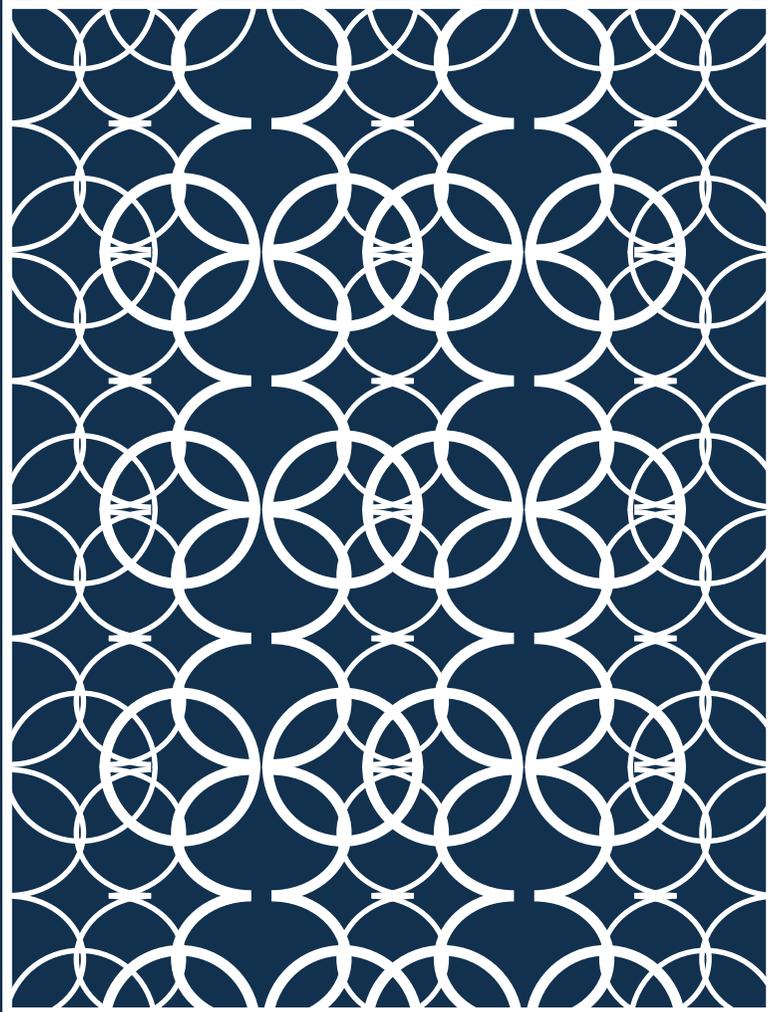


Vision and Prospects for World Peace



Proceedings of the Inaugural Lecture by

Hoda Mahmoudi

University of Maryland, College Park

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Proceedings of the Inaugural Lecture by
Hoda Mahmoudi

Research Professor and third incumbent of the
Bahá'í Chair for World Peace

November 16, 2012

Additional remarks by

John Townshend

Kenneth Bowers

Dorothy Nelson

Suheil Bushrui



VISION AND PROSPECTS FOR WORLD PEACE

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SUMMARY

In this study, Hoda Mahmoudi addresses themes central to building a more peaceful world, including human nature and its capacity to mobilize for good and ill, the pace and scope of changes shaping global conditions, and the role of education in transforming not only individuals but also societies at large.

First presented in November 2012 as the Inaugural Lecture of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace—an endowed academic program at the University of Maryland—*Vision and Prospects for World Peace* shares a concept of peace-building called a “worldview approach.” “This approach,” writes Professor Mahmoudi, “moves beyond nationalism and particularism and instead embraces a global, or ‘globalizing,’ view of peace that significantly expands and enriches the prevailing, Western-oriented model of peace education.”

These Inaugural Lecture proceedings also include introductory statements by distinguished authorities on related topics such as the origins and history of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and the strategic mission of the University of Maryland, which focuses on innovation, entrepreneurship, and engagement with the world.

Vision and Prospects for World Peace contributes fresh perspectives to the vital and complex dialogue on the search for peace.

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THE BAHÁ'Í CHAIR FOR WORLD PEACE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland is an endowed academic program that advances interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace. While drawing certain initial insights from religion, the Bahá'í Chair's program aims to develop a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies that lead to the creation of a better world. Viewing humanity as a collective and organic whole, the Chair explores the role that social actors and structures play in removing obstacles and creating paths to peace. Central to this focus is creating a body of rigorously derived and tested knowledge that can be applied to foster the emergence of a just, secure, and sustainable international order, one that addresses the social, material, and spiritual progress of the global community.

Through an active program of research and publication, the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace collaborates with a wide range of scholars, researchers, and practitioners. Recognizing the value of a broad concept of peacemaking—which it calls a “worldview approach”—the Bahá'í Chair addresses the many underlying issues involved and employs perspectives from diverse cultures. In particular, the Chair is committed to forging international research partnerships that significantly expand and enrich the prevailing, Western-oriented model of peace education.

A core purpose of the Bahá'í Chair's teaching and outreach is to encourage students to cultivate critical thinking skills which lead to understandings about the complex nature of social change in the creation of a more peaceful world. Within this broad educational objective, students develop a set of values—including the importance of service to others—that are the basis of lifelong engagement in framing public policy in areas such as the social and behavioral sciences, science and technology, and

the arts and humanities. Such values can also guide students in their international and civic life.



Chincoteague Hall on the campus of the University of Maryland, home of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace. (Photo courtesy of UMD's College of Behavioral and Social Sciences)

The Bahá'í Chair was established in 1993 to study major issues of world peace as presented in *The Promise of World Peace*, a Statement by The Universal House of Justice (the governing authority of the Bahá'í international community). In acknowledgement of the centrality of this document to the Chair's origin and history, the full text of *The Promise of World Peace* is reprinted in Appendix 2.

VISION AND PROSPECTS FOR WORLD PEACE

The Inaugural Lecture

Hoda Mahmoudi

“Memory is a protection against the risk of abstraction and political experimentation. It is also what enables successive generations to share the harshest aspects of the human condition.”

– Thérèse Delpech, *Savage Century: Back to Barbarism*.



Hoda Mahmoudi delivers the Bahá'í Chair Inaugural Lecture.
(Photo courtesy of UMD's College of Behavioral and Social Sciences)

Dean Townshend, members of the Continental Board of Counselors, members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, faculty, students, my dear family, friends and guests visiting from near and far, thank you.

The University of Maryland under the expert leadership of President Wallace Loh continues to enhance its national and international stature as a leading institution of higher learning.

In President Loh's own words, "the University of Maryland is ascending." I am grateful for the opportunity to serve at this great institution.

Some months ago, it was explained to me that successive deans of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences have been steadfast supporters of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace. Although I am a new arrival on this campus, I can attest that Dean John Townshend not only continues but also enhances that welcome tradition. Under his able leadership, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences has continued to rise by consolidating a worldwide reputation for excellence.

There is a senior University of Maryland official who is not present tonight, but he played an early and decisive part in the founding of the Bahá'í Chair. I am referring to Dr. William Kirwan, presently Chancellor of the University System of Maryland. In the early 1990s, when the Bahá'í Chair was struggling to emerge, Chancellor Kirwan served as President of the University of Maryland, and in that capacity he did everything possible to nurture the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace. Since that time, Chancellor Kirwan has remained a great friend of the Chair.

The Bahá'í Chair and its community of supporters owe a special debt of gratitude to Judge Dorothy Nelson and Mr. Kenneth Bowers, who both have served, successively, as liaison between the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and the Bahá'í Chair's Advisory Board. Over the years, both Judge Nelson and Mr. Bowers have provided wise guidance to the Chair and to the University of Maryland. Equally important, they have also helped ensure the financial security of the Chair.

As a new arrival at the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and the University of Maryland, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the decisive contributions of my distinguished predecessors at the Chair, Professor Suheil Bushrui and Dr. John Grayzel.

Dr. Grayzel was the Bahá'í Chair Professor for more than five years, from 2006 to 2011. During his tenure, he built on the solid record of accomplishment that had already been achieved while further expanding the scope of the Chair's activities. Among the new directions in which Professor Grayzel took the Chair, he organized a campus-wide initiative called the "Semester on Peace" which created a pattern of cooperation among various groups and individuals working to build peace.

Finally, I must, of course, salute the person who guided the Bahá'í Chair from its formal inauguration in 1993 through 2005, Professor Suheil Bushrui. By means of his peerless scholarship, drive, and dedication, Professor Bushrui infused the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace with a unique vision that allowed it to make enduring contributions.

Among the numerous national and international awards Professor Bushrui received during his tenure with the Chair, I believe the one he may be most proud of was his receipt of the Juliet Hollister Award for Service to Interfaith Understanding. Given by the Temple of Understanding—a leading interfaith organization that works closely with the United Nations—the Juliet Hollister Award is granted in recognition of "exceptional service to interfaith understanding." Other recipients of this prestigious prize include the late Queen Noor of Jordan, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and President Nelson Mandela.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with your permission, I would now like to present my vision for the Bahá'í Chair and my assessment of its far-reaching potential. In doing so, I am ever mindful of my fellow Bahá'í sisters and brothers in Iran, who for more than 30 years have experienced social discrimination, official persecution, and untold oppression. Sadly, the campaign

against the Bahá'ís of Iran extends to the field of education: young Iranian Bahá'ís are systematically denied access to universities. Tonight I am ever mindful of their sacrifices.

Introduction

The aspiration for achieving peace has been a central concern throughout human history. Generation after generation, men and women have longed for, struggled for, and perished for peace. In the twentieth century alone, it is estimated that some 60 million children, women, and men lost their lives as a result of war and genocide.¹ Even in this the twenty-first century, the human rights of more than three billion people, about one half of the world's population, are not protected.² The scholar Ulrich Beck has described some of the human rights violations that prevail today:

Torture, genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass execution, abduction, political murder, violence against children, rape, human trafficking, slavery, illegal imprisonment, illegal treatment of refugees, exiles and immigrants, the death of handicapped people, violent theft, the trade in human organs, exploitation of prostitutes and...mass deaths caused by the vicious circle of poverty, hunger and sickness.³

The philosopher and policy analyst Thérèse Delpech expresses this view about the violent nature of our times:

The ultimate consequence of modern experience—the annihilation of tens of millions of human beings in wars and revolutions—has already happened. The discovery of the means for the moral and physical annihilation

¹ For a discussion of genocide in the twentieth century, see Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

² Ulrich Beck, “War Is Peace: On Post-National War,” *Security Dialogue* 36 (March 2005): 12.

³ *Ibid.*

of the human race has already been made. It was not possible to bury the weapons that were developed or the moral barbarity that was explored in a desert where they would be concealed from the experience and consciousness of future generations. On the contrary, those extreme experiences have been globalized, often on our initiative, and weapons have proliferated along with the spread of knowledge and technology.⁴

Today every positive or negative change that takes place in the social, economic, or political realm regardless of its geographic location is felt throughout the world. The depth and breadth of the interconnectedness of the global order cannot be denied. However, the lack of ability and capacity of governmental and social institutions to accommodate the ongoing changes and in successfully addressing new problems is a serious threat to peace and stability. The world is getting smaller; the nations, more interdependent; yet inequality, suffering, fragmentation, and disorder are increasing.

In this situation, one is reminded of the Chinese proverb: “If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.”

The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace has a unique responsibility to advance an educational process that will create a body of tested knowledge that can be applied to foster the emergence of a more just, secure, and sustainable international order; an order that addresses the spiritual, social, and material progress of the global community.

More will be said about the Bahá’í Chair and its goals for advancing a new discourse on global peace. However, before doing so, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss two subjects that are central to any discussion about peace: the first

⁴Thérèse Delpech, *Savage Century: Back to Barbarism* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 23.

is human nature and the second are some significant changes that are reshaping our world.

Human Nature

Understanding human nature is essential to any discussion of peace because an examination of what scholars are learning about this subject highlights the issue of education and its potential for building a better world. Both the nineteenth-century doctrine that biology is destiny and the twentieth-century doctrine that the mind is a blank slate have been rejected as a consequence of knowledge that is being generated through research in the sciences of the mind, brain, genes, and evolution.⁵ The psychologist Steven Pinker asserts that “nature vs. nurture are not mutually exclusive, that genes cannot cause behavior directly, and that the direction of causation can go both ways.”⁶ He explains that:

Genes do not determine behavior like the roll of a player piano. Environmental interventions – from education and psychotherapy to historical changes in attitudes and political systems – can significantly affect human affairs.⁷

Today, unfortunately, aggression and conflict characterize our social order, an order that encompasses political, religious, economic, and cultural systems. In fact, many are resigned to the view that violence and warring are inborn human behaviors and, therefore, unchangeable. Such beliefs are often responsible for and lead to a paralysis of will among individuals, a cognitive numbness that is not easy to reverse, but which must be overcome. Here, the role of education is vital in removing unfounded views about human nature.

⁵ See Steven Pinker, “Why Nature and Nurture Won’t Go Away,” *Daedalus* 133 (Fall 2004).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

The historian Howard Zinn has challenged the view that human nature is instinctively aggressive and violent. In a 1991 speech he observed:

There's a history of wars and a history of kindness. But it's like the newspapers and the historians. They dwell on wars and cruelty and the bestial things that people do to one another and they don't dwell a lot on the magnificent things that people do for one another in everyday life again and again. It seems to me it only takes a little bit of thought to realize that if wars came out of human nature, out of some spontaneous urge to kill, then why is it that governments have to go to such tremendous lengths to mobilize populations to go to war?⁸

Social and cognitive scientists continue to enhance our understandings of human nature, and some of their findings are worth pondering. In 1994, in a period of about three months, around 800,000 people—mostly ethnic Tutsi—were killed in the Rwanda genocide. In the aftermath of this appalling episode, the two sides of human nature—the good and bad—were exposed. We are already aware of the heinous acts that played out during the slaughter. However, little has been said about what we have since learned about the role of the so-called “rescuers.” The term rescuers refers to those individuals who risked their own lives in order to save others, including the lives of those who were considered to be their “enemy.” I would like to share examples of the types of acts performed by rescuers. An ethnic Hutu government soldier, despite the danger and threat to his life, saved the lives of many Tutsis by “guiding them through wooded areas during the darkness of night.” A Hutu pastor sheltered and protected Tutsi women. And the

⁸ Howard Zinn, “Power, History and Warfare,” address delivered at the University of Wisconsin Madison on March 21, 1991 (Westfield, NJ: Open Magazine, 1991), 4.

mosques of Rwanda provided safe havens for members of all ethnic and religious communities.⁹

We have also learned about the positive side of human nature from the acts of humanity displayed by thousands of individuals who risked their lives to save others in the 1940s during the Holocaust. Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel made the following observation about those who risked their lives to save Jews during World War II:

In those times there was darkness everywhere. In heaven and on earth, all the gates of compassion seemed to have been closed. The killer killed and the Jews died and the outside world adopted an attitude either of complicity or of indifference. Only a few had the courage to care. These few men and women were vulnerable, afraid, helpless—what made them different from their fellow citizens?...Why were there so few?... Let us remember: What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander.¹⁰

The discipline of Holocaust studies offers important findings about human nature. At the Yad Vashem Museum of Holocaust History in Jerusalem, what are called “The Righteous Among the Nations,” referring to the rescuers who saved Jews, have been honored for their acts of valor. Their actions provide insights that help us to understand better human nature.

For example, we have learned that at first most of the rescuers were merely bystanders. They stood by as Jews were being persecuted, their rights restricted, and their property

⁹ These examples are drawn from Paul Conway, “Righteous Hutus: Can Stories of Courageous Rescuers Help in Rwanda’s Reconciliation Process?” *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 3 (July 2011): 218-19.

¹⁰ Elie Wiesel, Foreword to *Courage To Care: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, eds. Carol Rittner and Sandra Meyers (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 2.

confiscated. But, after some interval there came a turning point, an intersection at which the bystanders decided to act; they no longer accepted the intensifying measures against the Jews.

Historian Wolfgang Benz explains that at the beginning it was the Jews who turned to non-Jews for help. When non-Jewish bystanders faced desperate Jews knocking at their doors, they were confronted with the need to make an instant decision. The decision to rescue the other is described as a natural human gesture, “taken on the spur of the moment and only then to be followed by a moral choice.”¹¹ The rescuers are described as ordinary people, some of them acting out of ideological, religious or political principle and others without any such motivations. They were women and men of all ages, some were Christian, others Muslim, and some were agnostic. Among the rescuers were the educated, illiterate peasants, city dwellers, and farmers. They represented people from all walks of life including domestic servants, diplomats, policemen, fishermen, and so on.

Psychologist Ervin Staub’s five decades of research has made him one of the foremost experts on the personal and social factors that encourage individuals to be altruistic. Staub’s research has also examined the passivity of bystanders who ignore the needs of others. In his book entitled *The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults, and Groups Help and Harm Others*, Staub provides the following conclusion, which is based on extensive study:

To briefly summarize, human beings have fundamental, shared needs. These include a need for security, for a positive identity, for a sense of effectiveness, for both positive connection to other people and autonomy, for a comprehension of reality. Another need, which emerges most strongly when the needs I have described

¹¹ See “About the Righteous,” website of Yad Vashem ([<http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/about.asp>]; accessed 1 November 2012).

are reasonably satisfied, is the need for transcendence. This is an aspect of spirituality—the need to go beyond one’s own material concerns and beyond the self. When these needs are fulfilled, people are well on their way to harmonious, caring relationships with others, as well as continued growth in their lives.¹²

According to Staub, the passivity of bystanders “greatly contributes to the evolution of evil.”¹³ He points out that, “creating goodness requires active bystandership by individuals, organizations, communities, and nations. Speaking out can stop those who do harm from doing more harm, whether it is a child in a school, an adult in a workplace, or a group that is beginning to develop a destructive ideology.”¹⁴

Given the evidence for the capacity of humans to “do good,” I would like to share two additional observations. The first, as previously noted, centers on the fact that human beings are not instinctively prisoners of aggressive and violent behavior. Therefore, intervention through education and training can alter attitudes and change behaviors. Psychologist Jerome Kagan’s research on cognitive and emotional development in children and moral emotions helps us to understand what he calls “the uniquely human in human nature.”¹⁵ Comparing humans to chimpanzees in relation to their attraction to new experiences, Kagan observes: “Chimpanzees seek new fruits to eat, new places to rest...but humans spend more time than any other animal looking for unfamiliar events that can be comprehended and new skills that can be mastered....The desire for and

¹² Ervin Staub, *The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults, and Groups Help and Harm Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 531-32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 547.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Jerome Kagan, “The Uniquely Human in Human Nature,” *Daedalus* 133 (Fall 2004).

the ability to adapt to novel conditions is due, in part, to the structure of the human brain.”¹⁶

A second important observation about human nature is from the bioethicist Adriana Gini and the biopsychologist James Giordano, who state: “as evidenced by history, human beings are achievers...humans show a trend toward not merely surviving, but flourishing....human history is punctuated by our attempts to break the bonds of biological restrictions, and ‘be more than we are’; our relative dependence has been overcome by forming sociocultural cooperatives, our fears appeased by myth and assuaged by knowledge, and our weakness(es) compensated by intellect and invention.”¹⁷

Having reviewed what the latest research reveals about human nature, I would like to address my second theme. This concerns the monumental changes that are taking place in the world today which pose serious challenges to individuals, institutions, and our global society and which relate to the subject of peace. The scope of the changes impacts the entire planet and therefore requires solutions that address the globe as whole and humanity as a single organic unit. Above all, we must be aware that these changes bring both positives and negatives, both civilization and barbarity.

Changes Shaping Our World

Our global community is undergoing great transformations. Consequently, our conventional thinking about the political, economic, and cultural components of the social order is being tested on every side. In many ways, we have not kept up with the changes that are unfolding before us. Sociologists Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, among others, have noted that the

¹⁶ Ibid., 84.

¹⁷ A. Gini and J. J. Giordano, “The Human Condition and Strivings to Flourish,” in *Scientific and Philosophical Perspectives in Neuroethics*, eds. James J. Giordano and Bert Gordijn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 343-44.

social sciences are being challenged by these changes.¹⁸ The same can be said of other scholarly disciplines.¹⁹

In light of this situation, scholars point to the need for a re-examination of the existing fundamental ideas and theories we use to describe “modern society.” Beck and Sznajder, for example, state that “if the social sciences want to avoid becoming a museum of antiquated ideas,”²⁰ they must engage in a healthy re-examination of the changes at play in the world. In an effort to study realistically the pathways that may lead to peace, considerable attention must be devoted to adapting existing theories that are no longer capable of describing the changing world. By way of example, three trends can be highlighted. These are: modernity, globalization, and cosmopolitanism. All of these phenomena are indicators of the sea change that continues to shape the global order.

The sociologist Anthony Giddens has described modernity as another term for modern society or industrial civilization. Modernity lives in the future rather than the past.²¹ As a dynamic force unparalleled in any previous type of social order, modernity is connected with “a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the ‘world as an open transformation by human intervention.’” Modernity is comprised of complex

¹⁸ See Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznajder, “Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (January 2010): 382-403.

¹⁹ See, inter alia: Saskia Sassen, “Territory and Territoriality in the Global Economy,” *International Sociology* (June 2000): 372-93; William T. Robinson, “Social Theory of Globalization: The Rise of a Transnational State,” *Theory and Society* (April 2001): 157-200; Eric Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Fred Block, *Revising State Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Saskia Sassen, *A Sociology of Globalization* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007); and Diane Perrons, *Globalization and Social Change: People and Places in a Divided World* (London: Routledge, 2004).

²⁰ Beck and Sznajder, “Unpacking Cosmopolitanism,” 386.

²¹ Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 94.

economic institutions, including a market economy and a variety of political institutions such as the nation-state and mass democracy.²² As a process that is, or should be, open to change, modernity has now evolved from its origins as a Western phenomenon to what is presently called globalization.

Our second concept, globalization, is a widely used term described by some social scientists as the period that follows modernity. Certain authorities, therefore, refer to it as the “second modernity.” Just as the emergence of industrial society caused a breakdown in agricultural society, globalization has transformed industrial society into broader social and economic relationships stretching worldwide. Globalization is composed of and creates social networks that can be located thousands of miles apart; yet globalization, through the communications revolution, has also brought about a “time-space compression.” We no longer rely on a physical presence, but by means of technology can remove the limitations of space and time. As a result of such developments, we see a significant acceleration in the pace of life. Globalization links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents.

Globalization has its contradictions. For example, some scholars note that although the nation-state still has an important role to play, the world has moved beyond the old concepts of national and international. Sociologists Beck and Sznaider explain this change:

National spaces have become denationalized, so that the national is no longer national, just as the international is no longer international. New realities are arising: a new mapping of space and time, new co-ordinates for the social and the political are emerging which have to be theoretically and empirically researched and elaborated.²³

²² Ibid.

²³ Beck and Sznaider, “Unpacking Cosmopolitanism,” 386.

Another contradiction of globalization is that both the state and the states-system remain, but are subjected to major changes. Although the state has not and cannot disappear, according to the international relations scholar Ian Clark, globalization may be viewed as an “addition to, not a substitute for, the existing international order...globalization is not some process over and above the activities of states, but is instead an element within state transformation,” or a globalized state.²⁴ Clark concludes that, “We need to face the seeming paradox that there can indeed be an international order of globalized states.”²⁵ Similarly, the commentator Parag Khanna makes a distinction between globalization and geopolitics. He explains that “globalization involves free flows, especially of an economic nature, [but] geopolitics involves largely political and military efforts aimed at gaining control over, but frequently disrupting those flows....”²⁶

The third concept we will consider is cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism refers to a set of moral standards for living in a global order.²⁷ Kwame Anthony Appiah, a Professor of Philosophy and a member of the Center for Human Values at Princeton University, describes himself as a world citizen in this emerging global order in that he is a product of a mixed marriage. He explains that his mother was born in West England, and his father in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Appiah observes that today cosmopolitanism “is a temperament that is to be found on every continent....”²⁸ He defines cosmopolitanism as:

²⁴ Ian Clark, “Globalization and the Post-Cold War Order,” in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, by John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 554.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 555.

²⁶ Quoted in George Ritzer, *Globalization: The Essentials* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 114.

²⁷ See Kwame Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

²⁸ Kwame Appiah, “Education for Global Citizenship,” *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 107 (April 2008): 98.

...the conjunction of two ideas. One, which it shares with a lot of people, which is some form of commitment to the universality of concern for all human beings. That's one part of it. But what is distinctive about cosmopolitan universalism is that it combines that sense that everybody matters, every human being is important, with the idea that people are entitled to live lives according to different ideals, different conceptions of what they're up to, what they think is worthwhile.²⁹

Appiah continues, "So unlike many universalities, cosmopolitans aren't in the business of trying to persuade everybody to be like themselves. We like the fact that the world is full of different kinds of people."³⁰ However, Appiah is quick to point out that "where culture is bad for people...the cosmopolitan doesn't have to be tolerant of it. We don't need to treat genocide or human rights abuses as just another part of the quaint diversity of the species...."³¹

Decades ago, in her famous work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the political theorist Hannah Arendt offered the following observation about nationalism as a barrier to peace:

Politically speaking, tribal nationalism always insists that its own people is surrounded by "a world

²⁹ Whitney Johnson, "A Conversation with Kwame Appiah," *Mandala Journal*, 2009-2010 (available from [http://mandala.uga.edu/issues/8/appiah_conversation.php]; accessed 1 November 2012). Additional sources on cosmopolitanism include: Martha C. Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in *For Love of Country?*, ed. Joshua Cohen, 3-17 (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Lee Trepanier and Khalil M. Habib, eds., *Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Globalization: Citizens without States* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Georg Cavallar, *Imperfect Cosmopolis: Studies in the History of International Legal Theory and Cosmopolitan Ideas* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011); Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco, eds., *Cosmopolitanism in Practice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009); and Roland Pierik and Wouter Werner, eds., *Cosmopolitanism in Context: Perspectives from International Law and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁰ Appiah, "Education for Global Citizenship," 98.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

of enemies,” “one against all,” that a fundamental difference exists between this people and all others. It claims its people to be unique, individual, incompatible with all others, and denies theoretically the very possibility of a common mankind long before it is used to destroy the humanity of man.³²

Arendt’s vision of a “common mankind,” like cosmopolitanism’s commitment to the universality of all human beings, points to the fact that the examination of humankind as a whole should be at the center of our theories and empirical studies, especially in relation to world peace. Knowledge must take us to new ways of conceptualizing the world as a unity. In this way, we can carry out research in pursuit of knowledge that is relevant and valid to our ever-changing global community. In this regard, Appiah places great importance on what he calls an education for global citizenship. He explains:

Each person you know about and can affect is someone to whom you have responsibilities: to say this is just to affirm the very idea of morality. The challenge, then, is to take minds and hearts formed over the long millennia of living in local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe we have become. And that means shaping hearts and minds for our life together on this planet, beginning, of course, with the education of the young.³³

The Bahá’í Chair: An Education for Global Peace

We have briefly sketched the barbarity that has formed much of our history, while also recalling the humanity that endures even amid the darkest moments. We have also explored the nature of the accelerated changes that chisel away at and reshape our planet into a future that, from early indications,

³² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1962), 227.

³³ Appiah, “Education for Global Citizenship,” 88.

is sure to be vastly different from what any of us can imagine today. Here, I would like to focus on the role of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace, which is part of the mission conveyed earlier by Dean Townshend to “be a solution to the world’s challenges.”

In 1993, the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace was founded at this forward-thinking, leading university. The mission of the Chair as described in its founding document is “to initiate public forums for discussing the issues proposed in the Statement of the Universal House of Justice [the International Council of the Bahá'í Faith], entitled *The Promise of World Peace*.”³⁴ The contents of the Statement provide the guiding charter for the work of the Bahá'í Chair. However, I would like to discuss the source from which these ideas originated. Over its history of almost 170 years, the Bahá'í Faith has taken an active part in raising humanity’s consciousness on the vital question of world peace.

In December of 1919, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who was then the appointed head of the Bahá'í Faith, received a communication from the Executive Committee of the “Central Organization for a Durable Peace” at The Hague.³⁵ Representatives from nine European nations and the United States had formed this organization, and its deliberations resulted in a policy statement that expressed a “willingness to accept military sanctions against countries that started hostilities without first making a good faith effort to resolve a dispute by submitting to international arbitration or making some other appeal to the

³⁴ See “Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace,” n.d. (signed by members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and representatives of the University of Maryland).

³⁵ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), 307.

³⁶ Swarthmore College Peace Collection, “Central Organization for a Durable Peace [Organisation Central pour une Paix Durable] Collected Records, 1914-1919” (available from [<http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/CDGB/centralorganisation.htm>]; accessed 1 November 2012).

existing peace machinery.”³⁶ The committee met throughout World War I to discuss the basis of a durable peace and it disbanded after the Treaty of Versailles was enacted in 1919.

Unable to visit The Hague in person, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá instead wrote a letter of reply to the organization, which he dispatched by a special delegation. He praised the efforts of the organizing committee and wrote the following about world peace:

There is not one soul whose conscience does not testify that in this day there is no more important matter in the world than that of universal peace....But the wise souls who are aware of the essential relationships emanating from the realities of things consider that one single matter cannot, by itself, influence the human reality as it ought and should....³⁷

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then expounded on the need for a comprehensive framework for peace, one that takes into consideration the many issues that negatively impact humanity’s progress and one founded on positive values. In his letter, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sketched a plan of action that would support and advance the goal of world peace; this emphasized the importance of applying spiritual values while exploring solutions to the social ills which prevent the realization of peace. The principles and concerns set forth in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letter, as well as the themes found in *The Promise of World Peace*, find their roots in the original texts written by Bahá’u’lláh, the Prophet-founder of the Bahá’í Faith.

In the late 1860s, Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s father, wrote to rulers and leaders throughout the world (including the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, various European kings, rulers of America, the Shah of Iran under the Qajar Dynasty, and the Pope and other religious leaders) calling on them to gather together in their role as leaders and resolve their differences

³⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 2000), 311.

in order that their citizens might live under wise and just government.³⁸ Emphasizing the changes that were reshaping the world, Bahá'u'lláh described humanity as having reached the condition where it would have to be considered as a single common community. He called upon the national leaders to resolve their differences and find solutions to oppression and injustice. He reminded them of the changes that were taking form in the world which had, for the first time in human history, created the oneness of humanity, a condition that required cooperation among the nations of the world in resolving differences, removing inequality, and upholding justice.

Bahá'u'lláh asked the leaders to adopt a system of collective security based on a shared commitment to prevent, or respond by putting an end to, the aggression perpetrated by any one nation. He stressed the need to create an international, democratically elected body representing all the nations of the world in order to manage conflicts that arise between states. He stated that an international auxiliary language would serve as a mechanism for promoting world unity in that it would greatly enhance communication and consultation. Bahá'u'lláh went beyond the global dimension of change, stressing the need for the development of values at the personal level, which he said constitute the bedrock of society because they relate to the moral and spiritual foundation of the social order. He denounced oppression and corruption, stressed the necessity of trustworthiness and justice, emphasized the need for universal education to include values that transcend all cultures, and said that science and religion must agree.³⁹

Vision for the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace

With this brief background, I now come to the vision and prospects for the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace. Situated at the

³⁸ See Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002).

³⁹ See Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990).

University of Maryland, where the key features of its strategic mission are innovation, entrepreneurship, and engagement with the world, the Bahá'í Chair's central aim is to create a learning community where students examine the complexity that surrounds the vast and complex topic of peace. Learning takes place through a process-oriented, dialogic, and reflective inquiry whereby the study of a body of knowledge results in practical means for the betterment of the human condition. Here the relationship between science and religion is central to the pursuit of knowledge and its positive application. In this context of knowledge seeking and application, the agreement between science and religion is paramount.⁴⁰ I say this because from a Bahá'í perspective on peace, as noted in Bahá'í texts: "It is impossible for religion to be contrary to science"⁴¹ because both "constitute the dual knowledge system...."⁴² Although science can offer methods and tools of inquiry and learning, it alone cannot define the direction toward which society should move; rather, moral and spiritual principles must face the scrutiny of science, and vice versa.

Viewing peace as far more than simply the elimination of war or the prohibition of the weapons and methods of war, the Bahá'í Chair draws insights from universal values, which are the foundation for an education for peace. Equally important to this foundation is the study and development of a sound scientific basis of knowledge drawn from any and all fields of study that can advance a more peaceful world and greater happiness for humankind.

In this context, the study of world peace is more than the elimination war and violence—which are currently the dominant means for managing international conflicts.

⁴⁰ See the following source (also reprinted in Appendix 2): The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 18-19.

⁴¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), 145.

⁴² Bahá'í World Centre, *One Common Faith* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2005), 33.

Prohibiting weapons of mass destruction, although an important goal, will not move us closer to peace. Rather, peace stems from an inner state, one that is supported by values. Here, the aspiration for peace is an attitude, a will, and a yearning which promotes the discovery and implementation of practical measures for peace. The Bahá'í Chair offers a comprehensive framework for working toward peace. What do I mean by this? There are major global social issues which, if not addressed first, will continue to serve as barriers to peace. Although by no means an exhaustive list, a few of these issues are: rising global inequality, discrimination and violence against women, tensions and divisions caused by religious conflicts, a growing culture of hate, the scourge of prejudice and racism, lack of universal education, and failure to teach a concept of world citizenship.

To address these and many other obstacles to peace, the Bahá'í Chair will draw upon a set of values that can help solve social problems. Students study, discuss, and reflect on correlating values with the wealth of sound knowledge that is generated in every field of study. Similarly, values will be examined and their application explored in the search for solutions to social problems. In short, the Chair's goal is to utilize the strength that an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary program for the study of world peace can offer.

I would like to share the following example of the kind of multidisciplinary approach the Chair will take. An advertisement for a program called Human Dimensions of Global Change reads: "The Department of Earth and Environment is looking for a candidate trained in political ecology, development studies, geography, sociology, [and] anthropology. The candidate is expected to utilize mixed methods to explore the impacts, adaptation and vulnerability associated with global change (e.g., natural disasters, food security, water resources, and livelihoods)."⁴³

⁴³ Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's Section on Science, Knowledge & Technology.

Staying with the comprehensive framework for peace, the Bahá'í Chair will adopt what I call a “worldview approach.” This approach moves beyond nationalism and particularism and instead embraces a global, or “globalizing,” view of peace. Here, perspectives from diverse cultures are valued and evaluated. A network of scholars and international research partnerships will be formed representing multiple viewpoints on social problems. The worldview approach significantly expands and enriches the prevailing, Western model in the exploration of the possibility of peace. Viewing humanity as a collective and organic whole, the worldview approach will explore the role that social actors and structures play in removing obstacles to peace.

The worldview approach is all-embracing in its outlook, examining the disorders that impact all people and the entire globe. It considers the contributions from a diversity of peoples, cultures, nationalities, and perspectives. It blends and embodies the ideals of the East and the West, of North and South.

To further expand the reach of the worldview approach, the Bahá'í Chair, in recent discussions with Dean Townshend, has begun exploring steps toward the establishment of a “Global Council of Peace Chairs.” The scope of the proposed Global Council will, in the first instance, bring together, in a spirit of collaboration, the three Peace Chairs of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. However, in due course, it will extend to other universities regionally, nationally, and especially worldwide. The Bahá'í Chair will assume a major leadership role in coordinating this initiative, which intends to enlarge the reach of the interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace.

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace is committed to offering students a broad, realistic, and applied education for and about peace. Through a dialogic process of learning, the use of the mind, the expansion of knowledge, and insight into the realities and complexities of life, we begin to imagine a world in which we work toward applying individual skills and capacities in

constructing a better world. This is a process of learning that is centered on applying values and knowledge toward positive ends that transcend specific fields of study and career paths. Regardless of his or her place in society, every student and individual can be empowered to embrace the transformative nature of the education for peace provided by the Bahá'í Chair.

The ultimate goal of the Chair's teaching and research is to explore new frontiers of learning about peace. The aim of this journey is pushing forward the horizon and exploring the possibilities before us. The astrophysicist Carl Sagan stated: "What distinguishes our species is thought. The cerebral cortex is a liberation.... We are, each of us, largely responsible for what gets put into our brains, for what, as adults, we wind up caring for and knowing about."⁴⁴

The Bahá'í Chair stands ready to do its part in advancing a new and innovative discourse on global peace. It will do so through diligent work, collaboration with scholars throughout the world, and research and publications; all intended to advance knowledge and understanding of how to develop a better world.

We are hopeful, confident, unafraid, and eager to labor on a creative path to world peace. Please join with us in this effort. Thank you.

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APPENDIX 1

BIOGRAPHY OF HODA MAHMOUDI

A scholar of international renown, Research Professor Hoda Mahmoudi holds the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland (UMD).

The Chair is an endowed academic program that advances interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace. Professor Mahmoudi has served in this position since July 2012.

As the Bahá'í Chair Professor, Dr. Mahmoudi develops a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies that explore the role of social actors and structures in removing obstacles to peace and creating paths to a better world. In pursuit of this goal, she collaborates with a wide range of scholars, researchers, and practitioners. In particular, Professor Mahmoudi advocates a broad concept of peacemaking—which she refers to as a “worldview approach”—that draws insights from all cultures.

Before joining the University of Maryland faculty, Professor Mahmoudi served as the head of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel from 2001 to 2012. Her Bahá'í service also includes administrative appointments and assignments at the international and national levels.

Previously, Dr. Mahmoudi was Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Northeastern Illinois University, where she was also a faculty member in the Department of Sociology. Professor Mahmoudi served as Vice President and Dean of Olivet College, where she was instrumental in an institutional transformation that generated national recognition. She has presented her ideas on institutional change before various high-profile forums and participated in Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management and the Wharton Institute for Research on Higher Education at the University of Pennsylvania.

As an active scholar and researcher, Dr. Mahmoudi has secured and supervised significant institutional grants from prestigious organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Kellogg Foundation, and the National Science Foundation. As the Bahá'í Chair Professor, she is committed to working with UMD faculty and students to develop innovative, interdisciplinary research proposals.

Currently, Professor Mahmoudi is writing a book about an American woman born in 1851 in upstate New York, who may have faded into Victorian obscurity had she not possessed an insatiable curiosity about the world and a strong desire to make an imprint of her own. When she walked onto the world stage she was already in her fifties, having just finished her medical degree and joined the Bahá'í Faith. In 1909, she responded, without hesitation, to a daring mission to work in Tehran, Iran, which would change the lives of thousands and reshape the future for women of her era. She established an active medical practice for women, founded an all-girls school, and engaged in educational activities aimed at advancing the status of women. Having lived in Iran for over thirty years until her death, her story reveals a remarkable life that heralded a global awakening. She spoke of peace in an age of violence, of justice in an age of inequality, and of progress in opposition to the forces of fundamentalism.

Professor Mahmoudi's writings on subjects such as formal organizations, medical sociology, cross national research, and women's studies have appeared in leading publications, including *Organizational Studies*, *Group and Organization Studies*, *International Review of Modern Sociology*, and *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*. Her essay on "Altruism and Extensivity in the Bahá'í Religion" (co-authored with Wendy Heller) appears in the volume *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism*.

Olivet College granted Professor Mahmoudi special recognition for her support of and service to students of color and for her work on diversity issues and international education. She is also the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Award for Excellence in Bahá'í Studies, the Hewlett Grant for Faculty Development, and the Professor of the Year award from Westminster College of Salt Lake City.

Dr. Mahmoudi holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, an M.A. in Educational Psychology, and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Utah.

APPENDIX 3

SUPPORTING THE BAHÁ'Í CHAIR FOR WORLD PEACE

To support its many and diverse operations, the Bahá'í Chair depends largely on contributions it receives thanks to the generosity of donors. For information about the Chair, please see pages ix-xi or visit www.bahaichair.umd.edu.

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland welcomes your support in raising awareness about its important and timely mission in examining pathways to peace. As a self-supporting academic program, the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace is grateful for and appreciates contributions of any amount in support of its activities.

If you would like to consider making a financial gift, there are two funds to which you can contribute:

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Contributing to the operations of the Chair makes its numerous and varied programmatic activities possible. Those who wish to contribute to the operations account should make checks payable to:

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