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## Abdul Aziz Said: Peace Educator, Cathedral Builder, Soul Dancer - 1930-2021 - A Tribute and Retrospective

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**Abdul Aziz Said: Peace Educator, Cathedral Builder, Soul Dancer - 1930-2021  
A Tribute and Retrospective**

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*The life, thought, and spirituality of political scientist and peace educator, Abdul Aziz Said (1930-2021), are explored through: a) first-hand accounts from five decades of professional and personal collaboration between Said and the author; b) themes in his writings, especially in *Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective, Fourth Edition* and *Bridges, Not Barriers: The American Dream and the Global Community*; and c) his conviction that love is a relevant and significant force in international relations and peace building and needs to be strengthened if peace is to be sustained (a conviction shared by Martin Luther King Jr, Sigmund Freud, Greek philosophers, and many luminaries in history). A list of his published works is appended.*

Key words; Abdul Aziz Said, international politics in global perspective, spirituality and politics, peace paradigms, intercultural engagement, Abdul Aziz Said bibliography

For five decades I was blessed to know Abdul Aziz Said as friend, colleague, and soul mentor. Some friends are remembered because they touch your mind. Others your heart. And others reach into your soul. Abdul Aziz will be cherished forever for touching all three. He was one of those rare people who integrate intellectual, emotional, and spiritual knowing in themselves and recognize and awaken it in others. He was one of the most whole and integral persons I have been privileged to know.

Everyone engaged in peace education and global studies should, if they have not already, learn of the contributions Abdul Aziz Said has made to our field. His passion for peace, and compassion for the victims of violence and oppression, did not arise as abstract ideals, or isolated academic inquiry, but from brutal experience. When asked for his thinking on war, in any part of the world, a deep sadness would come over him. He was born on September 1, 1930 to a Christian Orthodox family in French-occupied Syria. His younger brother, when only three years old, was struck by a French military vehicle and died in his arms. In World War II, his family was bombed by both Axis and Allied forces. His father was exiled after leading an uprising against French rule. After Syria became independent, his studies were disrupted by coups and instability. Eventually, Abdul Aziz emigrated and earned his doctoral degree at American University (AU) in Washington DC, where he was considered “colored” and experienced racial discrimination.

But rather than despairing or becoming bitter, he transformed these sufferings into building stones for a lifelong career in peace education. He stayed on at American University after completing his doctoral degree and, for more than fifty years, served as a professor in the newly established School for International Service. Along the way he founded the university’s Center for Global Peace and the International Peace and Conflict Resolution program. He went through endless committee meetings and administrative and bureaucratic hurdles to secure academic approval for B.A, M.A.

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and, eventually, PhD programs in peace studies. He developed courses and curricula, and got top-notch faculty hired and tenured until AU had one of the most advanced and enduring programs in the field. It is challenging enough to be a teacher of peace studies. It is even more challenging to institutionalize peace studies so that it continues beyond one's own tenure. Today the peace and conflict resolution programs at AU attract students from all over the world and networks with many other institutions.

Abdul Aziz also produced numerous books, articles, editorials, and blog posts. He mentored thousands of students. He introduced Islamic Peace Studies at American University, in a country marked by anti-Arab and anti-Islamic bigotry. One of my prized possessions, a gift from Abdul Aziz in appreciation for our collaboration on inter-religious and spiritual approaches to peacebuilding, is a beautifully embossed edition of the Koran, in Arabic.

Abdul Aziz addressed ignorance, fear, and hate with a different kind of education. As a sometime guest teacher in his AU peace studies courses, I was impressed not only by the content, but also the methodology in his approach to peace education. Beginning with his Introduction and overview of peace studies, a course on paradigms of peace, through more advanced research courses, he placed a high degree of trust in his students to share responsibility for their own and class learning. Teams of students worked collaboratively on research and led inquiry and discussion of course readings, while he set the tone and offered inspiration and guidance. He took the students and their abilities seriously and, as learner-teachers, they rose to meet his high level of trust and expectations.

His commitment went beyond academic walls. Abdul Aziz actively engaged in conflict-resolution projects, including Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and the Iraq conflict. He joined protests, including against the Vietnam War and apartheid in South Africa. He served as an advisor to the United Nations, UNESCO, the US State Department, the White House, and to many non-governmental organizations. For many years he served on the Board of Trustees of Global Education Associates (GEA), which Gerald Mische and I co-founded, and was much loved and respected by his fellow board members and the GEA staff.

As a frequent guest in our home, he charmed our children with his personal attentions. They were also fascinated by his large mustache. My daughter Monica recalls the time she was visiting colleges in the DC area with her father and they had an appointment to visit Abdul Aziz at AU. Stuck in DC traffic, they arrived at his office full of apologies for being more than an hour late. It was after academic hours and they feared that Abdul Aziz might have already gone home or at least be perturbed. But Monica, then a shy and hesitant teen, was welcomed by Abdul Aziz as if she were a queen: "Never has anyone had to wait so little for such a splendid person as you," he smiled. Now a professor herself, she lights up when she remembers this validating welcome. Abdul Aziz graciously served tea and treats, engaged her in conversation, and left her forever enchanted. Such gestures and considerations marked all of his one-on-one encounters, whether with diplomats, academicians, or teenagers.

With so much success, was Abdul Aziz ever discouraged? I once asked him that. It was near the end of his academic career, when, after fifty years of teaching, he had already announced his coming retirement. He had been through many upheavals in academia and, as a highly respected

member of the AU faculty and its longest serving member, had often been prevailed on to broker resolutions to campus conflicts within and between administrators, faculty and students. He confessed that the changes in academia (including from an emphasis on liberal education in service of democracy and the common good to a business-oriented model) was troubling. He did not know if he would undertake in this more mercenary context his work of the past fifty years. But knowing him, I believe he would have risen to the challenge, whatever its nature or context, in the cause of educating for peace.

What had nurtured and sustained him, with equanimity and integrity, through all the turbulent years, was his spiritual practice of Sufism. Once, at his home, when I had asked about his spirituality, he showed me his prayer rug and described his centering meditation and movement. Then he danced. He spoke of hate and alienation as a great distancing from the sacred. In contrast, peace, justice, love, unity, are movements toward the sacred in self and the universe. Life is in the movement, the dance, to the center of self and God, and outward into the world. And could Abdul Aziz ever do that dance.

#### *Building a Cathedral*

Abdul Aziz and I were often speakers at the same conferences and came to know each other's themes and stories. One story that he frequently included in his talks, and which I loved hearing, had to do with stone workers. Although I may not recount it as ably as he told it, the broad strokes went something like this:

While travelling through a new country a stranger came across a group of stone workers. He asked one worker, "What are you doing?" "Cutting stones," grunted the worker. He asked another worker, "What are you doing?" "Lifting stones," gasped the worker. He asked a third worker who was cementing stones, "And you sir, what are you doing?" This worker proudly and joyfully proclaimed, "Building a cathedral!"

The point of telling this story over and over was to remind peace educators to value their long-range work. It takes hundreds of years to complete a cathedral. Those who cut, heft and lay foundation stones may never live to see steeples rising to the sky. Our work as peace educators is to contribute our part in building something sacred for the long-range well-being of the planet and humanity. We cut and move our stones, student by student, school by school, community by community, country by country, peace by peace. We may work for many decades and yet not be finished; we hand the further stages of work on to future generations. Although we may not see the rising steeples, we can be proud of our work in building firm foundations, in joining the dance, in moving the planetary community closer to a realization of its sacred potential.

I will forever think of Abdul Aziz Said himself as a pre-eminent peace educator, a cathedral builder, a soul dancer with feet touching ground but also raising sights and spirits to the skies.

#### **Intellectual and Spiritual Legacy: A Retrospective**

The depth and breadth of Abdul Aziz's intellectual and spiritual legacy is reflected in his published works, a list of which has been lovingly compiled by Nathan Funk and Meena-Sharify-Funk and appended below. Two of these works are visited here so that readers new to Said's contributions can glimpse something of his thought, vision, and spirit. In his publishing as well as his teaching,

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Abdul Aziz's career is remarkable for vision and courage to go beyond a traditional International Relations framework focused on dynamics of political power and to incorporate perspectives from other disciplines and approaches, including insights from theories of world order, philosophy, psychology, spirituality, and love.

### **Concepts of International Politics in a Global Perspective**

#### ***Traditional International Relations***

*Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1995), which Abdul Aziz Said co-authored with Charles O Lerche, Jr. and Charles O. Lerche III, remains, more than 25 years later, an excellent text for introductory college courses in international relations (IR). It offers a clear, concise summary of standard IR topics, including: IR's intellectual history and major theories; IR policy types, goals and priorities; state actors and structures; and IR decision making processes, capabilities, and implementation through political, economic, psychological and military techniques. It also explores the nature of an emerging global political system, including interstate relationships; equality and inequality in global politics; assumptions and patterns of power politics; and questions of equilibrium, balance of power, and integration of power in global politics.

The nation-state system, and an emerging global system, are examined and their relative strengths and limitations to effectively address new issues and conflicts in an age of increasing global interdependence are critiqued. New weapons technologies threaten total war and mass destruction and require new systems for arms control and war prevention. New economic interdependencies, growing gaps between the rich and poor within and between countries, and the rising power of transnational corporations (some with more wealth than many nation states), make it necessary to rethink global economic systems. New ecological threats exceed the capacity of nation states and existing inter-state systems to resolve effectively and require new global-level policies and structures. So do new global communications technologies and such global issues as energy, outer space, population, hunger, production and consumption, terrorism, and human rights. Belief systems, ideologies, nationalism and religious fundamentalism are also examined in light of their impacts on inter-state relations and the global system.

In using this text today, some obvious updates could be made on the current state of these issues and their role in conflict and security within and between states. Health and global pandemics, such as AIDs, SARs, and Covid-19, would need to be added. So too, the increasing urgency of climate change. But the basic analysis and underlying premises would remain the same – that there is a need to rethink the values, goals, and processes of international relations and the global system.

#### ***World Order Studies***

While the above content meets the standards of a very fine text for traditional approaches to International Relations, this work also offers perspectives and content that qualify it as a very fine text in World Order Studies, a field that began emerging in the 1960s and continued to grow in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, at the time Said and his co-authors were producing and updating their several editions of *Concepts of International Relations in Global Perspective*.

There are some similarities, but also significant differences between traditional IR and World Order (WO) studies. These differences, as outlined by the Institute for World Order in its 1961-1971 Report and discussed in Mische and Mische (1977), include:

1. While traditional IR professes to be values-free, WO Studies aims to be values clear. It emphasizes the values of war prevention and nonviolent conflict resolution, social justice, human rights, economic well-being, democratic participation, and ecological balance. These values are also espoused in the United Nations Charter and international agreements.
2. While traditional IR focuses on the past and present, WO Studies adds a focus on the future.
3. While traditional IR focuses on the nation-state as the primary actor, WO Studies considers a range of actors from individuals and nongovernmental organizations to regional alliances and world organizations.
4. While traditional IR focuses on policies that serve the national interest, WO Studies emphasize policies that consider world interest -the global common good and planetary well-being.
5. While traditional IR accepts violence as a legitimate tool of nation-states, WO inquiry explores alternatives to violence.
6. While traditional IR is descriptive, WO Studies is also prescriptive; it assesses possible outcomes of current policies and trends and proposes alternatives, including and transitional steps to move from existing systems to a preferred future.

In their Introduction, Said and his co-authors (1995) make it clear that they intend to depart from the behavioralist and positivist approaches of traditional IR and instead to take a normative and prescriptive approach with emphasis on our common humanity, planetary home, and the global common good. They consider an academic rubric that avoids normative judgements and shuns questions of “good or bad,” “right or wrong” to be untenable:

. . . only when we approach these problems not merely with the tools of the laboratory but also with a heightened sense of the value at stake, will we be able to see the resemblance among all of us. In the last analysis, we are all--whether white or black, female or male, upper- or lower-class, nationals of the United States or any other country, stateless persons striving for self-determination or citizens accorded full human rights—human, and we should appreciate our common human fate. Once we realize this need, we can achieve a better appreciation of the forces that unite us and those that set us apart. We will also come to realize that our most common and basic value in the world today—our survival—is threatened at present by a lack of a sense of community; by racism, sexism, and religious fanaticism; and by poverty, environmental pollution, and weapons of mass destruction. This volume points the way toward solidarity in global perspective.” (p.16)

This purpose is developed throughout the volume, and then further elaborated in the final chapter, “Toward Cooperative Global Politics.” Said and his co-authors underscore the failure of a hegemonic world system dominated by superpowers, and of materialist, competitive, amoral and double-standard systems, to safeguard human security. They prescribe an alternative, cooperative model, to be developed through consensus decision-making and upheld by four pillars:

1. the natural environment, our planet and ecological balance as the key value;

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2. the human environment, with key values organized around basic needs for survival, material well-being, identity, meaning, and freedom;
3. a viable political environment, with institutions that can sustain pluralism and where “capitalism, socialism, tribalism, and communalism can supplement one another”;
4. the cultural environment; i.e., how we live our lives, marked by diversity, tolerance, culture is seen as a resource for meeting deep-rooted human needs. (p. 287)

Such a new world order calls for

. . . a shift in our perspectives and worldview from the nation-state to one world; from balance of power to justice; from national interest to human interest; from the rights of states to human rights; from independence and sovereignty of states to interdependence; from economic growth as a central value to transformation; from materialism to human progress through spiritual evolution; from an environment to be exploited to an environment that has rights of its own; and from coercion and war to collaboration and nonviolence. (Said, Lerche & Lerche, 1995, pp. 287-288)

This vision also calls for discarding the old diplomacy which viewed world politics as a struggle of nation states to protect their national interests, and for developing a new diplomacy in which world politics is seen as a struggle for peace based on justice and freedom for all and the wholeness of planetary life.

***P.S. Spirituality and a New Global Politics***

Like most college texts, this one proceeds with reasoned analysis and academic restraint. Values concerns are raised, but without moralistic preaching. Rational modes of inquiry are employed to address rational modes of learning.

But in this revised, updated 4<sup>th</sup> edition, a “*Postscript*” was added on a matter, and in a manner, rarely approached in academic texts, whether for traditional international relations or world order studies. It is as if, after 290 pages of appealing to human reason, the full content and nature of the challenges confronting humanity cannot be contained within narrow academic boundaries or speak to reason alone. In three eloquent pages it is proposed that global affairs must also include emotional, intuitive, spiritual, and other modes of knowing. An ecologically viable global system must be *felt* as well as rationally argued. Because human consciousness comprises both analytical and intuitive modes, and the rational and intuitive complement one another in human wholeness and effective creativity, it follows that

. . . a new ethic must allow humanity to experience itself as complete . . . It must value acceptance of the self as a whole, embracing the unconscious as well as conscious. The integration of the personality at the individual level becomes a metaphor for the integration of humanity at the species level. (292)

But more than a metaphor, Said and his co-authors believe a spiritual component has practical applications for the transformation of global systems:

We feel that inner commitment to a vision of humankind’s place in the universe that gives priority to ethical thought and values over mere physical existence is a fundamental prerequisite for survival and ultimately prosperity on the planet. . . It may be that only this

kind of inner strength and creative energy can sustain us and enable us to [transcend current challenges and say yes to a life of greater peace, justice, humanity] (292)

***What Does Spirituality Mean and how is it Politically Relevant?***

What did Said mean by the term “spirituality”? He did *not* equate it with institutional religion or creedal theology. Nor with one world religion or one belief system. He did not support theocracies of any religious type. Nor did he associate spirituality with externalities or pious practices of different religions. Rather, he saw spirituality as transcending the boundaries of religion. He saw it as coming from the “inner essence of a person.”

He and his co-authors use the Scottish Council of Churches 1977 definition that sees spirituality as “an attempt to grow in sensitivity to self, to others, to non-human creations and to God who is within and beyond this totality.” (p. 291)

Said further describes spirituality as “a shift in consciousness that sees the whole of existence contained in the parts, and from the parts the whole is constructed. Spirituality filters out the superficial, the changing, and so the essential emerges.” (p. 291)

And, in contrast to many who would separate spirituality from politics, Said insisted that spirituality and politics are linked:

. . . politics . . . is inherently spiritual because our public life reflects our social values. The reconnection of politics to our highest and most worthy values is now the most important task in political life. World events and trends will continue to expose the precariousness of international relations based on separateness in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. Spirituality provides the possibility of experiencing and accepting human solidarity and, most importantly, the wholeness of life. Spirituality is an experience of a sense of unity that overcomes the principle that divides humanity on bases of religions, races, genders, and classes. (p. 291)

Scientific inquiry and spirituality are related, says Said. As an example, he cites cyberneticist Gregory Bateson’s definition of *sacrament* as “the recognition of the pattern which connects.” (p. 291) While evidence of the interconnectedness of life has been explored and verified in environmental and other sciences, and an ecological paradigm is alluded to, in these works Said does not delve in depth into its implications for an alternative politics. This is a pity, because this is a rich area of inquiry, opening the way to an ecology of mind and laying scientific and philosophic foundations for alternative politics and world systems. Science has been leading a major shift away from the atomistic and mechanistic thinking that undergirds “my nation, my ethnic group, my religion, first, alone and above others” and toward new worldviews and understandings of the Earth as a living system that support the cooperative politics and interdependent, interactive, organic models of world order proposed by Said. Moreover, the realities of climate change, collapsing eco systems, COVID and HIV-Aids pandemics offer not only evidence of human-Earth interconnectedness, but, if they are to be resolved, the need to be guided in international arena by a new ecological paradigm.



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However, in these and other works Said does point to the relevance of the world's great spiritual masters for today's global challenges, including Buddha's call to full awareness and harmony in the world. Said and his co-authors call for a reinvestment of "the sacred" which they define as any process that "explicitly links us to the largest possible context to which we belong" and includes reconsecrating the human to acknowledge "both human responsibility and divine will in our activity." (291-2)

Said believed that the great contemplative traditions and practices – whether Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Confucian, Jewish, Islamic, Christian, or aboriginal -- have important contributions to make, helping to open pathways to a shift in consciousness that enables us to see the connections between all peoples and life forms.

In discussions with Said, I know that he saw spirituality as developmental. All great religious traditions have spiritual pathways. When different religious pathways are explored only through their creedal and fundamentalist teachings or external practices, they are seen as far apart and divisive. But the deeper one goes and grows into the esoteric, internal vision and pathways of spiritual masters within each tradition, the closer they become, all leading ultimately to unitive experience of the sacred.

Though not spelled out in this volume's three-page "Postscript", what is alluded to here amounts to a gigantic paradigm shift for international relations, in which humanity's planetary future must be worked out not only through political processes, including a reshaping of global political systems, but also in the depths of the human soul.

### **Bridges Not Barriers**

In *Bridges, Not Barriers* (2006), Abdul Aziz Said, picks up where the above postscript ends. In a 41-page essay he explores the relationships between spirituality, values, and politics. Published in 2006, a decade after the fourth edition of *Concepts in International Politics in Global Perspective*, this essay was the first in the Fetzer Institute's series on "Exploring a Global Dream" and followed its earlier 2003-2006 10-essay series on "Deepening the American Dream."

The Fetzer Institute, inspired by the vision of John E. Fetzer, was founded in 1986 with a mission

to foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness in the emerging world community. The mission rests on the conviction that efforts to address the critical issues facing the world must go beyond political, social and economic strategies to the psychological and spiritual roots of those issues. ("The Fetzer Institute" in Said, 2006, p 47)

This mission emanates from an underlying belief that "critical issues in the world can best

be served by integrating the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of action and service in the world." (p. 47)

People from all different backgrounds and beliefs are searching for connection, meaning, and purpose. We are spiritual beings, born into mystery. We cannot escape the deep questions of existence and what it means to be human. (p 47)

It is easy to see why Said was chosen by the Fetzer Institute to lead this series; their worldviews and convictions on the relevance of spirituality to new pathways in global affairs are deeply aligned.

In the first chapter of *Bridges*, Said reaffirms his conviction that spirituality is vital for developing new patterns of thought and behavior in personal and global affairs and that it has special relevance for peace-building and human rights. To that end he prescribes revisiting and expanding definitions of peace beyond the “absolutisms” and “fundamental limitations” of traditional politics and religion. In an aptly titled section “Moving Beyond Pieces of Peace to Total Peace,” he writes:

The historically narrow and disorienting perspective on peace and human rights has resulted in a systemic thought pattern that focuses less on maximizing the potential of peace than on maximizing its use as another tool . . . to further short-term self-interest. (p. 1)

Political definitions of peace, particularly in the West where a Roman tradition of law and order persists, are too often limited to the narrow prerogative of national government institutions and interactions, he says. And traditional religious approaches have too often equated peace with passivity and the “tolerance of intolerable conditions” (p. 2). It is necessary to transcend these limited and limiting mind sets through a “global redefinition of self and community” if we are to attain peace, justice and global security (p. 2).

### ***Peace through Dialogue and New Learning***

Peace cannot be achieved by one nation imposing it, he asserts. Rather, peace is a process. It is an “endeavor invoking the wisdom and the dreams of others through the process of learning and dialogue.” (Said, 2006, p. 2)

Dialogue, as a new paradigm in global relations, is based on achieving new forms of knowing so that we see others in increasingly humanizing contexts, allowing us to look together toward a common future. Through dialogue we surface our key presuppositions regarding the meaning and role of “self,” “other,” “conflict,” and “peace.” Accordingly, we adjust the worldviews that frame our reality and fashion responses to one another that are appropriate to our newly understood mutual values and goals. In dialogue, we can explore and conceptualize a shared vision of peace that has depth and integrated meaning, embracing all our understandings, experiences, needs, hopes, and fears. By sharing our vulnerabilities, we find the freedom and the power to transcend them.

Furthermore, as we struggle to find our place and relationship with one another in a globalized world, we are discovering that each culture and tradition offers important solutions to questions regarding how to reach harmony. Dialogue is crucial to surfacing these “hidden treasures.” Once we are able to unlock the secrets of effective communications and pierce the walls of misperception and mistrust, we can gather these enriching insights, lessons, and opportunities, together building a vision that inspires and moves us toward a potential much greater than we could have realized as individuals. (2006, pp. 2-3)

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Again, he insists that spirituality has a major role to play in developing a “compass capable of guiding humanity toward a culture of peace” because it can help “bridge the tremendous material and cultural divides that define the world today.” (p. 5) Intuitive as well as rational approaches are needed to achieve new visions and social change. In this regard, the world’s great contemplative traditions have spiritual resources and enduring wisdom to offer. “Indeed, any vision with a chance of succeeding must incorporate spiritual principles because of spirituality’s exclusive ability to transcend material and cultural gaps.” (p. 5)

*Bridges, Not Barriers*, was published some 15 years ago, long before the Trump administration in the U.S. began building border walls to stop the flow of refugees into the United States from the South; more than a decade before Trump espoused “America first” policies over global cooperation; and long before red-hatted Trump followers stormed the U.S. capitol in a violent effort to overturn democratic elections. But re-reading this work now, after these setbacks in the U.S., one can see how prophetic Abdul Aziz was in suggesting that the physical and mental walls that shut out the truth of our interconnectedness are foreshadowed in failures of moral and spiritual development. Foreshadowed too in the failure of educational policies and practice that exclude moral and spiritual development as a vital aspect of human learning that will advance the common good.

Throughout this essay Abdul Aziz Said calls on Americans and the world to deepen and revitalize the dream of democracy; to deepen understandings and practices of true democracy and its potential to advance full human development and true global community.

***Individual Responsibility***

Where should social change begin? With social systems or individuals? Peace studies and liberal democratic thought often emphasize the need to transform unjust social systems, including institutionalized racism, sexism, poverty, and prejudice. Less focus is given to individual responsibility. Abdul Aziz Said held that both needed attention. While systems may perpetuate dehumanization, individuals are responsible for the state of the world that exists within their own hearts, minds and choices. The barriers that confront us in shaping a world of greater security and community are barriers erected first in people’s souls, at deep existential levels. So too, when it comes to building bridges – bridges to self realization, to fuller humanity and community—the action begins first in shifts in consciousness, in hearts, minds, and human wills. National governments and international organizations are not the only shapers of human well being, social justice, global security. We are all personally as well as collectively responsible for developing the consciousness, making new choices, and developing more just, peaceful and ecologically healthy systems. Each person can make a difference by beginning within themselves.

***Love as Choice, Discipline and Dynamic Force***

In Said’s (2006) vision, a deepened spirituality begins within individuals but leads outward to shape societies, cultures, and the international relations. It begets and supports understandings and values that will reshape the moral framework of an emerging global civilization. “*The reorientation of international relations to a moral framework derived from a spiritual perspective is the world’s best—and perhaps only—hope for transcending separateness and encouraging universal solidarity.*” (p. 5, emphasis added)

He asserts that, while mutual care and sacrifice are needed, they are not enough. We must learn to love. Not the easy love of Hollywood, but the hard, disciplined spiritual love of inner self-knowing and right action in the world. One does not “fall into” this type of love. It is not accidental. It is a choice. A choice made with conscious awareness and commitment to self, others, and the planetary common good. Love is not a state of being. It is an active, creative, lifegiving process. It is a dance.

He writes:

Love is a dynamic force which flows through us rather than a state we possess. To receive it, we have to give it to others. Everything on our planet has an ecological function, and love is the ecological function for humans. It demands that actions of outward care or self-sacrifice stem from an inner acceptance of and identification with the Other—whether the Other is defined by ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Indeed, when nations associate the Other with their own interests and consciousness, they ultimately experience a sense of oneness with the Other. (p. 6)

Hegemonic relations built on power over, or against, the other, whether persons or states, are ultimately self-defeating, he asserts. In contrast, a global future founded on a spiritual conception of love “represents the pinnacle of ‘enlightened self interest’” because it benefits all and thus begets a true, sustainable peace. (p. 6)

### ***Love As The Way And Ultimate Measure***

Traditional IR texts usually focus on power dynamics between states played out in international arenas. Love may be in the domain of religious and spiritual inquiry, of “soft” thinking, but it is outside the disciplinary boundaries of political science and its inclusion deemed academically inappropriate. Yet, despite the risks to his academic reputation, Abdul Aziz Said courageously insisted on its inclusion and defended its relevance.

In this he mirrored Martin Luther King, Jr. who defied critics who thought a religious leader should not engage in talk or action related to power dynamics, for wasn’t power essentially corrupt? In his 1967 speech, “Where Do We Go from Here?” presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King answered his critics by asserting that love and power are related, need one another, and must be embodied in unison for effective social change:

. . . one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as polar opposites, so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love. It was this misinterpretation that caused the philosopher Nietzsche, who was a philosopher of the will to power, to reject the Christian concept of love. It was this same misinterpretation which induced Christian theologians to reject Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power in the name of the Christian idea of love.

Now, we got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best . . . is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best

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is love correcting everything that stands against love. And this is what we must see as we move on. (King, 1967)

***Eros and Thanatos in the Psyche and in the Politics of War and Peace***

King and Said are not alone in asserting the relevance of love in international relations and the need to integrate love with positive uses of power for the advancement of social justice, peace and planetary health. Sigmund Freud underscored its relevance in his 1929 publication, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

The meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species. This struggle is what all life essentially consists of. (1929/1952 p. 791)

Freud's theory was criticized, but after further consideration he was even more convinced that it was correct. Albert Einstein was so impressed by Freud's insight and its implications for questions of war and peace that he invited Freud to an exchange of views. Einstein was concerned about the failure of politics and politicians to prevent war and wondered whether the mental sciences could shed light on how to overcome psychological obstacles to peace.

In a letter dated April 29, 1931, Einstein wrote to Freud:

You have shown with irresistible lucidity how inseparably the aggressive and destructive instincts are bound up in the human psyche with those of love and the lust for life. At the same time, your convincing arguments make manifest your deep devotion to the great goal of the internal and external liberation of man from the evils of war. (as quoted in Popova, 2013)

Then, in 1932, Einstein wrote again to Freud inviting his response to the problem. Specifically, was there a way to guide human mental evolution "against the psychosis of hate and destructiveness?" Freud's response came in a letter dated September, 1932. In it he expanded on his earlier thinking in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and considered how it related to international relations and war prevention. He pointed to historic shifts humans had made from the use of brute force and violence to the development of law and order. He argued the need now for a global legal structure, one that was stronger and more effective than the then League of Nations. For a global legal structure to endure effectively it would need to be undergirded by a shared sense of identity, community and unifying authority. The transition from violence to law would also require equal rights for all; members of the ruling classes must not set themselves above the law.

Freud felt that attaining this vision would be difficult because the conflicting instincts for Love and Death, what the Greeks called *Eros* and *Thanatos*, were intertwined and deeply embedded in the human psyche, often at unconscious levels. *Eros*, or the love instinct, as Freud used it here, is not the same as erotic or sexual love, but an extension of it, akin to Plato's sense of love for one's family, community, humanity. It is associated with attraction, bonding, and community. It seeks preservation of self, humans, and the natural world. *Thanatos*, the death instinct, is associated

with repulsion, hatred, aggression, and destruction. It seeks annihilation. Freud believed that these instincts are intertwined and difficult to separate and discipline. Self preservation is related to the love instinct but might lead to aggressive action. The love instinct, if focused on a specific object, could stimulate acquisitive and possessive attitudes leading to destructive behavior.

Freud (1932) relates this to the dynamics of international war:

[W]hen a nation is summoned to engage in war, a whole gamut of human motives may respond to this appeal—high and low motives, some openly avowed, others slurred over. The lust for aggression and destruction is certainly included; the innumerable cruelties of history and man's daily life confirm its prevalence and strength. The stimulation of these destructive impulses by appeals to idealism and the erotic instinct naturally facilitate their release. . . . the ideal motive has often served as a camouflage for the dust of destruction; sometimes, as with the cruelties of the Inquisition, it seems that, while the ideal motives occupied the foreground of consciousness, they drew their strength from the destructive instincts submerged in the unconscious. Both interpretations are feasible. (as quoted in Popova)

Although Freud seems to paint a gloomy future, he proposes a way forward: learning to strengthen the Love instinct and subordinate the impulse for Death and Destruction.

Freud was not apologetic for using the word “love” and asserting its significance in the politics of peace building. In his 1932 letter to Einstein he argued that love was politically pragmatic:

From our “mythology” of the instincts we may deduce a formula for an indirect method of eliminating war. If the propensity for war be due to the destructive instinct, we have always its counter-agent, Eros, to our hand. All that produces ties of sentiment . . . must serve as war's antidote. These ties are of two kinds. First, such relations as those toward a beloved object, void though they be of sexual intent. The psychoanalyst need feel no compunction in mentioning “love” in this connection; religion uses the same language: Love thy neighbor as thyself. A pious injunction, easy to enounce, but hard to carry out! The other bond of sentiment is by way of identification. All that brings the significant resemblances between men calls into play this feeling of community identification, whereupon is founded, in large measure, the whole edifice of human society. (as quoted in Popova)

He further urged that the outcome of the conflict between Love or Death not be left to chance. In the face of Nazi sentiment that was then rising in Europe he called for strengthening the intellect, reason and will to choose Love over Death. War must be banned by informed consent.

Long before Freud, Greek philosophers, poets and playwrights depicted the conflicting instincts of *Eros* and *Thanatos*, Love and Death, in archetypal images of powerful gods, These god-personified forces inhabited nature, loving and battling one another in the skies, mountain tops, forests, seas and underground. They also inhabited the human psyche in internal battles of the soul and in external relationships between people, states and cultures. But despite their driving power within and between human beings, these god-like forces were not seen as determining human fate. Humans had choices. And how they chose between Eros or Thanatos had consequences not just

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for themselves as individuals, but for their families and for the collective well-being and survival of nature and the human community far into the future.

The dynamics and consequences of choosing between Eros or Thanatos are powerfully presented in literature about the Trojan War and its aftermath, including Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*, *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, and *The Trojan Women* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* by Euripides. There is a back story in these tales of this war. Or perhaps the right word is *inner-story*, a story waged at unconscious and conscious levels in the human psyche, and ultimately at the level of human conscience. Before the men of Greece are willing to go into battle to kill or be killed the winds of war, the death instinct, must be stirred in them. They struggle with choices between Love and Death. Choice by choice the winds of war rise. They choose to override norms protecting the sacred in nature (epitomized in desecrating the forest and killing the sacred deer). And they choose to sacrifice Love, epitomized in the killing of Agamemnon's young and innocent daughter, Iphigenia, and offering her in sacrifice to the gods of War. Only when they kill and sublimate Love and reverence for the Sacred in themselves do the winds of war arise and carry the Greeks to war against Troy.

In the beginning of these stories, Death is masked as Love. To the Greek warriors, war looks and feels like love-- love of homeland, love of comrades, love of honor. But by the end of the war the mask has fallen and the illusion is shattered. What once seemed heroic is now revealed as devastation. Honor has morphed into rape, pillage, enslavement, and a scorched Earth. Love has become Death -- death of comrades, of families, of cities, of the natural world, of the capacity for love. It has become the death of soul.

In these tragedies the end of physical combat is not the end of battle. The political, moral, spiritual, and cultural battles still rage in human hearts and pass down to future generations. There are long-term, historical and political, as well as psych-spiritual consequences for choosing Death over Love.

Not only the Greek classics, but many of the greatest, most enduring expressions in art, music, and literature explore the struggle between Love and Death as it churns in the human psyche and history. Literary masterpieces by Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Browning, Goethe, and Neruda; stirring operas and compositions by Wagner, Mozart, Puccini, Verdi, and Beethoven; paintings by Van Gogh, Picasso, Dali, El Greco, Kahlo, Chagall, are only a few of many thousands. Their greatness and endurance stems not only from masterful technique, but also because they shake succeeding generations with love and death questions at the core of human existence.

These themes also appear in the cultures of traditional communities around the world, from aboriginal communities in Australia and New Zealand, and the "Ubuntu" philosophy of Zulu and Bantu communities in Africa, to the art and ethos of Native Americans. They appear in the art and philosophies of the Mayans and Incans, and the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, and Japan. They are in Japanese Kabuki theatre and today's Harry Potter books and movies. And they are in Hindu, Jain, Shinto, Buddhist, Confucian, Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious teachings.

Indeed, astrophysicists, cosmologists, physicists, and biologists suggest that the whole universe is in a dance between love and death, with forces of attraction and communion vying with the forces of repulsion and annihilation. Two of many possible examples may suffice. In the beginnings of the universe, anti-matter forces might have destroyed all matter, but a few particles found a way through and out of this has come the entire universe. So, too, in planet Earth's evolution, when early cellular organisms were annihilating themselves through destructive competition and by over-consuming the nutrients needed for their continued existence, the further development of life seemed at an impasse. But early bacteria survived through new learning, adaptation, and creativity: they changed their behavior, increasing chances of survival through cooperation; and they discovered how to harness the power of the sun through photosynthesis. Their creativity made possible not only their species survival and further development, but the later flowering of the Earth in all its diversity and beauty. Indeed, it opened evolutionary pathways for the later emergence of human life. (Several sources: Berry, 1984/1988; Sahtouris, 1996; Swimme & Berry, 1992)

Can we doubt that we, who are children of the universe and Earth, who have emerged out of these creative processes, are also in a dance between Love and Death? Are we not also capable of tremendous creativity for developing pathways of cooperation that support the continuity and further development of life in our planetary and human community?

The dance between Love and Death is everywhere in and around us. It plays out daily in human choices large and small, in international arenas and in neighborhoods, classrooms, homes and inner psyches.

Rarely does it play out in neat lines with certain ends. In the arena of international politics. I was once struck by how different choices made by different sets of players -- some a path of cooperation, others of annihilation - can coexist in the same community in sharp contrast and uncertain outcomes.

During the 1980s, while the Cold War rattled and divided the human community, Abdul Aziz Said and I, along with several colleagues from different disciplines and institutions, were invited to a week-long retreat on the French Riviera. Our task: to collaborate across different disciplines and areas of experience to develop proposals for new approaches to global security. The question before us was: What can be done to enhance security sufficiently so that countries will feel safe enough to disarm and develop a sustainable peace system. The six of us, with backgrounds in psychology, engineering, political science, international business, peace education and spirituality, were hosted at a beautiful villa overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Each morning and afternoon we would gather outdoors under clear blue skies to consider options from various perspectives. Behind us, fields of grapes ripened under the warm sun. Below us, down a steep cliffside, the sea waters shimmered. We were surrounded by Earth's verdancy, beauty and promise of life

But every fifteen minutes this reality was shattered by bombers from a nearby military base, roaring in formation over our heads on practice maneuvers over the Mediterranean, making conversation impossible. Elsewhere in Europe, NATO forces were practicing for ABC warfare, i.e., the possibility that Cold War threats would escalate into a hot war in which atomic, biological, and chemical weapons would all be deployed on or near highly populated European cities. The



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military in these maneuvers were all dressed in airtight clothing and masks to protect them against radioactivity and chemical and biological toxins. In the event of a real attack, however, there was no such protection for millions of people and nature. In an inversion of logic, the military who were supposed to be protectors, had now become the protected, and civilians and the natural world had no protection. In the face untenable Death and illogical approaches to security, we hoped our deliberations might contribute in some small way to choices and pathways for Life.

In this search our small group was not alone. Elsewhere, citizen groups were protesting weapons of mass destruction. Women's groups from around the world had organized across the Cold War divide and were meeting with heads of the nuclear powers to press for agreement ending weapons of mass destruction. Citizen diplomacy efforts to end the Cold War were also underway. US and USSR citizens no longer wanted to wait for their governments to build peace—they were taking the initiative and meeting together in Moscow and elsewhere to cooperate in developing peoples' peace agreements. And in the United Nations disarmament efforts were being pushed by nonaligned states. Here, in the Mediterranean region, there were ongoing regional negotiations related to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea from Pollution and for agreement on a Protocol to make it legally binding and effective. These efforts had been underway in various stages for many years and required a tremendous amount of cooperation between countries from Europe, Africa and the Middle East who bordered on the Mediterranean and whose trade traversed the sea. Here was human creativity, cooperation and yes, love, at work. In the dance between love and death, millions of people at local, national and international levels, within civil society and within governments, were choosing love and life and working cooperatively to achieve it.

Abdul Aziz and all of us at this retreat took our considerations to deep spiritual levels. We did not feel that human and planetary security could be developed and sustained through institutional arrangements alone; psychological, cultural, and spiritual components were also essential aspects of a sustainable peace.

**“Love is my Religion and Faith”**

The above section is not a digression from a focus on Abdul Aziz Said. Rather it is a validation of the choices he made in his life and academic career. He understood the narrow limits of traditional theories in the field of international relations. He was convinced that a focus on power dynamics alone did not convey the whole picture, nor would it lead to life-affirming solutions or the realization of human potential. Like Martin Luther King and Sigmund Freud, he was convinced that love and cooperation are relevant in politics and international relations as well as the human psyche and that for peace to prevail, love had to be strengthened. He introduced these themes in his texts, at first cautiously, in the last pages of *Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective*), then front and center in *Bridges Not Barriers*. He knew he was likely to be criticized by some academics who might mask rancor as rubric. But in his search for an adequate response to major challenges to human and planetary life, he courageously transcended the rubric and rancor to pursue interdisciplinary and spiritual routes that led to deeper, more holistic understandings, and ultimately took him to the heart of the matter.

I do not know how familiar Abdul Aziz was with the thinking of Freud and classical literature. I suspect it was primarily his spiritual journey that fed his insight and commitment. I do not know

whether or what demons he may have struggled with from his war-torn youth and encounters with racism. But I do know that, having been confronted with questions of Eros or Thanatos, Love or Death, he chose Love and made a disciplined commitment to live by and choose it again and again in his relationships with students, faculty, administrators, and political leaders. And he was not embarrassed to share his insights on the role of love with others in his writing and teaching.

He often asked me to make guest presentations in his class that had to do with major transformations in history and the new challenges for transformation now in an age of global interdependence. My presentation considered geological, biological, technological, and communications revolutions, and then explored psycho-spiritual shifts in human consciousness with reference to Love/Death choices. After one of these presentations, I was startled by his response. His eyes lit up, he cracked a huge smile and exclaimed to the class: “Wow! Wait till you fall in love!”

Some people love their family but not humanity. Some love humanity, but not individual humans. Abdul Aziz loved humanity, and he loved people one by one with their unique personalities. He especially loved his wife, Elena. The dedication at the end of *Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective* (1995), is a full-page proclamation of his love for Elena.

Love is disarming. Love attracts. Love’s energy bridges walls that divide, whether by belief, races, class, gender, age, or ideology. Abdul Aziz Said, with his great heart, had a gift for bridging walls of division and nurturing the hunger for love. Once, when I invited him to give a series of presentations at the college where I was then teaching peace and global studies, the students were not initially enthusiastic about his coming. Most, while professing a strong commitment to social justice, tended to dichotomous thinking and strident positions. They held a lot of anger and angst about the myriad injustices in the world, and the anger was often worn as a badge of honor and self-righteousness. On the surface they rejected notions that love and spirituality had much to offer in addressing injustices or alleviating their anxieties about the future. Secretly many hungered for it, but campus culture was decidedly anti-religious and there seemed no safe setting to explore or nurture their hidden needs. So, the needs were denied and walled within them

After encounters with Abdul Aziz Said, however, those walls began to tumble, and hearts and minds to open, especially about the role of spirituality. In the evenings, after classes, many of these students wended their way to my home to talk one-on-one with Said. What they wanted most to explore with him, was his spiritual journey. They were searching for something missing in their lives, and needed a safe harbor in which to seek and develop it. They saw in Said a man they could trust with their secret longings. He, in turn, recognized their vulnerability but also potential magnificence. He helped them find secure pathways to deeper parts of their being and to more nuanced and holistic ways of addressing critical problems; pathways in which they could grow their souls while sustaining a meaningful pursuit of social justice and peace in the world.

In her invitation to a celebration of Abdul Aziz Said’s life, his wife, Elena Turner, summed up her husband’s “long, remarkable and meaningful life” in these words: He was “a man guided by a simple principle: “Love is my religion and my faith.”

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What a wonderful summation of a man's life and vision. Abdul Aziz Said lived his faith and loved to the full; It was a blessing to walk – dare I say, “dance” -- with such a man on parts of his amazing life journey.

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Compiled by Nathan Funk and Meena Sharify-Funk for a book they are co-editing that is currently under contract with Springer Nature Switzerland, with a working title: *Abdul Aziz Said: A Pioneer in Peace Paradigms, Cooperative Global Politics, and Intercultural Engagement*.

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