

The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Its Politics of Representation in Turkey*

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Introduction

Samuel Huntington's provocative assertion about the "clash of civilizations"¹ has been a source of controversy not only for academics but also for religious communities. Some radical Islamist groups have enthusiastically welcomed Huntington's suggestion. In fact, this assertion has been finding more resonance since September 11, 2001. However, there are significant attempts on the part of some Islamic religious communities to challenge this theory through dialogue-oriented practices. The religious movement led by Fethullah Gülen in Turkey, for example, launched a civil societal foundation to challenge the discourse of conflict and introduced the idea of dialogue not only to the Turkish audience, but also to a global one. It was through this foundation that Fethullah Gülen and his community became part of the Turkish public agenda. This article aims to explore the nature of the Gülen movement and its politics of representation. The Gülen community is a significant case for students of contemporary Islam, for it is a successful example of a civil Islamic movement in the new global context.

The bulk of this article is devoted to a critical elaboration of several constitutive elements of the identity of the Gülen movement. These elements include: (1) the constraints and opportunities created by "conservatism" in Turkey; (2) Turkish nationalism; (3) the implications of the central concept and root-paradigm of *hizmet*; (4) the legacy of Said Nursi; and (5) the celebration of the Ottoman state or the Turkish-Islamic past. Those are the several themes with which I will attempt to map out the formative forces that shaped the identity of Gülen movement. The second and concluding part dwells specifically on the Gülen community's politics of representation.

From “Clash of Civilizations” to “Interreligious Dialogue”

Before embarking upon a discussion of the cultural sources that shaped Gülen’s identity and politics, I shall start with a brief introduction to the type of activism that this movement strives to produce. An example of such activism is best illustrated in the following media coverage of an event organized by the Gülen community.² After years of community building and as the leader of a large Islamic community, Gülen was gaining visibility in the media as the honorary president of *The Journalists’ and Writers’ Foundation* (JWF). The initial meeting of the foundation took place in a hotel in Istanbul on June 29, 1994, with the participation of various public figures and celebrities including former government officials, journalists and artists. The occasion garnered much media coverage. A later publication of the foundation contextualized the event within a larger framework:

While the communication facilities rapidly increased on one hand, some tried to flame up conflicts on the claim of ‘The Conflict of Civilizations.’ They exploited our richness of varieties as conflicting factors. We stopped applauding the beauties and the just. Then *The Journalists’ and Writers’ Foundation* made its launch at a meeting embracing the social diversities. The echo of the message calling for tolerance and dialogue was greater than expected. Our true will is the continuity of this positive start.³

Having made a positive start, the Foundation continued to organize meetings in which a large spectrum of elite people coming from different political, ideological and confessional backgrounds participated. What was stressed in these meetings has been summarized in the Foundation’s mission statement:

The modern world will be shaped by systems and approaches which cherish universal values which consider affection, tolerance, understanding and unification as basics; which consider Man as a universe and cherish Him accordingly; which see life only as a race of merits; which prefer to overcome all hostilities, hatred and wrath by friendship, tolerance and reconciliation; which undertake the mission of delivering culture and knowledge for the benefit of humanity; which can create a balance between the individual and the society without sacrificing one for the other; which have a great vision without falling into the trap of utopias and without leaving realities aside; which believe in the merit of keeping determinant factors such as religion, language, and race free from any compulsory pressure; and which evaluate superiority as a sublimation to human merit. Where should our place be among those?

Ours is only a modest contribution but the peace of our hearts and consciences depend on it. — *The Journalists' and Writers' Foundation*⁴

At a time when debates on fundamentalism and radical Islamism dominated the public agenda, JWF was an attempt to construct a new image for Muslim identity. After a Ramadan dinner hosted at the Istanbul Hilton on January 27, 1997, the Foundation once again became the center of media attention. As described by the Foundation, this occasion focused on the “richness of diversity”:

The Journalists' and Writers' Foundation succeeded in gathering the representatives of different social groups around a common table under its umbrella of ‘tolerance and affection.’ The gathering of men of arts and literature, politicians, journalists, the representatives of Vatican, the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Syriac Catholic Church gave an obvious message: ‘We are all on a common ground.’⁵

Several subsequent meetings continued in the creation of a new image for the Gülen movement and its members in Turkey. Muslim identity in general and the members of the community in particular were re-presented as the agents of tolerance and affection. Reverberations of these meetings found their most interesting form in a newspaper headline. An Istanbul-based paper with a large circulation covered the event and defined the Gülen community as “*Fundamentalists of Tolerance*.”⁶

As I will argue later in this article, this headline and other cultural products of the Gülen community’s activism constitute a form of resistance to the dominant image of the religious identity in Turkey and elsewhere. Given that Islam is mostly associated with lack of tolerance and fundamentalism, establishing an image that is associated with tolerance constitutes the very heart of Gülen’s activism.

Conservatism as an Ideology of Sustainable Change

From the attempts to save the Ottoman state to the processes that led to the formation of the Turkish Republic, the basic aim was to modernize the state and society. Among the three competing ideologies of the *Tanzimat Period*, namely “Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism,”⁷ it was Turkism that became dominant and was the only savior ideology. With the triumph of nationalism as the modernizing ideology, Ottomanism disappeared in a process accompanied by the demise of the Ottoman state, whereas Islamism persisted despite its subordination to Turkism. The bulk of the spectrum of contemporary Turkish political orientations can be explicated with reference to the various combinations of these two ideologies. Conservatism emerges, in this context, as the set of positions that have discursive immunity within

the range of combinations between Turkish nationalism and Islamism. Conservatism can be considered as “the immune zone” in Turkish politics and therefore is the regulatory framework according to which Islam(ism) and nationalism merge. Tanil Bora underlines the convertible and permissive character of nationalism, conservatism and Islamism as the three different “states” of the same “matter.”⁸ Unlike his treatment of conservatism as a distinct ideology, I argue that conservatism is primarily a strategy for generating legitimacy before the Turkish state. In other words, conservatism in Turkey functions as a corridor between Islamism and nationalism. Members of any of these two ideologies can find shelter in this corridor, where there is immunity thanks to a multiplicity of loyalties. Any of the loyalties, depending on the need, can be used as leverage to attain a formula for self-justification. As an amorphous position in terms of identification, conservatism in Turkey creates a vacuum of definition and provides the security derived from ambiguity.

Conservatism is pervasive in Turkey and it shapes state-society relations. The primacy of state over society in the Turkish case is not a consequence of “mere superiority” but a necessity of a mission waged by the state. I shall argue that this mission, the content of which varies from case (the Empire) to case (the Republic), is *hizmet* (rendering service); a term around which there is a sacred aura in Turkish culture. *Hizmet* is a form of legitimation that consists of a variety of activities. The mission of the state has changed over time. *Çağdaşlaşma* (modernization) replaced the Ottoman ideal of *İla-yi Kelimetullah* (that is, upholding God’s name and conquering new territories for the sake of Islam) as the form of *hizmet*.

The concept of *hizmet* has additional avenues of circulation. Each and every military intervention in Turkey has been legitimized with reference to the “mission of protection” of Kemalist principles. Members of the Turkish nationalist (*Ülkücü*) movement in Turkey identify themselves as “*mabed bekçisi*” (the Guardians of Mosque). The Gülen community movement identifies itself with a mission of “*hizmet*” (service to humans, the country, and the world). Any form of work or struggle should have a mission (a form of *hizmet*) to legitimize itself.

***Hizmet*: A Root Paradigm in Turkish Society**

The legitimizing ideology of the Ottoman state was Islam. The justification of Ottoman expansionism was *İla-yi Kelimetullah*. The idea of *conquest* has been central to Ottoman-Turkish society throughout history. Those taking part in the process of conquest are called as “*gazi*” and their activity as “*gaza*.” Serif Mardin considers “*gazi*” as an example of a “*root paradigm*.” Root paradigm is a term used by Victor Turner⁹ to characterize clusters of meaning which serve as cultural “maps” for individuals; they enable persons to find

a path in their own culture. Such paradigms affect the form, timing and style of behavior of those who bear them. The *gazi-gaza* cluster makes up a cultural constellation that is still present in contemporary Turkey. It shapes social actions of groups in different ways.¹⁰ *Hizmet* turns out to be a relatively durable root paradigm that frames the cultural map of Turkish-Muslim society. An interesting study¹¹ on the use of *bizmet* in Turkish historical narratives shows the deep-seated presence of this particular root-paradigm. Etienne Copeaux emphasizes the resilience of the concept since “the word itself is helpful to fit the Turks in with ‘otherness’, in the way of showing them in a good light in history. With regard to this notion, according to the narrative, wide groups of ‘others’ often take advantage of the existence of the Turks: the whole mankind, the ‘free world’, or the Muslim World, according to the time when the discourse was formulated.”¹²

Turkish nationalism is rarely presented by Turkish nationalists as an ideology of simple superiority. It is a *guardian nationalism*. It claims to serve best something that is by definition considered sacred. For instance, “if the Turks had not existed, Islam could not have been saved or the European Renaissance could not have taken place.” The popular idea that Turks accepted Islam without any resistance is another assertion of Turkish nationalism. In Turkish history textbooks, depending on the level of inclusion of Islam in the definition of Turkish national identity, the address to which Turks are claimed to have rendered service changes (e.g., mankind or the Muslim world).

From Territorial *Gaza* to Ideological-Economic *Hizmet*

With the transition to republic nationalism, Islam was replaced as the legitimizing ideology. Turkish nationalism did not take an anti-Western position.¹³ For this version of Turkish nationalism developed in the early years of the Republic, “the others” were the Ottomans and Islam. The new identity was constructed on the idea of a rupture with the Ottoman-Islamic past. However, that rupture took place mostly in terms of content and not of form. Serif Mardin’s works¹⁴ shed light on the relationship of continuity between the Ottomans and Turkey. The idea of *umma* as a collective identity is an idea that travels across the historical borders between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Beyond similarities between *Şeyhülislam* and *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs) or *müsadere* (confiscation) policies of Ottoman state and the early Republican policy of *Varlık Vergisi* (a form of taxation imposed on non-Muslim Turkish citizens), there is arguably a convertibility between *Battal Gazi* (a historical hero) and the *Mehmetçik* (the Turkish Tommy) or translatability between *umma* solidarity and *national*

solidarity.¹⁵ Gaza, as the Ottoman form of “*bizmet*,” is replaced by the new ones in the Republic. For Islamic identity, ideological/religious (and economic) service is the only available form of *bizmet*, since territorial *gaza* is neither possible nor reasonable anymore. With the shift from *gaza* to *bizmet*, Islamic identities not only perpetuate the Islamic mission (*daʿwah*) but also experience a process of democratization that is best exemplified in the words of Said Nursi, according to whom success in modern society is possible with consent and persuasion but not coercion.¹⁶ The concept of *bizmet* emerges as a point of interpenetration between Islam and Turkish nationalism. A proper understanding of the Fethullah Gülen movement requires a focus on the interaction between Islam and Turkish nationalism.

Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen

Fethullah Gülen owes a great deal of his intellectual background to the teachings of Said Nursi (1876–1960)¹⁷. Nursi was a prominent religious leader and Muslim intellectual in modern Turkey. The followers of Nursi, one of the largest Islamic communities in Turkey, are called *Nurcu*. Nursi’s biographies usually divide his life into three periods, two of which are relevant here. The first period is what he calls *Eski Said* (Old Said). This period coincides with the abundance of empire-wide search and efforts to save the Ottoman state from disintegration against the waves of ethnic nationalism and to save Islam against the critical reason of Western modernity. In this period, the Ottoman state is still attributed the Islamic mission of *İʿla-yi Kelimetullah*. Said Nursi was involved in politics in this period and tried to articulate a language that would accommodate modernity and make Islam consistent with modern reason and vice versa.¹⁸ In this period, Nursi was an enthusiastic supporter of Ottoman constitutionalism.¹⁹ According to his biographer, Sukran Vahide, the years that see transition from the Ottoman state to the Republic also see the transition from Old Said to New Said.²⁰ The distinction between these two periods is crucial to the understanding of Nursi.²¹

The New Said increasingly came closer to recognizing that the challenge Muslims were facing was neither political nor military but ideological. He started to publish books and booklets on Islamic faith. His writings were unconventional narratives and a reinterpretation of Qurʾān (*Tafsīr* in Arabic). The collection of his publications is called *Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı*.²² Nursi has been considered not only a theologian but also an intellectual who in addition to his other concerns also attempted to bridge the gap between Islamic identity and modernity. According to Serif Mardin, “Said Nursi’s contribution was a reaffirmation of the norms set by the Qurʾān in such a way as to re-introduce the traditional Muslim idiom of conduct and of personal relations into an emerging society of industry and mass communications.”²³

Having briefly remembered Nursi's personal history, we can now turn to the nature of his movement. First of all, Nursi distinguished his movement from traditional Sufi orders (*tariqat*).²⁴ He was not called a *shaiikh*. The community was text-oriented. The followers/readers of his books come together in collectively owned apartments that are informal public sites of gathering known as *dershane*. These are the places where *Risale-i Nur* is read and discussed. Very few of his followers are familiar with Arabic script. Yet the texts are written in Ottoman Turkish, which consists of plenty of words from various Muslim languages such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Kurdish. This trans-cultural vocabulary creates space for interpretation and hence a multiplicity of meanings. The *Risale-i Nur* collection is seen as an interpretation (exegesis) of Qur'ân, even though not all verses are interpreted nor do those mentioned follow the order in the Qur'ân. Said Nursi called his efforts and works as "*iman hizmeti*" (service for faith).

After his death his community fragmented into several groups. During the 1970s, the time when "the communist threat" was the dominant discourse, the Nur movement moved towards the right of the Turkish political/ideological spectrum. The influence of former anti-communist activists such as Bekir Berk contributed to the construction of the movement identity as a nationalist/rightist conservative identity. The popular ideology that garnered a large following from the Turkish masses was "*milliyetçi-mukaddesatçılık*" (nationalist-moralism or conservative nationalism), and this influenced the character of the movement.

Another turning point in the transformation of the Nur movement is the emergence of the first Islamist political party: the *Millî Nizam Partisi* (National Order Party-MNP), founded by Necmettin Erbakan in 1970. Politics has been the basic cause of fragmentation of the Nurcu Islamic groups. After Said Nursi, some of his disciples created their own communities (*cemaat*) in their own local centers. In addition to those like Mustafa Sungur, who remained supra-communitarian to all groups, Mehmet Kırkinci '*Hoca*' later emerged in Erzurum as a local leader. Fethullah Gülen (formerly *Hocaefendi*) who had a *medrese* background decided to go his own way and started his own community in the city of Izmir.

Today, the most populous and most influential post-Nursi group is under the leadership of Gülen. The group is known as the *Gülen Community*. Those groups related to the Nur movement can be classified into two streams with respect to their institutional organization. Relatively more nationalist and centralist groups have strong leader orientation and their leaders have classical *medrese* origin. The examples are *Fethullah Gülen (Hoca)* and *Mehmet Kırkinci (Hoca)*. These two figures used to preach at mosques and have backgrounds of formal religious education. The other groups such as *Yeni*

Aşya and *Nesil* are defined by reference to the dailies they publish or the publication houses they own. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, since not all of them are equally visible in the media. The Gülen community is currently the biggest and the most institutionalized Islamic group in Turkey.²⁵

On the ideological plane it can be argued that the military interventions in Turkey also created an atmosphere where the Nur communities tended to move towards nationalist discourses. Throughout the years of the left-right polarization that dominated Turkish politics from 1960 until 1980, the Nur movement joined the right-wing nationalist camp. This influence became an integral part of the group's identity later on, especially in the case of the Gülen movement. Gülen, in fact, left the movement because he did not approve of others' political behavior. Some members of the Nur movement do not consider Gülen to be a member of the Nur movement.

Negotiating Identity Between State and Religion

Gülen positions his identity at the heart of conservatism, which is a middle way between nationalism and Islam. The conservative political style shapes Gülen's public discourse as well. Gülen is a very influential public speaker and his speeches and sermons are usually cautious so as not to be offensive to certain groups. His statements can be made subject to different interpretations by different audiences. The issues that Gülen raises in particular speeches are mostly geared towards the particular audience. Gülen's public identity is constructed within the amorphous sphere between Islam and nationalism. Therefore, his public identity appears to be a *hesitant*, yet rational one. As a strategic identity, it is strikingly non-contentious as well. Working in an authoritarian environment, Gülen has to cope with the vulnerability of his position with respect to the Turkish state. The Gülen community is arguably the most rational and sophisticated Islamic group because of its ability to utilize the aforementioned conservative corridor. Due to this in-betweenness, Gülen has successfully disabled the Turkish state's exclusionary policies by manipulating the very categories used against him. However, when there is concordance between the Turkish state and Gülen's ideas, those ideas become radically visible in Gülen's discourse. Examples include his long term nationalism and recently abandoned "statism."²⁶ Gülen's approach to the state is based on traditional respect for the state in Turkish culture. In different periods of his life, Gülen has supported the existence of the state as indispensable against the forces of anarchy. Therefore, Gülen is arguably anti-anarchist and pro-order rather than a mere statist.

The impact that the 1980 military coup had on Gülen is a subject that should be explored both in terms of his personal perception of state (his

personal psyche) and the ideological consequences the coup brought about. It is noteworthy that the post-1980 increase in the visibility of Islam cannot simply be explained with the sympathy of 1980 coup for Islam. Instead, this intimacy, which looks like sympathy, is the product of the search for an anti-communist formula. The possibility that a relatively pure nationalism (*Ülkücülük*) could reinforce the existing polarization may have led Turkish military forces to find an in-between, that is, *conservative* solution to the problem. In fact, that is what makes the 1980 coup, among others, the most conservative and Islam-inclusive.

Therefore, the 1980 coup stands at the very *conservative corridor*, where Fethullah Gülen stands. Despite the fact that the military coup had issued an arrest warrant against Gülen, the movement itself grew during the 1980s. Although Gülen was not very vocal in his criticism of the military coup, his picture was pasted in public places alongside others who were wanted so that viewers could inform the military centers whenever he was found. The other Nur groups were more vocal in their criticism of the military coup. The impact of conservative ambiguity upon the identity of Islamist political party evidences similar patterns of behavior. The title of a book on the *Refah* (Welfare) Party reflects the ambiguous and in-between character of the conservatism that shapes the character of an Islamist political party: *Ne Şariat Ne Demokrasi*²⁷(Neither Sharī'ah Nor Democracy).

The Gülen movement constructs its identity at the point of intersection between state discourse of Turkish national identity and Islamic discourse of Turkish national identity. This point is where *Turkish-Islam Synthesis* emerges as a dominant form for state-oriented religious politics.²⁸ The search for synthesis between Turkish nationalism and Islam invites an idealistic revitalization of Ottoman consciousness in modern times.

Gülen: An Ottoman in Modern Times?

Gülen's mental map is to a large extent Ottoman in terms of its vocabulary. The conformist character of his community *vis-à-vis* the Turkish state is reminiscent of what Ottoman subjects knew as *ulu'l emre itaat*. Terms that appear frequently in Gülen's speeches and sermons, such as *ecdad* (ancestors), highlight popular sentimentalism regarding the heyday of Ottoman rule.

For Gülen, the transition from the Ottoman state to Republican Turkey has created very little erosion in the sacred attributes of the Turkish state. His personal background, of course, contributes to his perception of the state, because Gülen lived in cities like Erzurum, Edirne and Izmir. All these cities are located on the borders between Muslim Turks and "the other" states. These cities, which have been the settings of invasion and turmoil, create a

precarious Islamic identity that tends to see the Turkish state as not only indispensable for a peaceful Islamic life but also as having priority over Islam.²⁹

Among the historical figures to whom Gülen makes frequent reference are two key personalities in Turkish Islamic discourse: Mehmet Akif (the poet who wrote the Turkish national anthem) and Fatih Sultan Mehmet (Sultan Muhammed the Conqueror). Mehmet Akif is known for his Islamist modernism. He was influenced by Jamāl-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muhammad ‘Abduh. Their orientation was a technological modernization accompanied by a cultural “authenticity.” The Gülen community can be considered a realization of the ideals that Mehmet Akif developed in his poetry (See, for example, *Asım’ın Nesli*).³⁰ Gülen preaches about a project of “Golden Generation” (*Altın Nesil*), which is similar to the one imagined by Akif.

Furthermore, the Gülen group can be distinguished from other Nurcu groups in terms of its leader’s epistemological background. Gülen’s conception of Said Nursi is different in several respects. First of all, unlike other groups for whom Nursi is the first and only source of religious knowledge, for Gülen, Nursi is not the exclusive source.³¹ The differences between Nursi and Gülen can be interpreted either as deviation from or enhancement of Nursi. Those differences create some controversy regarding the position of Gülen vis-à-vis Nursi.

Gülen’s followers are much more organized than any other Islamic group in Turkey. Educational, business and media networks are the foundations of a project of *Golden Generation* and a mission of making Turkey a powerful country among Islamics, but more precisely over Turkic states. It is the project of a Muslim society with a powerful state. The Ottoman state is the prototype for this project. Yet current conditions are completely different from those that existed in the Ottoman period. So attempts to revitalize Muslim society can be successful only through the use of modern tools. Thus, modernity is the very context out of which the movement constitutes itself.

A Democratic ‘Reconquista’

The Gülen movement has a vision of reviving a faithful and tolerant Turkish-Islamic tradition as exemplified in the Ottoman Empire. Although most nationalist Islamic groups harbor such a dream, the Gülen community is distinguished in its elitism. The Gülen community’s elitism is linked to its concept of *bizmet*. According to the communal narrative, there is an urgent need for *bizmet* and resource mobilization. The answer to the question of “what is to be done?” leads the movement towards a designation of community development based on social engineering. Pragmatism of the movement has to do with its commitment to social engineering. In order to generate maximum success within a short time and with the limited resources, the

intelligent students, the *wealthy* businessmen and *celebrities* are seen as primary target groups.³²

The entire discourse of the community is based on *growth*. The movement is confident about its ideas and believes that the best way to succeed is to have democracy and a market economy. It is the level of commitment to the ideal of expansion and growth that distinguishes the Gülen group from other Islamic groups because it is this priority that makes the movement more in need of legitimacy and consequently more prone to transformation.

Three important turning points can be identified in the transformation of the movement in the last two decades. Although the military coup in 1980 in Turkey marked a new era for Fethullah Gülen, the first upheaval that had a transformative impact on the Gülen movement is the collapse of the communist bloc and the emergence of Central Asian Turkic republics. This development had both domestic and international consequences. At the domestic level, Turkish nationalists who owed their identity and legitimacy to a constant threat from communism suddenly found themselves out of the market of ideologies. On the one hand, they were losing their function due to the loss of enemy and, on the other, a rising community was promising their nationalistic dream about Central Asia. Therefore, for the Turkish nationalists, the idea of being affiliated with the Gülen community was attractive. Gülen's communal expansionist policies overlapped with Turkish nationalist expectations and this intersection explains the increasing level of nationalism in Gülen's discourse in the early 1990's. The movement became more nationalistic thanks to the involvement of former nationalists.³³ At the international level, the collapse of the USSR meant the opening of a whole national space. Now, more than ever before, the community could claim rendering service to both Islam and Turkishness simultaneously. Community members could take part in the re-construction of these newly established republics through educational institutions and trade networks.³⁴ Both of the effects made the movement more nationalistic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, more reference was made to religious figures who are the founders of Sufi orders both in Central Asia and in Anatolia. *Yunus Emre* and *Abmet Yesevi* are the two examples of such figures. In addition to Gülen's original Sufi input, we see a growing emphasis on Sufism within the movement.

The second turning point is related to the first and dates to the early 1990s. Nationalization of the community and the growing overlap between the religious mission of the community and the policies of the Turkish state led the movement toward a more state-oriented discourse of service. It is within this period of intimacy between the Turkish state and the Gülen community that Kemalism became a legitimate part of the communal identity. For the Turkish state, religion is legitimate only when it is seen not as a religion but

as part of Turkish national identity. Thus, for the Gülen community to generate legitimacy it had to assume a more nationalist discourse. A trade-off between (further) legitimacy and (further) nationalism reshaped the Gülen movement throughout the 1990's.

The Gülen movement's urge for expansion stimulates an appetite for further legitimacy before the Turkish state. This directs the movement towards a more nationalistic stance within the conservative corridor. The sense of urgency and resulting policies of social engineering within the Gülen movement reinforce its centralist and hierarchical organization. In this respect there is a discontinuity between Nursi and Gülen. Centralism, homogenizing the urge for mobilization and lack of individual autonomy drain the movement's ability to deliver intellectual autonomy: The movement, despite its scope, does not have any visible intellectual figures except Gülen himself. However, the movement sows the seeds of future intellectuals through its educational institutions. The schools that have now been established by the movement can be seen as attempts to change the map of intellectual life in Turkey. Public figures who are expected to answer the need for the intellectual representation of the movement for a long time were mostly "imported" intellectuals. Yet, the movement and its publications strive to create their own intellectual resources by sending their staff to the United States and elsewhere. Such efforts came to fruition by years of the early 2000s. Currently, the daily *Zaman* has managed to diversify its content and become one of the most prestigious papers in Turkey. It now hosts, in addition to its nationalist and Islamist intellectuals, non-religious and non-Muslim columnists such as Etyen Mahcupyan, as well as members of the Gülen community itself, who eventually carved their own niche in the journalistic market in Turkey.

The third significant turning point in the trajectory of the movement is the advent of the "February 28 process" of military intervention. It is after the impact of this indirect coup on the movement that the community began to draw more and more upon the global discourses of "human rights," "multiculturalism" and "democracy." It can be argued that since 1993, the Gülen movement has clearly declared that there is no return from democracy. But it is after the period of "February 28" that the Gülen movement suffered institutionally because of the restrictions brought to their educational institutions and limitations on their freedom. The Gülen community has been self-critical and more democratic since 1997, mostly because of the devastation of the indirect military coup on religious groups. Gülen had to go into exile in the United States and the movement restructured its orientation away from the Turkish state. Since then, the movement has arguably become more vocal on questions of democratization and is truly more global than ever before.

This transformation is directly linked to the changes in the life of the leader of the movement. Gülen is an extraordinary and charismatic person who keeps the whole community together in the quest for the same ideal. He is the most sophisticated and the most literate among religious leaders in terms of access to different scholarly resources. He is respected not only by his followers but also by the public at large. As such, he is one of the foremost charismatic figures in Turkish civil society.

The Gülen community movement also emphasizes different strategies to pursue its interests and operates as a pressure group. The movement clearly has an awareness of the translatability of different forms of capital.³⁵ The power in one field is translated into a field where there is a shortage of legitimacy. The Gülen movement acquired this ability thanks to new opportunity structures unveiled by the processes of globalization.³⁶ This is best reflected in the words of the businessman who is Gülen's financial adviser: "If we had transferred the power we have abroad to Turkey we (as a movement) would have become a political giant."³⁷ This modern rationalistic awareness appears to be a characteristic that makes the Gülen movement unique among other Islamic groups in Turkey. In this respect, Gülen is a translator who converts power into prestige, the social into the political, the global into the national, and the Islamic into the national.³⁸

Another characteristic of the Gülen movement that other Nurcu groups lack is its interest in the sphere of popular culture. The best example of this is the popularity of "football" and the "footballers" in national teams. Any source of power and legitimacy is a potential field of spread for the community. A field like football, to which no other Islamic group would have shown interest for its irrelevance to the Islamic mission, becomes an important field in which the Gülen community invests. Gülen, as a strategizing leader, takes advantage of any opportunities of transferring different forms of *popular support* into a support for his communal *bizmet*. What is important is not whether Islam has anything to do with football, instead the point is whether football provides more room for development and acceptance. Some players on national teams like *Galatasaray* are known for their sympathy for Gülen. The community's interest in football could go as far as owning a football team (*Nişantaşıspor*) in Istanbul. This attempt also highlights the Gülen movement's analytical and *rational* approach to communicating with the society at large.

The Gülen movement relies on two types of people who render service to the mission: those who are directly involved in the activities of the movement are considered as doing *bizmet* (service). The other group are those who are not directly involved in the activities of the movement but support them through a donation called *himmet*.³⁹ *Himmet* in this case works as a way

of legitimation for capitalistic accumulation on the part of individual entrepreneurs. What takes place is a trade-off between community membership and spiritual identification. In this respect, the movement is reminiscent of Protestantism not only for its reformist policies but also for its approach to money.⁴⁰ Gülen's "progress"-centric mentality seems to be partly inherited from the Early Nursi, who believed that "spiritual progress depends on material progress" (*Manen terakki (İla-yı Kelmetullah) maddeten terakkiye bağlıdır*).⁴¹

The Gülen movement has three basic fields of interest and thus sources of power.⁴² These are (1) educational institutions (colleges and universities), (2) business and financial institutions (e.g., *ISHAD, Isik Sigorta, Asya Finans*) and (3) the media (*Zaman, STV, Aksiyon, Sızıntı, Burc FM, CHA*, and many other periodicals). In the following section, I will focus on one institution that has played a key role in the articulation of the politics of representation of the Gülen movement. *Journalists' and Writers' Foundation* (JWF) was the public relations instrument of the Gülen community throughout the 1990's. What are the dynamics that pushed this particular organization to the forefront of the Gülen movement in the last decade? What was the message the Gülen community wanted to convey to both local and global audiences? The following paragraphs deal with such questions by way of a conclusion.

JWF, Civil Society and its Role in Civil Society

As far as the Turkish and the global politics of Islam are concerned, there is arguably a clash between the two particular representations of Islam. On the one hand, we have the construction and dissemination of Muslim identity as an irrational, Oriental *homo Islamicus* by both global Western media and the local Kemalist elite. On the other hand, we have the counter-construction of Muslim identity as a *Muslim homo economicus* by the Gülen community and other civic religious groups. These two competing representations are very important in understanding the Gülen movement. The first representation leaves the Muslim identity outside the domain of rationalism and modernity by elevating Islam to a location where it is the sole determinant of the Muslim identity, whereas the second one stresses the commonality in terms of rationalism and modernity by rendering Islam as only one dimension of entire Muslim identity. Moreover, the dichotomy between Western "*homo economicus*" and Eastern "*homo Islamicus*" reinforces the monistic conception of modernity as a Western product. The substitution of "homo Islamicus" with "Muslim homo economicus," on the other hand, implies a multiplicity of modernities and the existence of commonalities. Emphasis on such commonalities enables interaction and cooperation rather than conflict between these two identities. This part of the article takes a closer look at

the “representational” practices of the Gülen movement and discusses the politics it wages through JWF.

In the 1980s, the religious-oriented social movement of the Gülen community increasingly drew upon global discourses of dialogue, tolerance, and multiculturalism. Though active for decades, the Gülen movement started to regulate its public image more aggressively in the early 1990s through the establishment of JWF. The Gülen movement wanted to present itself and create a public image through this organization; before this, it was not well known. To begin, the very name of the Foundation is of special interest since it reflects a desire to include almost all actors of cultural production. The number and kind of activities organized by the Foundation are indicative of its hegemonic yet inclusive philosophy. The activities of JWF range from “Ramadan Dinners” to “football game organizations”; from “Conference of Inter-Religious Dialogue” to “celebrity award.” The JWF sponsored the production of a film and continues to publish books on co-existence and dialogue within and between cultures. Gülen’s famous visit to the Vatican and his meeting with Pope John Paul II was one of the landmark activities of the Foundation.

Launched for the regulation of public image, JWF worked hard to reveal the nature of the movement to the general public. Always pro-dialogue, the Gülen movement avoids confrontation. All activities are directed to the democratic conquest of civil society through the establishment of cultural and intellectual leadership. This modern conception of hegemonic struggle puts the Gülen movement above all other Islamic and Nur groups in Turkey. The activities of JWF reflect the nature of the representational practices of the Gülen community. An incomplete but representative list of the activities organized by the JWF includes the following:

1. The international symposium, “The Prophet Abraham: A Symbol of a Hope for Dialogue” (Sanliurfa and Istanbul, April 15–18, 1999).
2. The international congress, “Inter-civilizational Dialogue” (Istanbul, June 6–7, 1997).
3. The visit to John Paul II (The Vatican, 1998).
4. The symposium on tolerance, “700 years of Tolerance and Co-existence” (September 21–22, 1998).
5. The organization of an international soccer match to raise funds for children in Bosnia (September 19, 1995).
6. The First and the Second “Euro-Asia Dialogue” (May 5–7, 2000).
7. National tolerance awards (January 4, 1996).
8. “A Night for the Promotion of National Consensus/Compromise” (December 25, 1997).
9. The international symposium, “The Relation of State and Religion” (May 1–2, 1998, Milan, Italy, and October 13–18, 1998 Istanbul).

10. Brainstorming meetings: “The First Abant Meetings on Islam and Secularism” (July 16–19, 1998); “The Second Abant Meetings on the State, Society, and Religion” (July 10, 1999); and “The Third Abant Meetings on the Democratic State and Law” (July 21–23, 2000).

In addition to sponsoring these activities, the JWF has also published most of the papers presented in those conferences and several books promoting intercultural dialogue and tolerance.⁴³ Some of the titles (in my translation) are:

*From Clash of Civilizations to Dialogue
Tolerance and Co-existence in the Ottoman Empire: The Art of
Cobabitation
First Abant Meetings: Islam and Secularism
Essays on Islamic Philosophy
Science and Technology in the Ottoman Empire
Second Abant Meetings: State, Society and Religion
Cobabitation: In Eastern and Western Sources
Fethullah Gülen in the Mirror of the Media: Articles on Gülen*

The JWF functions as a public relations institution for the Gülen movement. After the indirect military intervention in Turkey in 1997, the mainstream Turkish media, which had been so enthusiastic about publishing interviews and books by Mr. Gülen, made a drastic shift and became critical of the Gülen community movement, launching a fierce attack against it. JWF was quick to engage in counter activities, which helped to keep Gülen’s image unsullied. However, the movement’s legitimacy was significantly eroded. Some critics argued that the state’s endorsement of the Fethullah Gülen movement was a temporary policy and that he was used in their effort to undermine the Islamist political party. As soon as political Islam was suppressed, the critics argued, state support for Fethullah Gülen ceased to exist.⁴⁴

Since 1997, typical Fethullah Gülen community-type public activities have been carried out by state-sponsored institutions. *The Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs*, for example, which has almost no record of sponsoring similar activities, all of a sudden started to organize similar events and tried gradually to replace Gülen-led activities. The exclusionary politics of the Turkish state towards the Gülen movement is by no means definitive. The interplay between the actors keeps the space of contestation open to representational politics. As argued by Tarrow, the states are constantly framing issues both in order to gain support for their policies and to contest the meanings placed in the public space by movements. In this ongoing struggle over meanings and images, movements generally suffer a disadvantage since states not only have armies but also use the media and other instruments for meaning and image construction.⁴⁵ The case of the Gülen

movement shows the centrality of the media in the struggle over the image of Islam and strategies of religious social movements.

The JWF attempted to keep Gülen and his community outside the coercive reach of the Turkish state. Proliferating activities organized by the Foundation and reported by the mass media succeeded in establishing a connection between Gülen and tolerance at the level of popular culture. Especially in authoritarian countries such as Turkey, where contentious politics is not allowed, social movements either resort to violence or try to transform the system from within. This is a form of resistance based on participation. The Gülen movement is a perfect example of “participant resistance,” which is not stated but underlies the writings of Antonio Gramsci on ideological struggle.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The Gülen movement is the first institutionally non-political religious organization that employed professional advertising agencies to build a positive *image* for itself and Islam in general. The movement strives to increase its constituency by addressing a more inclusive audience. The discourse of the community is shaped by and redesigned for new audiences. For the community, however, conservatism remains the safest locus and necessary strategy in the political arena. The movement constitutes an attempt at modernity without Westernization, that is, it seeks to create a non-Western modernity in contrast to Kemalist non-modern Westernization. This movement though, is not a mere modernization movement. Yet there is no doubt that it deepens the project of democracy and modernity in Turkey. The Gülen movement is a modern, consent-based religious movement that sees the representation of what it considers to be the ‘good’ as the best strategy for transforming society. Therefore, the movement has at the center of its activities political representation, which I have tried to highlight in this article.

The criticisms directed against the Gülen movement include the questions of *Kurdish* and *Alevi* identities, as well as about issues pertaining to women. The movement doesn’t have a policy independent of the Turkish state on the Kurdish question. It also has limited interest in women’s issues. Though a movement with vast resources and dozens of publications, it lacks any exclusive periodical for women.

Fethullah Gülen as a person can be positioned between Said Nursi and Mehmet Akif in terms of his conservatism. His politics is geared towards a final reconciliation between religion and state. His movement also, like all other Islamic movements in Turkey, has oscillated for a long time between political statism and economic liberalism. Despite his recent movement towards political liberalism, he used to be an advocate of the concept of Turkish Islam (“Türkiye Müslümanlığı”⁴⁷), which positions him between religion and

nationalism. He has been pro-state in cases of disagreements between state and Islamic groups (e.g., the headscarf dispute). He has mostly been closer to Turkish republicanism than to a liberal outlook. However, both Gülen and his community are in constant evolution in relation to global, political and social change. The military coup of 1997 in Turkey and the attacks of September 11th in the United States have partly justified Gülen's vision. They have also consolidated Gülen's discourse of tolerance and his movement's efforts for the construction of a positive image for Islam. Although the Gülen movement suffers from residual nationalism and statism, it remains a significant example of a civil Islamic movement with a democratic orientation. Unfortunately, most contemporary accounts of Islamic movements fail to include such movements as part of the current global Islamic landscape. The importance of the Gülen movement has been receiving greater appreciation due to the emerging literature on questions of non-violence and the compatibility between Islam and democracy.

Endnotes

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on *Islamic Modernities: Fetullah Gülen and Contemporary Islam*, Georgetown University, April 26–7, 2001, Washington D.C. I dedicate this paper to the memory of my friend, Zafer Cetin, who passed away at a young age while seeking knowledge in the United States. I would also like to thank Mr. Cemal Usak and Mr. Harun Tokak for their help.

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997). The article upon which the book is based initially appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993.

2. There are various Islamic groups in Turkey. For a specific discussion of Gülen's Islamic predecessor, Said Nursi, see Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', "Introduction" and Metin Karabasoglu, "Text and Community" in I. Abu-Rabi' (ed.) *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

3. See handbook of *Information and Organizational Chart* published by the Foundation, (Istanbul: Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı Yayını, 1997), 22.

4. Handbook, *ibid.*, 2.

5. Handbook, *ibid.*, 5.

6. Şeref Oğuz, "Kökten Hoşgörücüler," *Milliyet*, April 30, 1997

7. Yusuf Akcura, *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1976).

8. Tanil Bora, *Türk Saginin Üç Hali: Milliyetçilik, Mubafazakarlık, İslamcılık* (Istanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1998).

9. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 67 quoted in Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 3.

10. Mardin, *ibid.*, 4.

11. Etienne Copeaux, "Hizmet: A Keyword in the Turkish Historical Narrative," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 14, 1996.

12. Copeaux, *ibid.*, 97.

13. Çağlar Keyder, "The Dilemma of Cultural Identity on the Margin of Europe," *Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1993, 24.

14. Serif Mardin, *Din ve İdeoloji* (İstanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 1983).
15. Serif Mardin, *İdeoloji* (İstanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 1992), 138.
16. For the original expression see: “Medenilere glabe calmak ikna iledir, soz anlamayan vahsiler gibi icbar ile degildir.” Said Nursi, *Divan-i Harb-i Orfi*, (İstanbul: Sozler Publications, 1989), 49.
17. For biographies of Said Nursi see *Tarihçe-i Hayat* (İstanbul: Sözler Yayınevi, 1990), Necmettin Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1976), Sukran Vahide, *The Author of the Risale-i Nur: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (İstanbul: Sözler Publications, 1992).
18. Said Nursi, *Münazarat* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1991), 127.
19. Nursi, *Munazarat, ibid.*, 22–26.
20. Sukran Vahide, *ibid.*, 180–184.
21. For a discussion of Old Said vs. New Said see A. Samet Demir, “Eski Said — Yeni Said Uzerine Bir Konusma” www.karakalem.net, published in March 23, 2003.
22. Said Nursi, *Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı I&II* (İstanbul: Nesil Yayıncılık, 1996).
23. Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change-The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 13.
24. Said Nursi, *Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı I&II* (İstanbul: Nesil Yayıncılık, 1996), 561.
25. For more information on Gülen’s ideas about modernity see the following papers presented at the conference on *Islamic Modernities: Fetullah Gülen and Contemporary Islam*, Georgetown University, April 26–27, 2001, Washington D.C. See especially E. Ozdalga, “Yearning to Become a ‘Hero Without a Name’: Individualism and Internalized Self-Reflection among Women of the Fetullah Gülen Community”; Ahmet Kuru, “Fetullah Gülen’s Ideas on Modernity”; and Yasin Aktay, “Diaspora and Stability: Constitutive Elements in a Body of Knowledge.”
26. Drawing on Imam Ghazzali, the main source of Sunni orthodoxy, Fetullah Gülen states that “the worst state is better than the lack of state.” See Eyüp Can, *Fetullah Gülen Hocaefendi ile Ufuk Turu* (İstanbul: AD Yayıncılık, 1995).
27. Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şeriat Ne Demokrasi-Refah Partisini Anlamak* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994).
28. For a thorough history of Islamist Political parties see Ahmet Yıldız, “Politico-Religious Discourse of Political Islam in Turkey: The Parties of National Outlook” *the Muslim World*, (2003) Vol. 93 No. 2, 187.
29. Hakan Yavuz, “Türkiye’de İslam çoğulcu”, *Milliyet*, September 18, 1996, İstanbul.
30. Mehmet Akif, *Safahat*, (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1990).
31. There have been debates about the connection between Gülen and Nursi. For such an example see “Fetullah Gülen Ne Kadar Nurcu?” *Artıhaber Dergisi*, no. 1, İstanbul, 22–23.
32. For the criticisms of the elitist and nationalist attitudes of Gülen movement see Ahmet İnsel, “Altın Nesil eştirir Beyaz Türkler mi?” *Yeni Yüzyıl*, May 4, 1997 or Ömer Laçiner, “Seçkin Bir Gelenek: Fetullah Gülen Cemaati” *Birikim* no. 77, 1995, 3–10.
33. A good example of this type of ex-nationalist follower of Fetullah Gülen is Hüseyin Gülerce, who is a columnist of daily *Zaman*.
34. For the importance of the timing see Eyüp Can, *ibid.*, 17, 29.
35. Here I am drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu’s forms of capital. See Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital” in J. G. Richardson (ed), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241.
36. For use of international power and pressure for achieving domestic goals by social movements see M. Keck and K. Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

37. İhsan Kalkavan, "Yurtdışındaki gücümüzü Türkiye'de kullansak, siyasi dev olurduk," *Yeni Yüzyıl*, November 10, 1996.
38. For an analysis of the new opportunities and risks created by the processes of globalization for social movements see J. Guidry, M. D. Kennedy and M. Zald (eds), *Globalizations and Social Movements : Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).
39. The term Himmet is used in the Sufi brotherhood as means to help. This help is basically spiritual. People will expect Himmet from the master. At the same time, it can be material support as well. The Gülen movement successfully uses this term in both meanings. Some members of the Gulen movement teach students science and other classes for free as a part of their intellectual Himmet. Hence, there is a link between himmet and hizmet.
40. Tanıl Bora, "Allahına Kadar Laik" *Radikal İki*, February 1, 1998, 6–7.
41. Said Nursi, *Hutbe-i Şamiye*, (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Neşriyat, 1993), 92.
42. Hakan Yavuz, "Nasil Bir Türkiye", *Milliyet*, August 11, 1997.
43. For more information about the Foundation see the homepage of JWF: www.yazarlarvakfi.org.tr.
44. Rusen Cakir, "Fethullah'i kullanip attilar" *Milliyet*, June 26, 1999, Istanbul.
45. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.
46. For a detailed comparison see Mucahit Bilici, "Forgetting Gramsci and Remembering Nursi: Parallel Theories of Gramsci and Nursi in the Space of Eurocentrism" in I. Abu-Rabi³ (ed.) *Islam at the Crossroads* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003).
47. Eyüp Can, *ibid.*, 35.