. As he had done before, when transforming himself away from the philosophers of the West, Nursi left Istanbul for Van

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[85] Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997), 63.
[86] Ataturk did not, however, ban the veil (*hijab*).
[87] Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997), 63.

to examine his ideas and to instruct his followers. In an epistle to his students, Nursi

stated his new perspective of the current state of politics.

> Believers cannot serve their cause through politics in such stormy
> circumstances. Whatever service is rendered for Islam through politics
> eventually benefits the dominant anti-Islamic system…Engaging in
> politics also divides Muslims into opposing political factions that have a
> negative impact upon our individual hearts and collective life—some
> people are so obstinate that even Muslims may label angelic brothers and
> sisters as Satans, or a satanic part member as an angel, depending upon
> whether or not they support a certain political party. When I saw a learned
> man severely reproach a good, virtuous man who did not share his
> political views and then praise a corrupt member of his political faction, I
> became dismayed by the evils of politics and completely withdrew,
> saying: "I take refuge in God from Satan and politics."[88]

His concern was not only with the new government in Ankara; he continued to be

critical of the *ulema* as well. His belief was that the *ulema* had failed to properly educate

the *umma*, and, thereby, had led them into ignorance and away from the faith.

> One reason why preachers' advice is ineffective nowadays is that they
> invite people to change their nature. They advise: 'Do not be envious or
> ambitious, do not feel enmity or be obstinate, do not love the world,' and
> so on. Such advice is useless, for it is against human nature. Instead, these
> energies can and should be channeled into good deeds and directed toward
> positive aims. For example, love for the world can be channeled into love
> for the other world, enmity can be directed against one's carnal self, and
> envy can become a means for competing to do good things.[89]

While Nursi was staying in Van, a rebellion broke out against the Ataturk's

government. Led by Shaikh Said[90], with the intent of resisting Ataturk's reforms, Said

Nursi was recruited to join the fight, but he voiced strong opposition to this rebellion on

the grounds that this would pit Muslim against Muslim: "Those soldiers are the sons of

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[88] Bedíuzzaman Saíd Nursí, *The Letters: Epistles on Islamic Thought, Belief and Life* trans. Huseyin Akerasu (Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2007), xvi.
[89] Ibid., 53.
[90] Shaikh Said was a Kurdish nationalist leader and Muslim scholar who laid the foundations of the separatist movement for the Kurds. http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/kurdish/htdocs/his/said.html (accessed April 26, 2010)

this land. They are my kith and kin and your kith and kin. Whom will you kill? And

whom will they kill? Think! Use your head! Are you going to make Ahmed kill Mehmed,

and Hasan kill Huseyin?" [91] The rebellion proceeded, and, in spite of Nursi's opposition,

Atuturk used this event to arrest him and jail many of his followers. Atuturk could not

bribe Nursi to his side, so he sought to suppress Nursi and his words. But, just as with

many other attempts to silence or intimidate Nursi, these actions by the government only

served to help him further clarify his path,

> …whenever I have flagged in my duties, and saying [to myself], "what is
> it to me [?]" [and] have become preoccupied with own private affairs, I
> have received a slap… For example, so long as I was busy teaching the
> truths of the Qur'an in Van at the time of the Shaikh Said events, the
> suspicious government did not and could not interfere with me. Then
> when I said "what is it to me[?]" and thinking of myself, withdrew into a
> ruined cave on Mount Erek in order to save my life in the hereafter, they
> took me without cause and exiled me.[92]

As a result of this oppression, Nursi initiated an underground writing campaign.

The intent of this initiative was to instruct his followers on what course of action they

should take as a response to what was happening to the faith of Islam under the current

regime. Another aspect of these epistles was the instruction of his followers on all aspects

of faith so that they would not only grow in their knowledge of Islam, but also use this

knowledge to persuade others of the truths of the religion. Known collectively as the

Letters of Light (*Risale-i Nur*), these epistles were dictated by Nursi to his students, who

copied them by hand and distributed them through an underground network. Smuggled

out of prison to his followers, the eventual volume of work reached 6,000 pages with

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[91] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 181.
[92] Ibid., 186.

700,000 copies handwritten by the year 1960.[93] So effective was this letter writing campaign that, the underground movement had amassed a following of 500,000 by the 1940s, and by 1960 it had reached one million followers.[94]

Imprisoned and isolated, the "New Said" developed an argument for non-violence as a reaction to this oppression. The reconstruction of faith to a core level of belief (*manevi jihad*)[95] was the concept centered on the Qur'anic scripture "No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another" (Qur'an 6:164, 17:15). Nursi cited this *Ayah* in order to show that one should not be a burden others: therefore to waging a *jihad* of a military nature (which would be burdensome to people) should be ruled out in the circumstances in which they were living. Instead, urged that "positive action,"[96] actions that lead towards the development of a just and stable society, should be undertaken. "Our duty is 'positive action,' not 'negative action.' It is solely to serve belief [in the truths of religion] in accordance with Divine pleasure and not to interfere with God's concerns…We are charged with responding—with patience and thanks—to all the difficulties we may encounter in this positive service of belief, which results in the preservation of public order and security…"[97] His aim was to transform their faith--- through these actions--- into an actualized faith (*tahkiki iman*) that would address the

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[93] Zeki Saritoprak, "Islam and Politics in the Light of Said Nursi's Writings," *Islam and Christian—Muslim Relations* 19, no.1 (2008): 118.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Sukran Vahide, "Said Nursi's Interpretation of *Jihad,*" in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 105.
[96] Sukran Vahide, "Said Nursi's Interpretation of *Jihad,*" in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 105.
[97] Ibid.

attacks on the faith, attacks coming from both the internal reforms of Ataturk and the negative influences of modernity on the faithful.[98]

Nursi developed a multi-front strategy to confront what was happening within the *umma*: he established abolition against the use of violence as part of the movement's response; he set out to attack the failures of modernity and the Kemalist reforms; finally, he used scripture and science as a means to validate the positions he had undertaken.

In the second part of this strategy, Nursi saw that Kemalist reforms were based upon a belief in Western modernity, so to display the failures of Western modernity would be to discredit the position and reforms of Ataturk. Using the idea of justice in society, Nursi argued that the Western model of economics was based upon a flawed model that did not serve societies well, while the economics of the Islamic approach were based solely on justice, which absent in the West. Writing in his epistle, *The Letters*, Nursi laid out the injustice of the Western economic model,

> Western civilization, in its present phase, is founded upon five negative principles: It is based upon power, and power inclines towards oppression; it seeks to realize individualized self-interest, even though this causes people to rush madly upon things to possess them; it considers life as struggle, which causes internal and external conflict; it unifies through national and/or racial separatism, and 'feed' by swallowing the resources and territories of 'others' both of which engender terrible conflict; and it strives to satisfy novel caprice and aroused desires (whether the satisfaction is real or not), and so brutalizes people.[99]

Nursi took the position that this system of self-interest led to immorality based upon selfishness, "all immorality and disturbances in human social life proceed from two

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[98] Zeynep Akbulut Kuru and Ahmet T. Kuru, "Apolitical Interpretation of Islam: Said Nursi's Faith-Based Activismin Comparison with Political Islamism and Sufism," *Islam and Christian—Muslim Relations* 19, no. 1 (2008): 102.

[99] Bedíuzzaman Saíd Nursí, *The Letters: Epistles on Islamic Thought, Belief and Life* trans. Huseyin Akerasu (Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2007), xxi.

sources and two attitudes: 'Once my stomach is full, what do I care if others die of hunger?' and 'You work and I will eat.'"[100]

Islam, to Nursi, was a system centered on Divine mercy and justice. Contrasting the Islamic system of justice to that of the Western model, Nursi taught his students,

> The Qur'an is a mercy for humanity, and so urges a civilization that secures greatest happiness for the most people…Islamic civilization rests upon right (not power), which requires justice and balance, encourages virtue, which spurs mutual affection and love; considers life as mutual help, which leads to unity and solidarity; unifies people through a common religion in a common state, which leads to internal peace, brotherhood [sisterhood], and a willing self-defense against external enemies; and guides people to truth. Therefore it encourages scientific progress and elevates people, through moral perfection, to higher ranks of humanity. Never break with Islam, for it guarantees our survival. Stick to it, heart and soul, or we shall perish utterly.[101]

The individualist nature of the Western model mitigated against restraint, and led to an increasing of desire, "Its alluring service is encouraging lust and passion, satisfying desires, and facilitating the attainments of whims. And as for lust and passion, they make man descend from the level of angels to that of a beast."[102] In place of this, the Islamic system puts religion at the center of one's existence, and thereby checks the indulgences of the Western model,

> The principles of life are those of mutual assistance and cooperation instead of conflict and are manifested as unity and mutual support. In place of lust is guidance, which is manifested as progress for humanity and being perfected spiritually. It restricts the passions, and instead of stimulating the base desires of the carnal soul, it gratifies the high sentiments of the spirits.[103]

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[100] Bedíuzzaman Saíd Nursí, *The Letters: Epistles on Islamic Thought, Belief and Life* trans. Huseyin Akerasu (Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2007), 292.
[101] Ibid., 452.
[102] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 39.
[103] Ibid., 159.

It was not Islam that caused the Ottoman Empire to collapse, which Ataturk

maintained, but it was in fact the Empire's turn towards modernity during the *Tanzimat*

reforms that pushed the Muslim community away from faith, thereby causing it to lose

the traditions and beliefs that had unified the empire throughout its zenith.

> Of the hundreds of benefits that Islam's sacred nationality has given our
> social life, I cite only two examples: First, the Muslim state has
> maintained its vitality and existence, despite its population of only 20 to
> 30 million and European hostility, because of the conviction: 'If I die, I
> will die a martyr; if I survive, I will survive as a holy defender of Islam.'
> This conviction comes from the Qur'an's light and is held by our state's
> army…What kind of nationalistic zeal can be substituted for it and cause
> soldiers to sacrifice, even their lives, for its sake?[104]

Nursi took the argument against Westernization away from Ankara, focused it on

a religious stage, and drove it back into the heart of Ataturk's reforms.

The Rise of the DP and the transformation of the "Third Said"

The Death of Kemal Ataturk in 1938 allowed for a slow transition away from

strict Kemalist reforms and towards a relaxation of the oppression of faith. In 1950, the

Democratic Party (DP) came to power in Ankara. Upon their ascension to power, the

restrictions on the Nursi movement were lifted. Decades of patient guidance by Nursi

bore fruit. Nursi had taken his followers and taught them non-violent resistance using the

Qur'an and Islam as his example. The movement, numbering over a million followers,

had no incidents of violence during this time, and in the 6,000 pages of *Risale-i Nur* no

endorsement of violence is made.[105]

The transition to this new government and its subsequent lifting of religious

restrictions opened the way for Said Nursi to look towards politics again. Referring to

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[104]Bedíuzzaman Saíd Nursí, *The Letters: Epistles on Islamic Thought, Belief and Life* trans. Huseyin
Akerasu (Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2007), 341.
[105] Zeki Saritoprak, "Islam and Politics in the Light of Said Nursi's Writings," *Islam and Christian—
Muslim Relations* 19, no. 1 (2008): 119.

this as his "Third Said"[106] phase, he instructed his followers to work as advisors to the new political party, but to avoid being directly involved in the political process. Nursi felt that politics could serve to enhance the national identity if it could be steered towards religious guidance: "we work for the happiness of this country and nation by making politics the tool and friend of religion."[107]

The Democratic Party lifted the veil of oppression on Nursi's movement. It was no longer an underground movement, and for the first time in history, it was allowed to openly print the *Risale-i Nur* collection. "This is the *Risale-i Nur* festival! My duty is finished. This is the time I have long awaited,"[108] exclaimed Nursi. The way was opened for the movement to have meetings; and so Nursi used this opportunity to have study sessions with his students. In these sessions, Nursi, who had spent most of his life in forced isolation, read the *Risale-I Nur* to his students and explained the concepts to them. This process of education on the epistles is utilized by the movement in Turkey to this day.

Even with the oppression lifted within the borders of Turkey, events were taking place internationally that influenced Nursi's approach to the West. Communism was descending upon the Middle East as well as Turkey itself. Fearing the threat of an expansionist Soviet Union, the West sought out an alliance with Turkey. In 1955, a treaty was signed between Turkey and Iraq (and eventually with Pakistan, Iran, and Britain). This pact was an alliance against the communist threat to the region.[109] This

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[106] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 305.
[107] Sukran Vahide, "Said Nursi's Interpretation of *Jihad*," in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi   (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 109.
[108] Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 322.
[109] Ibid., 325.

threat from the atheistic Soviet Union brought the religious leaders in the West and in Turkey together. Upon receiving a letter from the Vatican, Nursi held a meeting with the Greek Orthodox patriarch as which both parties agreed to open a dialogue between the two faiths. Nursi perceived that the West had shifted its view of the Islamic world and no longer perceived it as a threat; he felt it was time to open dialogue with the West with the sincere hopes of reducing violence and hatred.[110] He instructed his followers to act on this in order to open up mutual dialogues with people of all faiths.

While Nursi's movement was allowed to practice in an open way, Turkish society was still divided between a secular "Kemalist" approach to governance, and those of faith who did not support these reforms. What Nursi's movement represents in history is the foundation that solidified and held the Islamic community together during the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the early stages of Turkey's history. He had implored his followers to resist using the example of scholarly *jihad*, a non-violent expression of religious values as a counter to oppression. He had advocated for the Muslim world to embrace traditional science as a means to strengthen the *umma*. Further, he had sought out a new dialogue with other faiths to enhance their abilities to resist a growing domination by militant secularists. Throughout the personal oppression he had suffered as well as his followers, Said Nursi unwavering commitment to these concepts and values allowed for a religious community to survive during this time of brutality, setting in place the foundations of a movement which continues to thrive fifty years after his passing.

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[110] Sukran Vahide, "Said Nursi's Interpretation of *Jihad*," in *Islam at the Crossroads,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 111.

IV: Sayyid Qutb

With the encroachment of Western modernity growing in influence throughout the Middle East during the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent carving up of that Empire by the British and French, the life of Sayyid Qutb of Egypt has many parallels to that of Said Nursi. Living in this crucial time for the Muslim world, both men attempted to fend off the onset of modernity in their respective cultures. Whereas Said Nursi throughout his oppression developed a system of non-violence as a reaction to his antagonists, Sayyid Qutb came to postulate on the nature of social justice under an Islamic state and on the crucial imperative of the followers of the faith to use a *jihadist* methodology, if necessary, in the implementation of the system he espoused. In doing so, Sayyid Qutb's vision of offensive *jihad* as a solution to the social ills of the world caused an internal division within the organization of which he was a key figure, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Despite these divisions, the nature of his ideas and methodology continues to reverberate with many Muslims in the modern era. Like Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, Sayyid Qutb evokes a strong polemical reaction. Unlike Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, Sayyid Qutb left a legacy of extensive writings, which—when taken together with a clear history of his era that can be juxtaposed as a backdrop against his life--- enable us to contextualize properly the complexities of his life and the conclusions to which it led him.

Sayyid Qutb's childhood is an important factor in an analysis of his life. Coming from a small town and a caring family, his father's political involvement demonstrates

how Qutb, from an early age, was exposed to anti-Western beliefs. Coupled with his religious upbringing, the groundwork for his eventual transformation was established early in his life. The foundations laid down during his childhood were so central to Qutb's life and beliefs that he wrote an autobiography devoted exclusively to his childhood.[111] From the retelling of his childhood one can trace the early development of Qutb's views on modernity, politics, religion, language, writing, and social justice.

Childhood

Sayyid Qutb was born into an Egyptian society that was in economic and political transition. The British Empire had managed to effectively occupy Egypt in 1882, making it a protectorate. Living in the environment of British rule, Sayyid Qutb's father, al-Hajj Qutb Ibrahim, was a politically involved activist and a member of the anti-British Egyptian National Party led by Mustafa Kamil. During the First World War, Sayyid Qutb's father regularly held meetings of local members of the National Party; Qutb Ibrahim allowed Sayyid to attend these meetings with the intent of exposing his son, at an early age, to the realm of politics.

Born in 1906 in the Upper Egyptian town of Musha, Qutb's early life was one of great promise. At the age of six, Sayyid was enrolled in a state school (*madrasah).* The fact that this was a state-run school caused debate within the household, as the village had another local school that was based around a more traditional Islamic educational system (*kuttab*) which Qutb's father had wished for him to attend. The fear of Qutb's father was that the state-run school could be influenced by an ideology of the government that he was not aligned with. It was Qutb's mother who argued that the state-run school offered

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[111] See: Sayyid Qutb, *A Child from the Village,* ed. and trans. John Calvert and William Shepard (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

a curriculum that included modern disciplines such as mathematics and science, which

the traditional school lacked. In the end, it was his mother's perspective that prevailed:

and Qutb was sent to the *madrasah.*

At the *madrasah*, Qutb flourished. His experience at the *madrasah* influenced his

religious convictions. With two schools providing education in the same town, a rivalry

developed as to the quality of the religious education being taught at the state-run school.

The intensity of this rivalry prompted Qutb to memorize the Qur'an by the age of ten as a

show of the superiority of his religious education. Although taken by the visuals and

beauty of the poetic and allegorical nature of the Arabic language in the Qur'an, he later

remarked that during this time of his life he did not develop a deep understanding of the

meaning of the Qur'an.

By the age of ten, Qutb's mastery of the Arabic language prompted local visitors

to his father's house to ask Qutb to read the local newspapers to them. From this early

stage of his life, Qutb was exposed to Egyptian politics, religion, and international affairs.

Qutb also displayed a passion for reading. Developing a friendship with a local book

dealer, 'Amm Salih, Qutb bartered his way into a collection of 25 various volumes, the

largest collection in Musha. In this collection, there were two books that resonated with

him. The first, written by Thabit al-Jurjari, had an impact on Qutb in two ways. The book

exposed him to poetry for the first time in his life, and this style of writing appealed to

Qutb. More significantly, however, the book was a political piece whose content was

about Egyptian national pride. Qutb, having discovered that the author was a political

prisoner, had a nationalistic ideal planted within him, "He found in this poetry words that

nourished in his soul the spirit of patriotism, a spirit that had been awakened by the

family atmosphere in which he lived and the general atmosphere that was as if charged with electric currents ready to explode."[112]

The second book that Qutb credits with having an impact was a history of Egyptian culture, written by Muhammad Bey Khudari. What Khudari states in the introduction is what struck Qutb. Khudari wrote that the book would most likely never been printed again, unless some sections were deleted. The notion of government censorship was introduced to Qutb through this book, further encouraging his political awakening.

Many of the themes addressed in Qutb's works can be seen to have been taken from a foundation erected in his early childhood. His exposure to politics, the richness with which he experienced his faith and the language of Arabic, his immersion in poetry and an early awareness of the cultural and political environment of Egyptian society during his era all contributed to the content of his later works. Central to his writing is the focus on an Islamic system of governance that addresses the injustices of the materialist system of the West. In a vignette from his autobiography, it can be seen where this idea of social justice had its foundations laid in his childhood. This involved his father's hiring of impoverished workers from the Qana and Aswan regions of Egypt for the harvest of the crops three times annually.

During three seasons, wet planting, harvest, and cotton harvesting, the farmers in the village of Musha would hire laborers from the Qana and Aswan areas of Egypt. These workers were from a decided underclass of Egyptian society. Although not wealthy himself, Qutb's father had always contracted the laborers at above the market price in

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[112]Sayyid Qutb, *A Child from the Village,* ed. and trans. John Calvert and William Shepard (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 94.

addition to providing them with a meal each day. His father was attempting to instill in

Qutb the notion of charity that is a core tenant of the Islamic faith. But even though his

father had gone to great lengths to provide the workers with extra pay and food, Qutb

viewed their poverty as a reflection of the social ills perpetrated upon the lower class in

Egyptian society. Addressing this growing conflict and sense of injustice Qutb wrote of

the about his feeling of being part of the system that robbed the poor.

> He learned many things, whose profound effects on his soul and whose
> harsh impact on his feelings have only become evident as he now reflects
> on them from time to time, and feels shame in the depth of his soul and
> contempt for himself and his people. He is a robber. He has robbed these
> 'foreigners' and many millions like them who create the wealth of the
> Nile Valley yet go hungry.[113]

It was his father's charitable nature that set Qutb on a different course in his life.

The charity Qutb's father was providing, both in the form of above market payment for

laborers as well as providing for the needy in the town, was only possible thanks to an

inheritance that he had acquired, and eventually through the selling off of sections of the

family farmland. This downward spiral toward impoverishment prompted his mother to

arrange for Sayyid to move to Cairo, where he would live with his uncle and further his

education.

Into Adulthood

At the age of thirteen, Qutb was sent to Cairo to live with his maternal uncle

Ahmad Hussayn 'Uthman, where he was to finish his middle school and high school

education as well as a university degree. While attending the university, Qutb began to

write poetry and essays for some local Cairo publications. This poetry reflected a

politicized Qutb, attacking British policies and voicing support for the Egyptian leader

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[113] Sayyid Qutb, *A Child from the Village,* ed. and trans. John Calvert and William Shepard (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 124.

Saad Zaghlul.[114] At 19 years old, Qutb began his professional career as a writer,

publishing his first work in a local daily publication *Proclamation* (*al-Balagh*).

The move from Musha to Cairo served as a transitional point in the growth of

Qutb's political astuteness. Cairo's culture shifted Qutb's focus to that of Western ideas,

British rule, and secular thought. His poetry and his writings, although political, were not

religious in nature, but they reflect an Egyptian cultural identity that Qutb was working to

reclaim. Cairo's impact on Qutb took him temporarily away from religion.

The poetry that Qutb developed in Cairo was heavily influenced by the journalist

and modernist thinker 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, who was a leader of a school of

modern poetry, the *Diwan* group. The members of this poetic movement believed in the

personal nature of poetry, that poetry should be the result of expressions coming from the

emotions of the writer. This was counter to other movements within Egypt at the time.

Qutb delved into this school with a great deal of passion. It is within this school that Qutb

developed a deep connection with al-'Aqqad. This connection was so personal for Qutb

that he felt it necessary to eventually break away and develop his own style of poetry.

Within the *Diwan* school, the personal nature of poetry was centered on emotions that

came from intellect and reason. Qutb separated himself from this thought, maintaining

that poetry, while personal, should not be based upon reason and intellect; instead, it

should be spiritual in nature. This spirituality would allow the poet to connect the reader

to the higher cause of faith. Although still in his secular phase, this break from al-

'Aqqad towards a more spiritual writing style could be viewed as the beginning of the

reconnection to Islam that Qutb had lost. Although Cairo was having an effect on his

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[114] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 35.

beliefs, he wrote that he still took comfort from reading the Qur'an, "These moments invigorated me like no other experience did and made me feel that he was indeed standing on firm grounds that had not been desecrated by mud."[115]

In 1939, Qutb turned his focus to writing literary analyses of the Qur'an. Although Qutb had previously argued for the separation of religion from literature, he launched into this phase of his writing by presenting analyses that were focused on the imagery of the Qur'an from an artistic viewpoint.[116] From 1939 to 1947, Qutb's criticism and analyses transitioned from a strict literary interpretation to a full fledged analysis of the meaning of the Qur'an.

The Development of Political Associations

The original nature of Qutb's secular writing alienated him from many of the active Islamic movements within Egyptian society. When he turned to writing about the Qur'an in the 30's and 40's, eventually writing strong works in support of Islamic thought, his writing attracted many of those groups that had once assailed him. One of the primary organizations that began to court Qutb was the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt (*Ikwan Muslimin*). Founded by Hassan al-Banna in the early 20th century, the Brotherhood flourished as a social-political organization that answered the growing influence of the West by founding charitable organizations and schools, and that organized political actions to stem the increase of Western cultural norms.[117] During the 40's, Qutb's writing began to combine his interpretation of Islamic morality and social justice. He criticized many aspects of the society in which he lived and also

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[115] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 57.
[116] Ibid., 58.
[117] The exact date of Qutb's membership into the Muslim Brotherhood is debated. During this phase in his career, Qutb had not fully developed his political theory and he had not joined during this initial courting.

attacked outside influences on the Egyptian psyche. He attacked Britain, The United

States, and France; he was critical of Egyptian youth, who he thought were too caught up

in the Western lifestyle and lacking true Islamic beliefs. He assailed Muslim

organizations that he viewed as weak and ineffective. The emphases of Qutb's writing

focused on a reinvigoration of an Islamic Egyptian society. He sought out other like-

minded Muslim thinkers to publish a journal, *The New Thought* (*al-Fikr al-Jadid*). This

publication, dealing with issues of social injustice within Egypt, was a small publication

that started a grass roots revival, especially among the university youth. This publication,

although published briefly, was influential among the disenfranchised and disillusioned

Egyptians (causing concern at the royal palace) and was subsequently banned.

Consequently, an order was issued for Sayyid Qutb's arrest. This order was to be issued

by the Prime Minister, Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi, who had associations with several

political groups with which Qutb was active. Nevertheless, al-Nuqrashi successfully

lobbied the royal palace to allow Qutb to be brought back into the fold. Al-Nuqrashi's

logic followed the lines that if Qutb had an opportunity to visit the secular West, his

perspective could perhaps be changed.[118] Sayyid Qutb agreed to be sent to the United

States where, in late 1948, he began working towards a Master of Arts degree in

Education.

Qutb's reaction to America, however, led to a profound solidification of his own

core beliefs. Qutb did not dismiss America outright, he was impressed with the

technological achievements that he recognized the American system had produced, and

he believed that these technological and scientific advances could be beneficial to

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[118] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihād: Sayyid Qu   b and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 97.

Egyptian society. Nonetheless, Qutb was not impressed by the materialistic and individualistic nature of America's "harried crowds resembling an excited herd that knew only lust and money."[119]

There are several key instances that Qutb to which points to as a reflection of his impression of American values. Of these, the issue of sexual morality in American society was seemingly shocking to Qutb. While at the Teachers' College in Greenley, Colorado, a female colleague told him, "The issue of sexual relations is a purely biologic issue. You—the Orientals—complicate this simple issue by introducing the ethical elements into it." Further, while attending a conference in Washington, DC, responding to a Latin American student's question about promiscuity among students as young as fourteen in America, another female colleague responded by saying "Our life on earth is very short. We do not have time to waste more than fourteen years."[120]

Qutb went on to criticize many other aspects of American culture such as music and sports:

> Jazz music was created by the negroes to satisfy their primitive inclinations and their desire in noise on the one hand, and to arouse the vital dispositions on the other hand.[121]

> Football, boxing and wrestling are tantamount to hitting in the belly, breaking arms and legs with all violence and fierceness and the crowds shouting, each encouraging his team: smash his head, break his neck, crush his ribs, knead him into dough….This scene leaves no doubt concerning the primitive feelings which are fascinated by muscular strength.[122]

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[119] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 114.
[120] Ibid., 115.
[121] Ibid., 117.
[122] Ibid., 121.

Aside from Qutb's observations about American morality and material lusts, while still in American, two major political events stood out to Qutb that solidified the marriage of his political beliefs and his Islamic ideology. The first major event was the foundation of the State of Israel and the unwavering support that the Western press gave to Israel, which Qutb viewed as proof of the West's anti-Muslim outlook. Further, while in America, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was assassinated. Qutb reacted to what he perceived to be the joy which the American press and public seemed to take from this event.

> My attention was very much drawn to the extreme interest in the Brothers shown by American newspapers as well as British newspapers….and their gloating and obvious placidity over the dissolving of the Muslim Brothers group, hitting it and killing their leader.[123]

Qutb returned to Egypt and was greeted at the airport by a delegation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Although still not a member of the organization, the courtship of Qutb by the Muslim Brotherhood began to flourish. Qutb's writings were now solidly within the sphere of Islam and politics, and Qutb was espousing the answer to the social injustice that permeated the Muslim world, an Islamic system of governance. Upon returning to Egypt, Qutb's first major text was published concerning the Islamic answer to this injustice. *Social Justice in Islam*[124] marked the beginning of Qutb's argument that Islam, politics, and *jihad* are inseparable pieces in the answer to social injustice.

With the politics of Egypt shifting, growing political and social movements began to challenge the government and the status quo. One group in particular, "The Free Officers," led by a military Colonel Gamal Adbel Nassar, espoused social justice through

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[123] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 122.
[124] This publication will be analyzed in a subsequent part of this chapter.

socialism and adherence to Islamic law. Under these precepts, Sayyid Qutb associated

with The Free Officers, initially supporting their political agenda. Qutb also developed an

intellectual friendship with Gamal Adbel Nasser, a top officer in the organization. Qutb's

relationship with the Free Officers led him to be given an office in their headquarters.

From this office, he used his power through his post in the Ministry of Education to write

in support of The Free Officers' cause, while also advocating the position of the Muslim

Brotherhood, which he perceived as potential allies.

By 1952, the Free Officers managed to stage a successful coup against the

government of King Faruq, and installed, as a prime minister, a general who was a

member of the Free Officers, Muhammad Naguib. Initially this coup served as a chance

for the Muslim Brotherhood to work with the new government to help implement their

political Islamic principles. Qutb wrote in support of the new ruler[125] and called for him

to be allowed to be a "just dictator" for a period of six months, allowing the leader to start

to implement his reforms. A rift began to split the Free Officers. Naguib had pluralistic

leanings, wanting to create a government that included supporters of the *Wafdist*

movement, communists, and Muslim Brothers. His eventual aim was to set up a

Constitutional government. Nasser, on the other hand, was angling for a military

dictatorship.[126] Nasser triumphed with another coup in 1954, replacing Naguib as

Egypt's leader.

Upon coming into power, Nasser solidified his power with a military dictatorship

that had no real intentions of installing Islamic law. Furthermore, Nasser now viewed the

Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to his power and began to work with some of his former

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[125] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 138-139.
[126] Ibid., 143.

contacts within the Muslim Brotherhood to cause internal division. This confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood came to a head in 1954, when the Brotherhood staged a rally at the University of Cairo where Muslim Brotherhood speakers openly challenged the government of Nasser.

The subsequent arrest of Qutb and other members of the Muslim Brotherhood led to the final developments of Sayyid Qutb's ideas about Islamic Justice, *jihad*, and the West. He would remain in prison for ten years, continuing to write until his death. Qutb was executed in 1966 by the government on charges of sedition. The later banning of all of his works immediately after his execution would lead to a propagation of misinformation about his writings that have helped set up much of the modern day Islamic extremists' perspectives.

An analysis of the writings and ideology of Sayyid Qutb

There is much conjecture about what Sayyid Qutb advocated during his lifetime. Agendas for Western and Muslim scholars often blur what is truly known about Qutb's philosophy. Inherent to this problem is the issue of Gamal Nasser's banning of all of Qutb's works, immediately after the execution of Qutb in 1966. Further, much of Qutb's writing still has not been translated from its original Arabic. From this perspective, analysis of Qutb's writings can be problematic in so far as it is often a case of choosing between secondary sources that have conflicting views. The analysis that follows will be broken into three parts: an analysis of the development of Qutb's political thought vis-à-vis various stages of his political reaction to the Egyptian society and government; the progress of Qutb's Islamic perspective as justification for his political outlook; and

finally, the impact these writings had, after being fully developed, on the Islamic perspective.

Qutb's journals and writings for the first thirty-three years of his life were primarily literary criticism and poetry. It was in the late 1930s that Qutb's ideas started to shift to a political nature, and later his works combined an Islamic view of the world and politics. The foundation for this development of political thought can be seen as a reaction to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936-1937.[127] This treaty officially ended British colonial rule in Egypt. As a result of the end of this rule, Egyptian intellectuals wrote about the future of Egyptian society and politics. Qutb's jump into the political discourse can be viewed as a reaction to two influential Egyptian writers, Taha Husayn and Ahmad Amin, who advocated the spurring of Arab/Egyptian ties towards a pro-Western alliance, both politically and economically.[128]

Qutb refuted the notion of a rejection of traditional Egyptian/Islamic culture in favor of a closer alliance with the secular West. In *Artistic Portrayal of the Qur'an* (*Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an,* 1945), Qutb began to argue for the cultural rebirth of Egyptian and Muslim society by analyzing the Qur'an in order not only to show the artistic merit of its literary style, but also to use the Qur'an as an example of traditional Islamic culture in the early Muslim societies. These were the values and ideas that Qutb was starting to lay out for the Egyptians. It was also a pivotal moment conceptually for Qutb, as he had begun to lay the groundwork for his ideas on ignorance (*jahiliyyah*).[129]

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[127] Sayed Khatab, *The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb: the Theory of Jahiliyyah* (London: Routledge, 2006), 79.

[128] Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 82.

[129] Historically, *jahiliyyah* has been used to define the era before the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad; a period of turmoil and ignorance. After the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad and the

The culmination of this period resulted in a seminal work for Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam* (*al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam,* 1948). *Social Justice in Islam* combined Qutb's theory of social justice with his interpretation of the nature of the state in Islam.[130] In the introductory arguments, Qutb laid out an argument against the economic systems of the West in which he attacked both capitalism and Marxism as being equally based upon materialism.[131]

Qutb postulated that the Islamic system addresses all aspects of human relations in this world. Challenging the status of the Muslim world at the time, Qutb stated that Western influences had corrupted Muslim governments and societies, and that they had turned away from the universal application of Islam, compartmentalizing the faith.[132]

> Now the faith of Islam, which deals with the whole field of human life, does not treat the different aspects of that life randomly, nor yet does it split up the field into a number of unrelated parts. That is to say, Islam has one universal and integrated theory which covers the universe and life and humanity…The treatment of all these matters emanates from this one universal and comprehensive theory.[133]

With *Social Justice in Islam*, Qutb outlined a historical analysis of the Islamic faith, arguing that, during the early parts of the Islamic state, Muslims had developed the perfect system, one which was sent down by God to the prophet Muhammad.[134] This system had been corrupted over time, but the example was there to be studied and applied

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establishment of a Muslim sovereignty on the Arabian Peninsula, two worlds existed, the world of *jahiliyyah* and the world of *hakimiyyah* (sovereignty).

[130] This work is a foundational text of many modern Islamists political movements.

[131] Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam,* Trans. John B. Hardie and Hamid Algar (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2000), 19.

[132] Ibid., 137.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam,* Trans. John B. Hardie and Hamid Algar (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2000), 46.

to Islamic society in the current era. If this system were to be restored, and applied universally, then a just system would prevail for all of humanity.[135]

Qutb encouraged the Islamic community to rebuild itself and challenge the ideas of the current Muslim leadership, which he viewed as Muslim in name only, who neither justly applied Islamic law, nor ruled on the basis of social justice. In *Social Justice in Islam,* Qutb stated that it was incumbent on any Muslim leader to rule by pious example, and failure to rule in this manner would give the Muslim community the right to unseat the ruler, "by any means necessary."[136] Within six years of the publication of *Social Justice in Islam*, and after numerous criticisms of the state of the Islamic world, Sayyid Qutb, along with many of the high ranking members of the Muslim Brotherhood, was arrested and sentenced to hard labor.

It is in the Egyptian prison system that Qutb's work solidified into what would be the culmination of both his thoughts and reactions to Western influences in the Muslim world as well as the challenges he posed to the current regimes across the Middle East. In a work that would divide the Muslim Brotherhood,[137] *In the Shade of the Qur'an* (*Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*), Qutb wrote an exegesis of the Qur'an that defined *jihad* as a strictly offensive military means that is obligatory for the Muslim community to undertake. This postulate is put forth by Qutb in the seventh and eighth volumes of this work, which analyze the eighth and ninth *suras*. In this analysis, Qutb argued that, through the process of abrogation, one must draw the conclusion that a definition of *jihad* as defensive is a sign of the influences of the West weakening the beliefs of the Muslim world.

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[135] Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam,* Trans. John B. Hardie and Hamid Algar (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2000), 47.
[136] Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 451.
[137] As a reaction to Qutb's work in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood wrote *Preachers, Not Judges* refuting the postulate that Qutb had put forth.

When we understand the nature of Islam, as it has already been explained, we realize the inevitability of Jihad, or striving for God's cause, taking a military form in addition to its advocacy form. We will further recognize that Jihad was never defensive, in the narrow sense that the term 'defensive war' generally denotes today…we need to amend the meaning of the term 'defence' so that it means the defending of mankind against all factors that hinder their liberation and restrict their freedom.[138]

The justification for Jihad is inherent in the nature of this faith, its declaration of man's liberation, and its confrontation with existing human situations using adequate and effective means…This justification exists in the first place, even though there may be no threat to the Muslim land or the Muslim community. It is of the essence of the Islamic approach and the nature of the practical obstacles that stand in its way in different communities. Islamic Jihad cannot be linked merely to some limited and temporary defensive needs.[139]

So what is Islam? Islam is a revolutionary concept and a way of life, which seeks to change the prevalent social order and remold it according to its own vision. Based on this definition, the word "Muslim" becomes the name of a revolutionary party that Islam seeks to form in order to put its revolutionary programme into effect, Jihad signifies that revolutionary struggle involving the utmost use of resources that the Islamic party mobilizes in the service of its cause.[140]

Having defined *jihad* as an obligatory offensive concept for the Muslim community, Qutb structured his position on abrogation of the Qur'anic verses that supported the defensive quality of *jihad* by making an analysis of four stages of Islamic development. The first stage, the Meccan stage, was the stage when the Islamic community was to learn about the faith of Islam, to study its cause and to grow.[141] The second stage, the early Medina stage, when the Muslim community had immigrated in order to escape persecution, was a stage of peace treaties in order to build up the ability to

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[138] Sayyid Qutb, "How Defensive is Jihad?," in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings of Politics, Religion and Society,* ed. Albert J. Bergesen (London: Routledge, 2008), 50.
[139] Ibid., 55.
[140] Sayyid Qutb, "The Essence of Jihad" in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings of Politics, Religion and Society,* ed. Albert J. Bergesen (London: Routledge, 2008), 56.
[141] Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an: Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an: Volume VII: Surah 8,* trans. and ed. by Adil Salahi (Wiltshire: Antony Rove, Ltd), 15.

defend themselves from attack.[142] The third stage was the time when warfare and rules of

engagement were to be given to the community, leading up to the initial battles between

the Muslim and Meccan armies.[143] The fourth stage represented the final stage of

abrogation and was epitomized by the battle against the Byzantine Empire. Qutb refuted

the notion that the attack against the Byzantine Empire was defensive in nature. It was,

in fact, the final stage that obligated the Muslim community to spread the world of Islam

through the means of offensive *jihad*.[144]

> It is sufficient to remember that Islam aims to free all mankind from
> servitude to creatures so that they may serve God alone to justify Islamic
> jihad. This was clearly in the minds of the early Muslims when they went
> out to fight the Byzantines and the Persian Empires. None of them
> justified their action by saying, "We want to defend our country against
> external threats" or, "We want to repel Byzantine or Persian aggression,
> or, "We want to annex land and want to expand to our wealth." [145]

Qutb laid out the methodology of the spread of social justice through Islam by

offensive *jihad* in *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, but it is in his final major work *Milestones

on the Road* (*Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, 1964) that Qutb put the concepts of *jahiliyah*, social

justice, and *jihad* together and called for an Islamic revolution against the West and the

leaders of the Middle East who had led the Muslim world into this present-day time of

"ignorance" (*jahiliyah*). The culmination of Qutb's ideology that is laid out in *Milestones

on the Road* represents a significant advancement for the development of political Islam.

The influence this seminal work of his life had in the Muslim societies led to the

foundations of many fringe organizations who would take of the mantle of offensive

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[142] Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an: Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an: Volume VII: Surah 8*, trans. and ed. by
Adil Salahi (Wiltshire: Antony Rove, Ltd), 17.
[143] Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an: Fi-Zilal al-Qur'an: Volume VII: Surah 8*, trans. and ed. by
Adil Salahi (Wiltshire: Antony Rove, Ltd), 18.
[144] Ibid., 20.
[145] Ibid.

jihad. This work was deemed such a threat to the leaders of the Muslim world that it led

to his execution in 1966 by the Nasser regime. In the introduction to this work, Qutb can

be seen as succinctly encapsulating for the reader his vision for justice and the world.

> Mankind today is on the brink of a precipice, not because of the danger of complete annihilation which is hanging over its head--this being just a symptom and not the real disease --but because humanity is devoid of those vital values which are necessary not only for its healthy development but also for its real progress. Even the Western world realizes that Western civilization is unable to present any healthy values for the guidance of mankind. It knows that it does not possess anything which will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence.

> Democracy in the West has become infertile to such an extent that it is borrowing from the systems of the Eastern bloc, especially in the economic system, under the name of socialism. It is the same with the Eastern bloc. Its social theories, foremost among which is Marxism, in the beginning attracted not only a large number of people from the East but also from the West, as it was a way of life based on a creed. But now Marxism is defeated on the plane of thought, and if it is stated that not a single nation in the world is truly Marxist, it will not be an exaggeration. On the whole this theory conflicts with man's nature and its needs. This ideology prospers only in a degenerate society or in a society which has become cowed as a result of some form of prolonged dictatorship. But now, even under these circumstances, its materialistic economic system is failing, although this was the only foundation on which its structure was based. Russia, which is the leader of the communist countries, is itself suffering from shortages of food. Although during the times of the Tsars Russia used to produce surplus food, it now has to import food from abroad and has to sell its reserves of gold for this purpose. The main reason for this is the failure of the system of collective farming, or, one can say, the failure of a system which is against human nature.

> It is essential for mankind to have new leadership!

> The leadership of mankind by Western man is now on the decline, not because Western culture has become poor materially or because its economic and military power has become weak. The period of the Western system has come to an end primarily because it is deprived of those life-giving values which enabled it to be the leader of mankind.

> It is necessary for the new leadership to preserve and develop the material fruits of the creative genius of Europe, and also to provide mankind with such high ideals and values as have so far remained undiscovered by

mankind, and which will also acquaint humanity with a way of life which is harmonious with human nature, which is positive and constructive, and which is practicable.

Islam is the only System which possesses these values and this way of life.

The period of the resurgence of science has also come to an end. This period, which began with the Renaissance in the sixteenth century after Christ and reached its zenith in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, does not possess a reviving spirit.

All nationalistic and chauvinistic ideologies which have appeared in modern times, and all the movements and theories derived from them, have also lost their vitality. In short, all man-made individual or collective theories have proved to be failures.

At this crucial and bewildering juncture, the turn of Islam and the Muslim community has arrived -the turn of Islam, which does not prohibit material inventions. Indeed, it counts it as an obligation on man from the very beginning of time, when God deputed him as His representative on earth, and regards it under certain conditions as worship of God and one of the purposes of man's creation.[146]

Qutb's vision for a global system of justice enforced through his interpretation of an Islamic jihad caused a split within the Muslim Brotherhood which would have a devastating impact for the wider world. Hasan al-Hudaybi, the leader of the Brotherhood predicted a rise of individual jihadists in the future if Qutb's vision came to fruition. Al-Hudaybi's concerns came to fruition with the actions of Ayman al-Zawahiri, who planted a tree the day after Sayyid Qutb's execution, in honor of his legacy. Ayman al-Zawahiri eventually became involved with a splinter group that broke away from the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Jihad, after the Brotherhood had rejected violence as a means of political expression. Along with other members of Islamic Jihad, he participated in the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1979. Upon his release

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[146] "Milestones," Young Muslims, http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/Introduction.htm (accessed March 21, 2010).

from jail in a general amnesty, Ayman al-Awahiri fled to Afghanistan, where he founded, along with Osama b. Ladin, Al-Qaeda.

Unlike Said Nursi's advocacy for a non-violent scholarly *jihad*, Qutb's vision for an Islamic global system establishing justice through military means ignited an antagonistic relationship between the West and Muslim societies into a heightened era of violence. In the current era, another vision of global interaction between societies is being offered today as a to counter this spiraling of violence. Coming from the same Turkish society as Said Nursi which is still struggling with the nature of secularism and religious expression, M. Fethullah Gülen, in contrast to Sayyie Qutb, seeks a pathway that can lead to mutual respect, cooperation, and reduction of violence between these worlds. It is his organization, the Gülen Movement, which can be seen as one of the possible alternatives that can lead the world into a new era.

IV: Fethullah Gülen

The secular reforms of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk during the establishment of the modern state of Turkey and the subsequent suppression of religious expression within the Turkish state initiated a struggle to define the role of religion within Turkish political and cultural identity. From this, various religious movements worked to identify Islam's place in a secular state as well as within the growing encroachment of modernity. In the current era, a movement founded by M. Fethullah Gülen seeks to answer this problematic displacement of Islam by a process of education, interfaith action, and acknowledgement of the importance of the global perspective to Turkey as a nation. Working against the current official state policy which seeks to suppress religious expression, the Gülen Movement can be seen as successfully addressing these questions as well as having an impact on the political structure of the state of Turkey.

To place Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement within the context of Turkish culture and politics it is necessary to understand the role that secularism has played since the inception of the state of Turkey shortly after World War I. Western ideas of secularism are defined as meaning a general lack of engagement in the religious affairs of the private sector as well as, in some cases such as the United States, a separation of the political body from any religious endorsement.[147] In the Muslim world, from the Shah of Iran, to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and Mustapha Kemal Ataturk's Turkey, secularism was

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[147] M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, "Introduction: Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path?" in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Eposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003): xv.

an attempt by the governing bodies of these countries to control the outward expression of religion by individuals.[148]

Referring to religion as "a putrefied corpse which poisons our lives,"[149] Ataturk drove a line between the pro-Kemalist and anti-religious members of Turkish society and the Muslim community.[150] This division is a factor that resonates within Turkish politics in the modern era. In order to demonstrate this, the example of a court ruling in 1997 by the Constitutional Court (CC) in Ankara illustrates the importance of secularism as defined by Turkish law. In 1997, the military staged a coup to oust a newly elected government that they deemed to have Islamic leanings. According to the Internal Security Act of 1961, articles 35 and 85, the military has a legal obligation to protect Turkey from both external and internal threats. The internal threat can take many forms, but specific to the 1997 court case was the threat the new government had posed to the secularism of the state. It is up to the discretion of the Turkish military to define who poses a threat. Finding for the military's side, the courts defined secularism as a "way of life"[151] and this "way of life," according to the CC, included all aspects of political, social *and* cultural life.[152]

Taking into consideratoin the complexities of working within the confines of the Turkish law, Gülen's perspectives can be viewed not only as a response to the secularization of the state of Turkey and Western modernity, but also as a response to the challenges hailing from within the Islamic world. Rooted in the Hanafi tradition of sunni

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[148] Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997), 64.
[149] Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997), 65.
[150] Ibid.
[151] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 247.
[152] Ibid.

Islam, with a background influenced by Sufism, Gülen's concepts challenge the Arabian

salafi approach to the Islamic world view.[153] His aim is to facilitate a resurgent Hanafi

tradition that seeks new approaches to the educational standards taught to Muslim young

men and women, the reduction of violence through interfaith dialogue and cooperation,

and the establishment of an Islamic system of democracy in Turkey.[154]

Gülen sees the rise of anti-democratic rhetoric coming from the Middle East as a

reaction to the onset of modernity leading to a politicalization of the faith. According to

Gülen, democracy vis-à-vis Islam must address two competing and flawed ideas: One is

the strict fundamentalist interpretation that Islam and democracy are not compatible with

Qur'anic principals; and the other is the Western idea of a state without religious

principles. In a way, both of these factions have a commonality. Gülen states, "Muslims,

due to their independence struggles and their tendency to see their problem and solutions

as political in nature, have made Islam into an almost-political-ideology."[155] This

dangerous reaction which emphasizes Islam as a political system takes away the spirit of

the religion.[156] Gülen believes this disillusionment often opens the door to violence,

> …there are many conflicting interests in the Islamic regions, as well as
> many competing and clashing groups. Problems such as anti-democratic
> practices and human rights violations have resulted in the foundation of

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[153] M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans," in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Eposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 24.

[154] Almet T. Kuru, "Fethullah Gülen's Search for a Middle Way Between Modernity and Muslim Tradition," in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Eposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 124.

[155] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Advocate of Dialogue,* ed. Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 280.

[156] According to Gülen, "Supposedly there are Islamic regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia, but they are state-determined and limited to sectarian approval/Islam is a religion. It can't be called anything else. When the West defeated the Islamic world in military and technology, salvation was sought in politicizing Islam or transforming it into a political system. This resembles a modern version of Khawarij, whereas Islam as a religion is based upon enlightening the mind and brightening the heart. Thus faith and worship come first. The fruit of faith and worship is morality." M. Fethullah Gülen, *Advocate of Dialogue,* ed. Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 151.

various disaffected and disenfranchised groups. Being ignorant and inexperienced, many of these groups can easily be manipulated and used by some.[157]

While the flaws in this approach to democracy and politics are a problem for the Muslim world, equally, the Western secular approach has its own limitations. It can be argued that the Western idea of secularization sprang out of the necessity to divide the function of governing bodies from religious influence primarily because of the conflicts that resulted from competing religious factions within Europe.[158] Because of this separation of state from the church, the philosophical approach that came forth centered around the individual that had no checks on the limitation of ego. Leaving the spiritual dimension behind, Europe's approach has led to violence similar to that of the strict Islamic approach.

> The bloodshed, the continuance of colonialism under different names, unending massacres and conflicts, unchanging human attitudes, crudity of manners, enlightenment of intellectual life, the dominance of materialism in science and world views, all these, together with many other signs of savagery prevailing world-wide, show decisively that the 'developed' peoples of the world have not founded a true civilization, nor have their 'developing' imitators been able to do so.[159]

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[157] Zeki Saritprak and Ali Unal, "An Interview with Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World* 95 (2005): 467.

[158] Authors M. Hakan Yuvuz and John L. Esposito point out, "Secularism, defined as the removal of the domination of religious authority from diverse spheres of society or public life, is the key constitutive category of modernity. European secularism emerged as a solution to the wars of religion in Europe. Thomas Hobbes, the father of modern philosophy, created independent ethics outside of Christianity by excluding religious concerns and values from the public sphere. Because of ongoing religious wars in Europe, secularism became a necessity for civil peace and stability, and states soon refused to pursue any religious goals. The separation of the state and religion because the bedrock of the European state system, and secularism became the constitutive feature of modernity." M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, "Introduction: Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path?," in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Eposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003): xv.

[159] Fethullah Gülen, "A Comparative Approach to Islam and Democracy," *SAIS Review* XXI, no. 2 (2001): 351.

Arguing that the politicization of Islam leads to a corruption of faith,[160] and Western secularization lacks spiritual balance,[161] Gülen postulates a "middle way"[162] approach towards Islamic democracy. Combining the freedom of the individual while maintaining the function of government to oversee a harmonious society, Gülen separates this Islamic approach from modern Western societies by defining it as a society that functions in the realm of a civilized humanity, and thus setting it above the extremes.

> …civilization is not to be sought in riches, luxury and a comfortable life in large, richly-furnished houses, nor in techniques and quantities of production and consumption…it is to be found rather in purity of thoughts, refinement of manners and feelings, and soundness of views and judgments. Civilization lies in the spiritual evolution of man and his continuous self-renewal towards true humanity and personal integrity…Civilization is not, as it is unfortunately understood by blind imitators of the West, a garment to buy from some shop and put on, but rather a final destination reached along a rational way going through time and circumstances.[163]

This is a vision of a civilization that is ruled neither by a theocracy[164] nor a government lacking moral guidance. Instead, this is a political system that combines a republican form of democracy which allows for freedom together with the spiritual guidance of faith. In order to demonstrate this, Gülen refutes the notion that democracy

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[160] "The politicization of Islam, understanding and presentation of Islam as a political system, in my opinion, is a great insulting to the spirit of Islam." Ebru Altunoglu ,"Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society," in *International Conference Proceedings Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, CD Rom (London: SOAS, 2007).

[161] "The 'enlightenment' movement spoken of in the last centuries only includes mental enlightenments. Spiritual and moral principles are not mentioned, and the truth that the heart and life can be enlightened only with spiritual and moral values is neglected. Moreover, these values have been ridiculed covertly. But we believe that human existence is too noble for t he spiritual and moral dimension to be neglected. Every person should be educated in this respect. Just as no serious enlightenment can occur if this dimension is neglected, peace, harmony, and happiness cannot be established in human life. Real salvation can be realized only be enlightening the mind intelligence and the heart/spirit." M. Fethullah Gülen, *Advocate of Dialogue,* ed. Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 7.

[162] Thomas Michel, S.J., "Sufism and Modernity in the Thought of Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World* 95 (2005): 353.

[163] Ibid., 352.

[164] Berrin Koyuncu Loradagi, "Globalization, Moderinzation, and Democratization in Turkey: The Fethullah Gülen Movement" in *Globalization, Alternative Modernities, and Democracy: Remaking Turkey*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 163.

and Islam are not compatible by establishing that there is no prohibition against democracy in Islam. Instead, "Islam establishes fundamental principles that orient a government's general character, leaving it to the people to choose the type and form of government according to time and circumstances."[165] Further, Gülen points to the passage in the Qur'an which states: "God will not change the state of people unless they change themselves [with respect to their beliefs, worldview and lifestyle].' In other words, each society holds the reins of its fate in its own hands. A prophetic tradition that he cites emphasizes this idea; 'You will be ruled according to how you are (13:11)."[166] Gülen states that since the political structure of a society is to be taken within the context of history, no system is espoused by Islam, or the Qur'an.[167]

Gülen advocates that constitutional democracy has come from a series of progressions in all ideas of state throughout history[168] and therefore reflects the development of a natural system of government: "Democracy is developing. It's a process of no return that must develop and mature… Democracy one day will attain a very high level. But we have to wait for the interpretation of time. We have to respect time. The irritability of impatient people shouldn't be incited." [169]

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[165] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Advocate of Dialogue,* ed. Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 134.

[166] Ibid., 135.

[167] Zeki Saritprak and Ali Unal, "An Interview with Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World* Vol. 95 (2005): 461.

[168] "He believes that only Islam's worldly aspects should be compared with democracy because whereas religion focus primarily on the immutable aspects of life and existence that have little to do with time and worldly life, political, social, or economic systems or ideologies concern only variable social aspects of the worldly life that can change in time according to the changing circumstances and places where it is practiced." Berrin Koyuncu Loradagi, "Globalization, Moderinzation, and Democratization in Turkey: The Fethullah Gülen Movement," in *Globalization, Alternative Modernities, and Democracy: Remaking Turkey*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 163.

[169] "Globalization, Moderinzation, and Democratization in Turkey: The Fethullah Gülen Movement," in *Globalization, Alternative Modernities, and Democracy: Remaking Turkey*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007): 150.

The establishment of the Islamic "middle way" is rooted in the reform of the Turkish approach to education.[170] Similar to the juxtaposition seen in the Western and Islamic concepts of ideology, the Turkish educational system contains a division between the secular state schools and the religious *medreses*, the former lacking moral education, the later having a curriculum that is void of the traditional sciences.[171] Without moral and ethical guidelines, the nature of education lacks the ability to let the student develop a moral compass, while the lack of the traditional sciences eliminates the hope of a student competing within a globalized world. Combining the positive sciences and morality along with rationality in education Gülen sees as an appropriate approach for this age,

> The light of the intellect is scientific knowledge while the heart of the spirit derives its light from religious (knowledge). Scientific knowledge without religion usually causes atheism or agnosticism, while religious knowledge without intellectual enlightenment gives rise to bigotry. When combined, they urge a student to research, further and further research, deepening in both belief and knowledge.[172]

With the aspiration of the re-emergence of Hanafi Islam as a global voice for Turkey, Fethullah Gülen and his movement have established hundreds of schools throughout the world each having a curriculum that is designed to educate students to work within the framework of the demands of a global society. Ranging from elementary schools through universities, these schools concentrate on a combination of courses in

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[170] Thomas Michel, S.J., "Sufism and Modernity in the Thought of Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World* 95 (2005): 349.

[171] "The separation began in very early periods at the Nizamiyah *madrasas*. For this reason, some researchers blame Imam Ghazali, who struggled against Peripatetic philosophy. However, at that time philosophy and experimental sciences were studied together. His stance against philosophy affected the sciences as well as those based on rationalism and their methods of scientific findings of the philosophers he opposed, and that these were not harmful to religion. However, his struggle against this type of theoretical knowledge caused acertain damage in the Islamic world of that time, because it was misunderstood as a stance against positive science and philosophy. Those who opposed positive science, who had made themselves known from time to time, began to make their presence felt more acutely." M. Fethullah Gülen, *Advocate of Dialogue ,* ed. Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 323.

[172] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Advocate of Dialogue,* ed. Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 7.

mathematics, traditional sciences, business, English, Turkish and ethics. Prohibiting

specific religious training in these schools,[173] Gülen opts for a system that facilitates

"self-discipline, self-sacrifice and tolerance"[174] with the example and actions of the

educator.

With this unique educational opportunity this "golden generation"[175] of students

has key support from a group of Turkish businesses that share the ideal of Gülen's vision

for Hanafi Islam and Turkey's global role. As a result of the Turkish government's

attempt to revamp its economic model in the 1990's, many business owners, lacking

connections with the official state bureaucracy, suffered. Consequently, many of these

businesses, which were not privy to state subsidies reacted by creating private business

associations."[176] A select group of these associations, made up primarily of conservative

and traditional Muslim business owners, lent their (financial) support to the Gülen

Movement.[177] This arrangement was and is mutually beneficial; supporting this system of

education allows for these businesses to have a generation of employees that is qualified

to facilitate a Turkish business model which is viable globally. Gülen states, "The

globalization of the world will bring about certain changes. For example, small tradesmen

or small-scale trade will disappear. Therefore, establish big trade organizations."[178]

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[173] M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, "Introduction: Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path?," in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Eposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), xxx.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Berrin Koyuncu Loradagi, "Globalization, Moderinzation, and Democratization in Turkey: The Fethullah Gülen Movement," in *Globalization, Alternative Modernities, and Democracy: Remaking Turkey*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 159.

[176] M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Role of the New Bourgeoisie in the Transformation of the Turkish Islamic Movement," in *The Emergence of A New Turkey,* ed. M. Hakan Yavuz (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), 5-6.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ebru Altunoglu "Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society," in *International Conference Proceedings Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, CD Rom (London: SOAS, 2007).

Within the context of Kemalist secularism, the traditional interpretation of Turkish Islam, and the aspirations of Gülen and the Gülen movement, this unofficial arrangement between Gülen's goals and the Muslim Turkish business model can be viewed as a unique reaction to the rise of western modernity. On one hand, it is an organization that is willing to work within in the context of modernity, but, on the other hand, the movement is also an approach to this engagement with the Western model that seeks to define its dealings with the West within a traditional Islamic framework.

With the soft coup of 1997, and the subsequent dissolution of the FP (Virtue Party), the foundations of a new political party were set into place, and with it the possible beginning of a Turkish political system that closely reflects the goals and vision of Fethullah Gülen. The AK Party (Justice and Development) was founded by Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul (respectively, the current President and Prime Minister of Turkey) who broke away from the FP Party after the soft coup. What sets this new party apart in Turkish history is that, during a round of elections in 2007 the Gülen movement and its media services broke with the tradition of political neutrality of the movement when the editor of *Zamam*, a Gülen publication, openly endorsed the AK Party in the election.[179] It is with this link that, a combination of multiple factors has come to a head. The election of the AK party represents the culmination of the problematic relationship between the secular state and religious movements within the modern state of Turkey. Seeking to serve as a bridge between the West and the Muslim world in its foreign policy as well as focusing on human rights within Turkish laws, the AK Party's goals and vision

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[179] Ahmet T. Kuru, "Changing Perspectives on Islamism and Secularism in Turkey: The Gülen Movement and the AK Party," in *International Conference Proceedings Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, ed. Dr. Ihsan Yilmaz (London: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, 2007), 149.

can be seen as parallel to those of Gülen. Springing from the conflict between Mustapha

Kemal Ataturk and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, after a decades long struggle, Fethullah

Gülen and his movement, with his vision of global role for Islam as a facilitator of

education, business ethics and tolerance, have set into motion a new role for Turkey, and

hence Islam, on a global scale.

V: Conclusion

The reductionist reforms started in the 18th century by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab began a shift away from traditional Islamic governance, the Caliphate, which ended with the downfall of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. With the power vacuum this collapse left, competing and disparate ideas concerning Islamic governance developed throughout the last 100 years. Often, as has been shown, these forms of governance can be seen as a reaction of the hegemonic rise of the Western economic, political and social model. In the case of Wahhabism, the modern state of Saudi Arabia has continued the relationship between the two parties that first aligned themselves in the mid 18th century. The alliance was subsequently lifted into a dominant position by British and American interests during WWI and by the discovery of oil on the Peninsula during the early 20th century. This theocratic monarchy in the modern era propagates an intolerant practice of the faith; one that flies in the face of the historical nature of the religion vis-à-vis the faith's historic pluralistic nature.

Sayyid Qutb's legacy represents a complex narrative, one that is a direct reaction to modernity and the West. His definition of the Islamic system being a complete and superior undertaking in the realm of governance gave rise to what is now referred to "political Islam." Western historians often ignore Qutb's emphasis on social justice, and how the Islamic faith represents the best approach to the ills that plague global society. What is also singled out by the West is his concept of offensive *jihad*. Controversial for the time, leading to an internal division within the Brotherhood itself, this postulate is often vilified in the West and celebrated by the fringes within the Islamic world. None the

less, it is a polemic approach to the West that seeks to solve the issues of the world only through a globally dominant position, which is an approach that lacks a truly practical implementation and solution; hence, it belongs in the realm of a theoretical "utopia"; even though some Muslim extremists attempt to argue for this with blood.

In reaction to the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of a rigid secular state system that oppressed the practice of faith, Said Nursi posits that a democratic constitutional system enshrined with Shari'a law is, in fact, a proper reaction to the onset of modernity within the Islamic world. His "scholarly *jihad*" (consisting of a non-violent reaction to the oppression of the state held together an Islamic community that was under siege) has set up the foundations for a model for Islamic governance that is being enacted in the modern era in Turkey.

As argued, the historical influence of the British Empire and modernity has served to create a vacuum in the traditional construct of the *ulema* in much of the modern Muslim world. The subsequent rise to power of the Wahhābi *ulema* and the family of Saud during the 20th century as a result of these influences (and later oil), together with the Western support for non-democratic regimes in the Muslim world, has produced different approaches to Islamic governance (one example of which is that advocated by Sayyed Qutb) that are often polemic and problematic for the constructive engagement with the global community. Exceptions to these polemical developments have been the movement of Said Nursi and subsequently that of Fethullah Gülen, both of which have exemplified the compatibility of Islam with Western principles and have helped to set the stage for the contemporary situation in Turkey. There, with the rise of the AK Party— which in its integration of Islam and democracy is demonstrating the harmony of these

principles to the West—an opportunity exists for the West and the Muslim world to re-engage and establish a socio-politcal paradigm for nurturing understanding and cooperation, which would certainly result in a reduction of the degree of warfare and animosity that has all too often plagued the relationships between these two worlds

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