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The Fethullah Gülen movement and politics in Turkey: a chance for democratization or a Trojan horse?

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Since 1923 the official ideology of republican Turkey has been strictly secular. However religious networking has always been a very important component of the socio-structural system in the country. Over time, the republican regime sought to stifle development of such networking, while at the same time also promoting changes in this regard. For 50 years – between 1930 and 1980 – Islamic networks in Turkey developed market relations that promoted strategies to improve the economic position of their members. In this context, several ‘new’ religious groups emerged, including the Fethullah Gülen movement. This article is concerned with the democratic involvement of the Fethullah Gülen movement in recent democratization in Turkey.

Keywords: Turkey; Gülen movement; democracy; democratization; religion; faith-based organizations

This article is concerned with the Fethullah Gülen movement and its relationship to democratization in Turkey. The article seeks to advance three arguments:

Firstly, the post-Ottoman, republican decision-making elite in Turkey introduced laicist¹ policies and legislation in order not only to change the superstructure of the country towards a Western model but also to ‘modernize’ Turkish society more generally. For them, traditional beliefs threatened the seemingly ambitious project of modernity. Consequently, the Republic of Turkey’s founding elite implemented policies to remove religion from the public realm and reduce it to a matter of faith and practice of the individual. As a result, the principle of religious freedom amounted only to a protection of ‘individualized religion’. Paradoxically, many of the strongest supporters of laicism actually consider themselves religious, and would be offended to be perceived as agnostics or atheists.

Secondly, such policies found widespread acceptance in society. Nevertheless, many Turks preferred to remain faithful to their traditional beliefs. Over time,

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especially during the last decades, political Islam, a modern ideology with roots in the nineteenth century, has become more visible in the political arena in Turkey. The result is that over the last 80 years, that is, since the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the introduction of the post-Ottoman republican regime after World War I, divisions between the two worldviews deepened in Turkey. It is important to understand that this was not a religious ‘revival’² as many scholars in the field claim. This is because, while a political allegiance to ‘religion’ has always been a part of the Turkish social body,³ it has noticeably grown in the last few decades, paralleling a wider – some say, worldwide resurgence – of religion. In Turkey, it became especially visible from the 1990s, spearheaded by a new emerging Islamic bourgeoisie. In addition, it seems clear that Turkey’s domestic policies in the 1980s, a time of civil conflict and economic liberalization, encouraged social conservatism and the rise of political Islam.

Finally, Fethullah Gülen, the spiritual leader of a large community of religious activists, is a prominent religious figure who is currently living in self-imposed exile in the United States. Since the 1980s, his movement has grown to comprise several million followers and sympathizers, including important business groups and politicians in Turkey. His movement is known as the Gülen movement. Its ostensible aims and ideals are comparable to the Roman Catholic Jesuits: both give major emphasis to secular education, which in the case of Gülen amounts to hundreds of institutions all over the world. In addition, the ‘movement’⁴ also works to advance transnational interfaith dialogue.

A brief account of state, society and religion in republican Turkey

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the state elite tried to secure the system they were structuring through a series of laicist legal regulations. Laicist reforms abolished the caliphate, that is, the erstwhile religious leadership, established a state monopoly over education, disestablished the institution of the *ulema* (doctors of Islamic law), rejected Islamic law and adopted a modified version of the Swiss Civil Code, Latinized the alphabet, and, in 1928, struck out the sentence in the Constitution of 1924 which stated that the Turks were necessarily Muslims.⁵

The republican leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, sought to remove religion from the public and social realm, ‘to confine it to the conscience of people’, and make it a set of beliefs that would not go beyond their personal lives. Thus his aim was to reduce religion to a matter of individual faith and prayer. Henceforward, the principle of freedom of religion and conscience was to protect only *individualized* religion and prayers. Religion was to stay a personal issue and only to necessitate state intervention if it concerned and objectified the social order.⁶ The ‘Turkish Republic’ was designed to be a strictly temporal state. Mustafa Kemal stated this clearly: ‘We get our inspirations not from the heavens or invisible things but directly from life.’⁷ The state’s purpose in this period was to secularize not only the state and the ‘political’ realm, but also society and the ‘social’ environment.

It is plausible to argue that this is the biggest single difference between Republican and Ottoman modernizations in Turkey.

Those referred to as ‘Kemalist nationalists’ preferred what may seem a risky path, although it was actually not so: they declared that all ties with the Islamist and the Ottoman past were now cut off. Instead, they wanted to connect to what they regarded as a utopian, ‘universal civilization’, epitomized at the time by the modern nation-states of Western Europe.⁸ However, while the Kemalists denied Islam as a civilization project, they continued to imagine the Turkish nation as Muslim.⁹ As a result, two ‘very different conceptions of life’¹⁰ existed side-by-side in Turkey: the secular and the religious.

Those in the secularist camp are troubled by the ‘fact’ that a significant part of the population in Turkey does not think the way they do, and are not convinced by the assurances of those in the Islamist camp that if the latter capture power they will respect the secularists’ life styles. Consequently, the secularists are hostile to virtually anything that smacks of Islam. In turn, those in the Islamist camp have lost all hope that the secularists will eventually accept them into their fold, and, as a result, have adopted an equally uncompromising attitude.¹¹

A new middle class became visible from the 1980s,¹² which, while accepting the ethical standards and cultural values of the traditional order, also adopted the ‘rational’ business rules and the profit motive of the capitalist market system.¹³ As the late Ernest Gellner put it: ‘Of the Western monotheisms, Islam is the most Protestant. That is Islam . . . has certain appropriate ‘Protestant’ features: rule orientation, strict Unitarianism, a kind of completeness, the stress on the doctrine, and the finality of doctrine.’¹⁴ Now, if this is a correct sketch of Islam, and if the Weberian thesis is correct, then the new Turkish Islamic middle and upper middle classes are very good examples of a capitalist spirit in Turkey, both as believers and entrepreneurs. Although coming not exactly from the same spiritual/philosophical sources, many of the cadres of the ruling AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/Justice and Development Party),¹⁵ as well as many followers of Fethullah Gülen, would fall into this category.¹⁶ This ‘Islamic bourgeoisie’ evolved from two sources: (1) the state’s neo-liberal economic policies that created conducive economic conditions, and (2) developing transnational financial networks, consequential to deregulation and the opening of the Turkish economy to external networks. Most Islamic entrepreneurs are first generation college graduates, children of an Anatolian-based petty bourgeoisie who benefited from Turgut Özal’s¹⁷ neo-liberal economic policies in the 1980s and early 1990s. These policies had the effect of increasing such people’s social mobility, allowing them to establish their own medium-sized and small-sized firms.¹⁸ When the Özal government privatized the economy, education, and telecommunication networks, well-organized Muslim groups were empowered to carve new economic and social spaces for themselves.

In February 1997, the mayor of Sincan, a town on the outskirts of Ankara, organized ‘Jerusalem Day’, to call for the liberation of that city from Israeli control. The mayor was from the ‘pro-Islamic’ Welfare Party,¹⁹ a partner of the then

extant coalition government. The Iranian ambassador was invited and, making anti-secular statements, he called for the establishment of Islamic law in Turkey, while the crowd demonstrated in support of Hamas and Hizbullah, two Islamist groups waging armed struggle against Israel.²⁰ Laicist forces in Turkey were infuriated and appalled by the rally so close to the capital, and the generals of the Turkish Joint Forces responded by sending tanks through Sincan as a warning. The mayor was arrested, the Iranian ambassador declared *persona non grata*, and an investigation launched against the Welfare Party. Ahmad notes that by this act, 'The Welfare Party had provided the generals with a pretext to curb the Islamic movement and they did so, with what is described as a soft or "post-modern" coup', known as 'the February 28th regime'.²¹

28 February was the date of a National Security Council meeting where the Chief of the General Staff and the commanders of the different forces demanded the implementation of the 18 measures designed to check the growth of 'religious fundamentalism'.²² On 18 June 1997, faced with pressure from the military and the high judicial institutions, Prime Minister Erbakan (Welfare Party) presented his resignation to President Demirel. As a result, a new government was established, led by Mesut Yılmaz, the leader of the centre right/liberal Motherland Party. Despite this, the army remained very active politically.

In subsequent general elections, held on 3 November 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) got 34% of the vote and won nearly two-thirds of the seats in the parliament. AKP, born partly out of the pro-Islamist Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party) persistently rejects the nomenclature, 'Islamist'. Instead, it defines itself as a conservative democratic party, and emphasizes not only the democratic character of its party organization and spirit of teamwork but also the importance of consensus-seeking in politics.²³ Five years later, in June 2007, the AKP recorded another resounding victory in general elections, increasing its share of the popular vote to over 46%. However in the local elections in 2009 the Party got 'only' 38.8% of the votes, a significant decline compared to 2007. The period of the rise of the AKP to power in Turkey was also the time of growing significance for the Gülen movement.

Fethullah Gülen and the 'Gülen Movement'²⁴

Gülen is the product of the Struggle against Communism Foundations of the 1960s. Look . . . The inner state sees everything acceptable as long as they are under their control. If something goes beyond its control that immediately becomes a threatening element. Gülen has a claim as 'educating a golden generation'. This is Turco-Islamic elitism. Just as the Jesuit priests had . . . 'We will educate a golden generation in the schools. Later we will dominate the world with these elites, we will govern it'. That is his idea.

Ahmet Insel interviewed by Neşe Düzel, 'Fethullahçıları Derin Devlet Yarattı (*Fethullahists were created by the inner state*)', *Taraf* daily, January 14, 2008, 11.

General elections took place in 1995 in Turkey. The increasing popularity of the pro-Islam Refah Partisi seemed to offer the threat of 'religious fundamentalism'

to laicist circles. Gülen emerged then as a counter-effect to the apparent rise in religious fundamentalism. He presented a non-political profile although also managing to give the firm impression that the political Islam of the Welfare Party was henceforward to face strong opposition from a milder, 'apolitical' version of Islam from within the Turkish Islamic community.²⁵

The organisation's founder, Fethullah Gülen (b.1941),²⁶ seems to have preferred not to be particularly visible to larger audiences than his own circles until 1995 when he started giving interviews to almost all of the major daily newspapers and television channels in Turkey.²⁷ The Fethullah Gülen movement is represented in Turkey and abroad through many organizations and publications. In Turkey the movement controls the daily *Zaman* newspaper and the *STV (Samanyolu)* television network.

Numerous conferences, meetings, symposiums have been organized by Gülen groups cooperating with prestigious academic institutions. For example, recent events have included: 'The Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', which was held on 25–27 October 2007 at the House of Lords in London organized by the School of Oriental and African Studies, the London School of Economics and the Leeds Metropolitan University.²⁸ There was also a symposium entitled 'Islam in Turkey Today' hosted by Columbia University in New York on 2–3 November 2007.²⁹ This was followed shortly after by the 'International Conference on Peaceful Coexistence: Fethullah Gülen's Initiatives for Peace in the Contemporary World', held on 22–23 November 2007 at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands.³⁰ Finally, there was 'Practitioners, Faith Based Organizations and Global Development Work', a conference organized as part of a joint Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs and Luce Foundation project on religion and international relations on 17 December 2007 at Georgetown University's Doha Campus.³¹

Despite his adhesion to a 'moderate' Islam, Gülen became one of the targets of the '28 February regime', and as a result removed himself to the United States where he has lived since 1999, claiming that he is in the USA to receive medical treatment.

Gülen was born in a village in Erzurum province, well known as the home of a very conservative and highly nationalistic population. He left primary school education in 1949, and commenced a religious one. In 1959 he was appointed by the official Presidency of Religious Affairs to be an associate imam (that is, the man who leads prayers in a mosque) in Edirne, a north-western province of Turkey, near to the border with Greece. In 1966 he was appointed as a preacher in Izmir, Turkey's third largest city, located in the Aegean Region. After a military 'intervention' on 12 March 1970, he was arrested and released seven months later. In 1975 he initiated summer camps called '*nur kampları*' (the light camps) for low-income families' teenage children of the Aegean region. At the same time, he continued to work for the Presidency of Religious Affairs until September 1980, resigning his post in 1981. From 1979 he wrote articles for the periodical *Sızıntı* (rivulet) and others, under the pseudonym Abdülfettah Şahin. Following his motto that

‘founding a school is better than a mosque’, his followers started to establish schools and dormitories in Holland in the late 1980s and in Germany from 1994. During that year, Gülen founded the Journalists and Writers’ Foundation (*Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı*), and began to become better known.

Gülen was strongly influenced by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877/1878?–1960, the ‘Nonpareil of Our Times’),³² and still shows him a great deal of respect. Bediüzzaman was an Islamic thinker from Turkey of Kurdish origin and the author of the *Risale-i Nur (The Epistle/Treatises of Light)*, a near-6,000 page commentary on the Koran.³³ Gülen’s teachings draw on the heterodox traditions of the Turkish Sufi tradition and refer heavily to the ideas of the medieval mystic poet Mevlana Celaladdin-I Rumi (founder of the order of ‘whirling dervishes’). The Gülen belief system emphasizes the Turkish traditions of Islamic practice over orthodox Sunni doctrines. In addition, the Gülen movement also has a nationalist focus, in that it envisages an Islamic world shaped by an ‘enlightened’ Turkish culture rather than a ‘reactionary’ Arab one.³⁴

Following Nursi’s teaching, the Gülen movement³⁵ has avoided political issues, including the relationship between religion and secularism.³⁶ On the other hand, in the late 1990s, Turkey’s Journalists and Writers’ Foundation together with the Gülen movement began to organize the Abant Workshops with the aim of seeking to ameliorate socio-political polarization and to search for a new social consensus in Turkey. The annual workshops involve around 50 Turkish intellectuals from different ideological backgrounds.³⁷ The first workshop in 1998 was devoted to Islam and Secularism. Its press declaration emphasized that God’s anthropological sovereignty is compatible with the political sovereignty of the people.³⁸ The second workshop also examined the relationships among state, society and religion.³⁹

Fethullah Gülen specifically stresses the compatibility of Islamic ideas and practices with the market economy, and his followers control a complex web of businesses and significant broadcast and print media in Turkey and in Central Asia.⁴⁰ The movement is very well financed by its sympathizers and it uses these funds to disseminate its literature and establish many hundreds of colleges and universities not only in Turkey but also in Central Asia, Russia, the Balkans, Africa, and, more recently, Latin America and Nepal. Regarding the movement’s business interests, many commentators suspect strong lines of patronage between the present AKP government and the Gülen movement. Under the current AKP administration, a number of business groups owned by avowed members of the movement have grown rapidly with the help of state contracts and concessions.⁴¹ The ‘Business Life Solidarity Association’ (abbreviated to ISHAD in Turkish) is another key organization for fostering the movement’s business ties – particularly in countries other than Turkey.⁴² ISHAD members are reputed to provide the main sources of funding for the movement.⁴³

Many Turkish commentators (and some members of the Turkish judiciary) appear to suspect the movement of sinister intentions, particularly towards the secular establishment in Turkey and the Turkic republics. However, there are no

grounds to suspect ties to radical Islamist or terrorist groups and even Fethullah Gülen's most outspoken opponents have not suggested any such ties. The Gülen group presents itself as a civil society movement and not as an evangelical or political force. Naturally, much of Turkey's laic establishment is deeply suspicious of the group's intentions. The fiercely secularist State Security Court prosecutor Nur Mete Yüksel indicted Fethullah Gülen in 2000 for activities against secularism and for seeking to establish a theocratic state. The indictment alleged that: 'The Fethullah Gülen group has been assessed as the strongest and most influential reactionary formation of this country with their:

- Efforts to appear as modest Islam thanks to their ostensibly accepting democratic methods,
- Using as a device for their aims the schools they have set up at home and abroad with the approval of a sizable part of the people,
- Claim to spiritual leadership, not only in Turkey, but also in the world,
- Exploitation of the established government system through their acceptance by political parties and some state cadres,
- Financial power, whose source is unknown and which keeps active their religious and political structure.'⁴⁴

The trial (in absentia) of Fethullah Gülen in May 2006 concluded with his acquittal on all charges noted in the bullet points above, with the help of changes made in related laws by the current AKP government. However, the judgement was appealed against, and it was not until June 2008 that the acquittal was finally made official.

The movement's educational activities

'portar parte del peso delle scuole'⁴⁵

Neglect of the intellect . . . would result in a community of poor, docile mystics. Negligence of the heart or spirit, on the other hand, would result in crude rationalism devoid of any spiritual dimension. . . . It is only when the intellect, spirit and body are harmonized, and man is motivated toward activity in the illuminated way of the Divine message, that he can become a complete being and attain true humanity.⁴⁶

Fethullah Gülen has always focused his attentions on education.⁴⁷ He started to put his thoughts into practice in the 1970s, when he established his own community (*cemaat*), delivering public lectures to thousands of listeners, which were recorded and sold throughout the country. From this time, Gülen began to attract people who supported his ideas with money and volunteers. Specific community houses, so called 'houses of light' (modified Nurcu-*dershanes*),⁴⁸ were established utilizing private flats or houses. In the Nurcu-*dershanes*, Islamic education was and is taught on the basis of both Nursi's writings and Gülen's teaching, making use of

the latter's tapes. These units make up Gülen's own *cemaat*, the nucleus of his educational network, which is however much larger than the *cemaat* itself.⁴⁹

He also expressed his thoughts on the issue in his writings.

Science also can be described as comprehending what things and events tell us, what the Divine laws reveal to us, and striving to understand the Creator's purpose. Created to rule creation, we need to observe and read, to discern and learn about our surroundings so that we can find the best way to exert our influence and control. When we reach this level, by the decree of the Exalted Creator, everything will submit to us and we will submit to God. . . . There is no reason to fear science.⁵⁰

Gülen, seizing both national and global opportunities, advanced his goal of training a new elite that he named the 'golden generation' armed with both modern sciences⁵¹ and Islamic ethics. It seems that he now moved beyond leading a purely religious movement to one which had both social and educational connotations, while presenting himself as a 'modern' educator and social innovator.⁵² This educational mobilization, in turn, has shaped the worldview and practices of the Gülen movement. Those trained in the summer camps he had initiated in the 1970s became the teachers of the new generation of teachers, ones who carried the ethical message of Islam all over the world. It may be argued that the movement was first transformed by its educational practices while it was seeking to transform the society.⁵³ 'Serving humanity by means of education' seemed to become Gülen's motto to initiate educational institutions of all levels all around the world:

First of all, education is a humane service, for we were sent here to learn and be perfected through education. . . . I encouraged people to serve the country in particular, and humanity in general, by means of education. I called them to help the state educate and raise people by opening schools. Ignorance is defeated through education, poverty through work and the possession of capital, and internal schism and separatism through unity, dialogue, and tolerance. However, as every problem in human life ultimately depends on human beings themselves, education is the most effective vehicle regardless of whether we have a paralyzed social and political system or one operating with a clockwork precision. . . . Schools have been opened in places ranging from Azerbaijan to the Philippines and from St. Petersburg (the capital of Czarist Russia) and Moscow (the capital of communist Russia, and with the help and reference of our Jewish fellow citizen and prominent businessman Üzeyir Garih⁵⁴) to Yakutsky. These schools have been opened in almost all countries, except for those, like Iran, that don't give their permission.⁵⁵

Several journalists and academicians have been invited to visit these institutions. It is reported that the Gülen schools pay special attention to their curriculum in terms of 'sensitivities' of the country where they are located:

The Central Asian schools are not run by a central financial institution. Entrepreneurs came from various Turkish cities and opened schools in different cities. The teachers, whose teaching is top quality, graduated from the best universities in Turkey. . . . None of these schools give religious education. Religion is taught, but none of the

teachers have been educated in theology. With their well-equipped labs and curriculum, the schools follow the pattern of the Turkish Anadolu high schools. Girls do not cover their heads. The purpose is not to introduce religion as a set of norms, but to bring up students according to universal moral standards.⁵⁶

This observation indicates that Fethullah Gülen has been able to undertake an educational programme designed not to upset secular sensibilities, at least not immediately and not in its public forms. As Vicini notes, ‘Adherents are not required to bring any outward sign that marks their Islamic inclination. In places linked to movement’s activities – from schools to dormitories, to administrative centres of foundations – no sign of Muslim faith is present. Rather, there we can find – at least in Turkey – Atatürk busts and Turkish flags. From this point of view Gülen has given to Islam a public form that is suitable for secular rules of appearance.’⁵⁷

Fethullah Gülen also appears to have much interest in social sciences education, in addition to natural sciences and technology:

When Turkey was knocked out by its adversaries technologically, it was decided to turn all superior minds in this direction so that they would study physics and chemistry and transfer high technology to Turkey as soon as possible. But it seems that some who gave priority to the social sciences also will be among those who will manage the future. . . . Raising a leader is tied, in part, to respect for free thought. A seed has the strength to sprout in the soil’s bosom and grow. If the air is beneficial to growth and if it reaches water, the sapling will grow taller. People are like that. There shouldn’t be any pressure. People should be able to express themselves. People, even geniuses, are not directed to their essential capabilities. This system must change. Students should choose what they want to study. Both high school and the university need this flexibility. An untalented, incapable team is controlling this nation’s destiny.⁵⁸

The Gülen movement’s educational mission is at its core and in its praxis, remarkably similar to the centuries-old Jesuit educational tradition.⁵⁹ Ignatius of Loyola, initiator of the Society of Jesus or so-called *Jesuits*, a Christian religious order of the Roman Catholic Church, sent his companions as missionaries around Europe to create schools, colleges, and seminaries in the 1550s.⁶⁰ The Jesuits were founded at the threshold of the counter-reformation, a movement whose purpose was to reform the Catholic Church from within and to counter the Protestant Reformers, whose teachings were spreading throughout Catholic Europe. Gülen’s initiation appears to be with a similar sentiment, as a reaction to republican Turkey’s official ideological approach to Islam. By the time of Ignatius’ death in 1556, the Jesuits were already operating a network of 74 colleges on three continents. Some of these institutions were local, but some others like *Collegio Germanico* were admitting students from various countries of Europe, including Poland, England and Scotland, and even two from Turkey by 1565.⁶¹ A precursor to liberal education, the Jesuit plan of studies incorporated the Classical teachings of Renaissance humanism into the Scholastic structure of Catholic thought.

Finally, the Gülen school curriculum reflects a similar approach of combining modern sciences with Islamic ethics. Since the 1990s, the Gülen movement has presented its educational mission as a cure for identity conflicts, a bridge between local and global groups, and a basis for interfaith dialogue.

The movement's interfaith dialogues

Applaud the good for their goodness; appreciate those who have believing hearts; be kind to the believers. Approach unbelievers so gently that their envy and hatred would melt away. Like a Messiah, revive people with your heart.⁶²

... Interfaith dialogue is a must today, and the first step in establishing it is forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones⁶³

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (25 November 1881–3 June 1963), was made *Vicaire Apostolique* (Apostolic Delegate) to Turkey and Greece from 1935 to 1945. He became known as Blessed John XXIII following his beatification, and was elected as the 261st Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and sovereign of Vatican City on 28 October 1958.⁶⁴ Pope John XXIII instituted the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (often referred to as Vatican II), the 21st Ecumenical Council of the Church. Vatican II commenced in 1962 under the auspices of Pope John XXIII and ended in 1965 under the direction of Pope Paul VI, following the former's death. It is likely that Pope John XXIII's familiarity with other faiths and cultural traditions was consequential in the Council's initiation of various interfaith relations including those with non-Christian religions. The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) was enacted as a by-product of Vatican II. It urged Catholics to enter, with prudence and charity, into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. (See Troy's contribution in this special issue for further discussion of this issue.)⁶⁵

Starting in the early 1990s, Gülen was the first spiritual leader in Turkey to express his views on the necessity of interfaith dialogues:

The goal of dialogue among world religions is not simply to destroy scientific materialism and the destructive materialistic worldview; rather, the very nature of religion demands this dialogue. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and even Hinduism and other world religions accept the same source for themselves, and, including Buddhism, pursue the same goal. As a Muslim, I accept all Prophets and Books sent to different peoples throughout history, and regard belief in them as an essential principle of being Muslim. A Muslim is a true follower of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and all other Prophets. Not believing in one Prophet or Book means that one is not a Muslim. Thus we acknowledge the oneness and basic unity of religion, which is a symphony of God's blessings and mercy, and the universality of belief in religion. So, religion is a system of belief embracing all races and all beliefs, a road bringing everyone together in brotherhood. . . . Regardless of how their adherents implement their faith in their daily lives, such generally accepted values as love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom exalted

by religion. Most of them are accorded the highest precedence in the messages brought by Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, as well as in the messages of Buddha and even Zarathustra, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and the Hindu prophets . . .

There are many common points for dialogue among devout Muslims, Christians, and Jews. . . there are just as many theoretical or creedal reasons for Muslims and Jews drawing closer to one another as there are for Jews and Christians coming together. Furthermore, practically and historically, the Muslim world has a good record of dealing with the Jews: There has been almost no discrimination, and no Holocaust, denial of basic human rights, or genocide. On the contrary, Jews always have been welcomed in times of trouble, as when the Ottoman State embraced them after their expulsion from Andalusia.⁶⁶

Well before the significant increase in dialogue activities in the post-9/11 world, Gülen had established the Journalists and Writers Foundation in 1994. It appears that from this time he was intent on promoting dialogue and tolerance among all strata of the society in Turkey and elsewhere. In the context of the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Gülen has held talks with many religious leaders and institutions, such as Pope John Paul II (1998), Greek Eucumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos (1996),⁶⁷ Sepharadic Chief Rabbi of Israel Eliyahu Bakshi Doron (1999), as well as a number of Turkish religious leaders.

The Foundation also functions as a think tank on related issues. The movement tries to bring together scholars and intellectuals regardless of their ethnic, ideological, religious and cultural backgrounds (an initiative known as ‘The Abant Platform’). This platform is the first of its kind in Turkey, an environment where intellectuals could agree to disagree on sensitive issues such as laicism, secularism, peaceful co-existence, ‘faith and reason’ relations, and the status of one of Turkey’s minority religious groups, the Alevis.

Gülen’s dialogue and peaceful coexistence discourse was also replicated in institutions abroad, like the Dialogue Society established in 1999 in London and the Rumi Forum established in 2000 in Washington DC. There are now hundreds of dialogue associations and charities all over the world founded by the movement’s Muslim and non-Muslim volunteers said to be motivated by Gülen’s teachings. Through these charities, these volunteers initiate and engage in interfaith and intercultural dialog with people of different faiths, backgrounds, and cultures.

As a result of these activities, Gülen and his associates were strongly criticized by two groups: hardline secularists and some Islamists. The two differed in the ways and reasons for which they criticized Gülen. Hardline secularists rebuked him based on the contention that in order to get into contact with other faiths’ representatives, some sort of an authorization is required. Since Gülen was not appointed by the state, he had no right to speak to someone like Pope John Paul II on his own behalf.⁶⁸ Radical Islamists’ reaction to Gülen’s visit were slightly different. They considered Gülen’s initiatives as a humiliation. A Muslim should not go and visit a non-Muslim. They also believed that for such a prominent Muslim religious leader to visit other religious leaders would cause some Muslims to convert.⁶⁹

In Gülen's opinion, interfaith dialogues have five main reasons: saving modern humans from materialism; all religions have the same sources and natures; the Koran's call to interfaith dialogue; religious tolerance as a purpose of human life; and love as the essence of being requests tolerance. He repeatedly rejects fundamentalist, violent, and exclusivist interpretations of religion.⁷⁰ Instead, Gülen emphasizes the importance of pragmatist reasoning to serve what he sees as the common goal of all religions: to fight materialism and to revive the existence of God in people's lives. In other words, he appears to be seriously concerned not only with religion per se, but also with the question of how to improve the religious life of contemporary humans so as to increase both tolerance and interfaith dialogues. He prefers as a method of dialogue to forget the divisive arguments of the past and to concentrate on common points that religions share.⁷¹

In the context of 'dialogue', it is interesting to observe Gülen's construction of 'otherness'. Kösebalaban analyses Gülen's conception of foreign policy through the application of a constructivist theoretical framework.⁷² Kösebalaban distinguishes three perceptions of the 'other' defined by varying degrees of separation that shape Gülen's national security identity: (1) a strong degree of common identification with the Turkic world, (2) a lack of common identification with the West but a desire to integrate with Western institutions, (3) a strong lack of common identification with Iran. These conceptions may be useful in interpreting Gülen's expressions like the following:

To devotees, the value of their ideals transcends that of the earthly ones to such an extent that it is almost impossible to divert them from what they seek – God's gratuitous consent – and lead them to any other ideal. In fact, stripped entirely of finite and transient things, devotees undergo such a transformation in their hearts to turn to God that they are changed because they recognize no goal other than their ideal. Since they devote themselves completely to making people love God and to being loved by God, dedicating their lives to enlightening others, and, once again, because they have managed to orient their goal in this unified direction, which in a sense contributes to the value of this ideal, they avoid divisive and antagonist thoughts, such as 'they' and 'we', 'others' and 'ours'.⁷³

Concluding remarks

We have seen that the Gülen movement is a faith-based network with organizational structures and a focus of discourse that has developed as a consequence both of Turkey's unique political history and global events since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. During this time, Fethullah Gülen has managed to lead his followers into the modern world while retaining their religious framework. Their education initiatives concerning all around the world, as well as inter-faith dialogue activities, seem to emanate from a desire to be involved in agenda setting at both Turkish and global levels. Despite most members having a specific national background in Turkey, the movement appears to be a religious actor which wants to be both assertive in making its points while also showing willingness to

listen to other points of view. Fostering the movement's global business ties among members that are reputed to provide the main sources of funding for the movement seems to be an objective inextricable from the aim to be an actor in global politics. Although already there is quite an impressive amount of literature on the Gülen movement⁷⁴ very few critical ones exist, and almost no serious work has been done yet on issues like the role of his followers in Central Asia, or the impacts of the graduates of the educational institutions all over the globe, founded by members of the community.

In sum, in order to understand the nature of the movement, it is necessary to refer to Fethullah Gülen's thinking.⁷⁵ For Gülen, Kemalist Turkey's 'top-down' imposition of a dogmatic secularism has distanced swathes of Turkish society from the governing elite. Gülen prefers to draw inspiration from the Ottoman model of state–society relationships. Although the empire's rulers were guided by their faith, the Ottoman system of governance was not theocratic. Public laws were formulated on the basis of the state's needs rather than in accordance with Islamic law (Shari'a). For Gülen, the state has a functionally secular responsibility to provide internal and external security and stability for its citizens. Gülen is not in favour of the political implementation of Shari'a, though the freedom to express one's faith should be respected. Gülen believes that there is no necessary contradiction between Islam and modernity. Indeed, Turkish Islam's more adaptable and less doctrinal Sufi traditions have enabled Turkey, with its democratization, free market economy, and secular political system, to incorporate aspects of modernity barely found elsewhere in the Muslim world. A key to his thinking is that Islam should positively embrace science, reason, democratization, and tolerance. It may be said that Gülen's support of democracy back in the 1990s was instrumental in facilitating in Turkey many practising Muslims' internalization of democracy.⁷⁶

In this context, Park notes the following:

[T]he more one perceives the movement as a more-or-less hierarchical, disciplined, and 'conspiratorial' organization that seeks to penetrate and undermine the Turkish state and society from within, the more one is inclined to adopt an essentially political interpretation of the movement's activities. This is precisely the model of the Gülen movement that many in Turkey's elite hold, and fear. On the other hand, although the movement's lack of transparency and the weakness of its internal democracy and capacity for self-criticism are unsettling, this does not necessarily render it an extremist phenomenon. Neither Gülen nor the movement that takes his name is overtly politicized, and in the absence of hard evidence to the contrary, the movement will seem benign to many – unless of course one is ideologically opposed to challenges to Turkey's existing order, as many in Turkey are, or inherently uneasy about any faith-inspired movement.⁷⁷

Finally, this article has sought to underline that Turkish democracy is at a stage where it is necessary for consistent checks and balance to be in place covering all interested parties along the political spectrum. This is particularly the case if we understand democracy in terms of the rule of law. The latter should be created by the will of majority in a democratically elected legislature, involving popular

participation, competition, consent, and sufficient protection of both individual and minority rights then it is not legitimate to try to exclude any movement from the political realm. This is the case as long as the above mentioned constituents of a democratic regime are consistently respected and honoured by all, government and governed alike.

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Notes

1. I use the term laicists to mean those who prefer the state's control of religion as opposed to secularism which implies the separation of state and religion. As Rex Ahdar and Ian Leigh point out, 'The longstanding French policy of *laïcité* exemplifies . . . desire to restrict, if not eliminate, clerical and religious influence, over the state. . . . The modern Islamic society of Turkey is similarly an example of a state founded on strongly secular principles where restrictions on individual religious liberty have been introduced to prevent pressure being exerted by the predominant religious group' (Ahdar and Leigh, *Religious Freedom in the Liberal State*, 73). For a comprehensive argumentation on the terms laic and secular, and their derivatives, see Davison, 'Turkey, a "Secular" State? The Challenge of Description'. I totally agree with Davison in his arguments, thus I prefer to use the term 'laicist' for republican state practice in Turkey. Furthermore, laiklik (*laïcité*) is the concept that is preferred by the Republican decision-making elite of Turkey in both legislation and other legal regulations.
2. For such usage see, Esposito, *Islamic Revivalism*; Davison, *Secularism Revivalism in Turkey*; Howe, *Turkey Today: A Nation Divided over Islam's Revival*, 7, 8, 15, 305; Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States*, 55–84; Karpas, *The Politicization of Islam*, 527; Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing a New Millennium*, 90; Vertigans, *Islamic Roots and Resurgence in Turkey*. I assert that 'revival' may only be used for the revitalizations of the religious orders (see Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 149) in the nineteenth century, part of the emergence of political Islam – which in fact is a modern ideology (see Türköne, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu*).
3. For a very illuminating work on reconstitution of the *process* that led to the emergence of the current party of government, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), see Mardin, 'Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today'.
4. Followers of Gülen have been reluctant to use the term 'movement'. Several other terms have been suggested, including, 'community' (*cemaat*) and network. Hakan Yavuz justifies his use of the term, movement, as follows. I agree with this usage: 'I use the term *movement*, because a movement has a collective goal that it intends to achieve through a collective engagement. In order to achieve it, you need networks. The Gülen movement consists of a number of networks, organized horizontally. In this loose network system, the traditional values and idioms of the community play an important role. . . . As a movement, it incorporates the network and community, or communal ethos. I would consider it as a movement based on the re-imagining

of Islam and consisting of loose networks under the guidance and leadership of Fetullah Gülen. . . . These networks are not necessarily organized in hierarchical terms. But we see three circles. The first is the core circle around Gülen. The second circle consists of those who give their time and labour in order to achieve the collective goals of the movement. The third circle consists of those who are sympathizers: sometimes they support the movement by writing an article in the media, or they give money, or they support the movement in other ways So you have a number of circles, but each circle includes a number of networks. When we examine these networks, there is a sense of solidarity and of the Islamic ethos of brotherhood. This is the glue that joins these networks together' (Mayer, 'The Gülen Movement').

5. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 194.
6. Actually this was a political/legal enforcement of the 'secularization thesis' (see Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 17–39), and 'privatization of religion' (see Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*) by adopting the right to individual belief, 'a product of the only legitimate space (that was) allowed to Christianity by post-Enlightenment society' (Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 45).
7. Atatürk, *Söylev ve Demeçler*, 389.
8. Güllalp, *Kimlikler Siyaseti: Türkiye'de İslamın Temelleri*, 35.
9. Turkey is often defined as a predominantly Muslim country; Islamists especially delight in repeating at every opportunity that 99% of Turkish people are Muslim. But this is mostly a definition given to them by the secular state. Unless declared otherwise, every child born in Turkey is registered as Muslim and this is clearly indicated in every person's government-issued identity card. . . . "Muslim" is evidently a social identity conferred upon the Turkish people by the "secular" state' (Güllalp, 'Whatever Happened to Secularization?', 394; also see Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 51–4).
10. Howe, *Turkey Today: A Nation Divided over Islam's Revival*, 243.
11. Heper, 'Review of "Turkey Today: A Nation Divided over Islam's Revival"', 150.
12. For overviews of the 'new middle class', see İnel, 'The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey', 297; Raudvere, 'Where Does Globalization Take Place?', 168, n. 2.
13. Kemal Karpat makes a very similar statement for the last decades of Ottoman times (Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 21).
14. Gellner, 'The Turkish Option in Contemporary Perspective', 234.
15. For the religious lineage that takes us to Turkey's current prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, see Mardin, 'Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today', 15–18.
16. See, Selçuk Uygur, "Islamic Puritanism" as a Source of Economic Development: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', a paper presented at the 'Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', conference that was held on October 25–27, 2007, at the House of Lords in London organized by SOAS, the London School of Economics and the Leeds Metropolitan University, online at <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/2453/53/>
17. Turgut Özal (1927–1993), a Turkish political leader, prime minister and the eighth president of Turkey. As prime minister and later president, he transformed the economy of Turkey by paving the way for the privatization of many state sectors.
18. Yavuz, 'The Role of the New Bourgeoisie in the Transformation of the Turkish Islamic Movement', 5.
19. A series of pro-Islamic parties have been represented over time in parliament with almost the same group of founders since the 1970s: National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi), founded on 26 January 1970 – banned on 20 May 1971; National Salvation Party (Milli Selâmet Partisi), founded on 11 October 1972 – closed on 12 September 1980; Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), founded 1983 – banned on 22 February 1998; Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi), founded 1998 – banned on 22 June 2001; Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi), founded on 20 July 2001.

20. In addition to having an Islamist movement to be represented in parliament, Turkey also has a number of active small and medium-sized radical Islamist groups. For a recent report published in September 2007 by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on the 'reemergence of Hizbullah in Turkey' see Çakır, 'The Reemergence of Hizbullah in Turkey'.
21. According to Turkish National Security Council decision no. 406, the Erbakan government was instructed to implement 18 directives initiated by 'the principle of laïcité [that] should be strictly enforced and laws should be modified for that purpose, if necessary'. For these directives see Yavuz and Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, 275–6.
22. Ibid.
23. In an article Erdoğan is quoted as saying 'Let me be quite open and clear in stating a fact – we don't find it appropriate to mix religion and politics We are not Muslim democrats, we are conservative democrats. Some in the west portray us as (Muslim democrats) but our notion of conservative democracy is to attach ourselves to the customs and the traditions and the values of our society, which is based on the family. This is a democratic issue, not a religious one (Boland, 'Eastern Premise').
24. Gülen himself rejects the name 'Gülen Movement in both his writings and interviews, as well as the tag 'Fethullahists'. Recently he was said to have requested academics not to use such terms, but instead to use 'movement of ones united for high humanitarian values' (Yüksek, *insani değerler etrafında birleşmiş insanların hareketi*) (samanyoluhaber.com – 10 January 2008).
25. For a very insightful analysis of the 'movement', see Laçiner, 'Seçkin bir geleneğin temsilcisi olarak Fethullah Hoca Cemaati'.
26. Some sources report his birth date as 10 November 1938. Nurettin Veren, an ex-follower who later became a fierce opponent, claims that this is Gülen's symbolic invention to indicate his role as a saviour of Islam by dating his birth to the very day Mustafa Kemal Atatürk died. See, Veren, *Kuşatma: ABD'nin Truva Atı Fethullah Gülen Hareketi*, 9.
27. 23–28 January 1995: Ertuğrul Özkök-Hürriyet; 30 January 1995: Nuriye Akman-Sabah; 3 July 1995: Ateş Hattı/Reha Muhtar-TRT 1; 6 July 1995: InterStar TV: news; 13–23 August 1995: Eyüp Can: Zaman; 20 August 1995: Oral Çalışlar-Cumhuriyet.
28. See <http://www.gulenconference.org.uk/>
29. See <http://www.islaminturkeytoday.org/>
30. See <http://www.gulenconference.nl/>
31. See <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/42589.html>
32. Şerif Mardin, a very prominent sociologist that has been working on religion, state and society in Turkey since the 1970s, is the author of a milestone book on Bediüzzaman Said Nursi published in 1989. Recently many books and other academic works have appeared in English. See, Abu-Rabi, *Islam at the Crossroads*; Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey* (actually she is also the author of a previous book on Bediüzzaman of 1992 under the name Mary Weld, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*); Markham and Özdemir, *Globalization, Ethics and Islam*. Also for a detailed biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi in English, see http://www.ayetulkubra.com/rnkidiller/eng/english_hayat.htm
33. For *Risale-i Nur* collection in English see <http://www.risale-i-nur.org/>
34. For the Gülen movement's contributions to Turkey's potential leadership of the 'Turkic world', see Yılmaz, '*Ijdi'had and Tajdid by Conduct*'.
35. For overviews of the significance of the movement, see Yavuz, 'Towards an Islamic Liberalism?', and Aras, 'Turkish Islam's Moderate Face'.
36. Kuru, 'Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey', 141.

37. For an argument on Gülen's efforts to reveal a dynamic interpretation of Islam that is compatible with and at the same time critical of modernity and Muslim tradition, rather than creating an eclectic or hybrid synthesis of modernity and Islam, see Kuru, 'Fethullah Gülen's Search for a Middle Way Between Modernity and Muslim Tradition'.
38. For the texts of the first four *Abant Declarations* see Yavuz and Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, 251–6. Also see, <http://en.fgulen.com/content/category/148/265/18/>
39. See *İslam ve Laiklik* (Islam and Laïcité) (1998) Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı, İstanbul; *Din, Devlet, Toplum* (Religion, State and Society) (2000) Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı, İstanbul.
40. Eickelman, 'Islam and Ethical Pluralism', 123–7.
41. Hendrick, 'Transnational Religious Nationalism', 16.
42. See, http://www.ishad.org.tr/ishad_english.asp
43. The projects sponsored by the Gülen-inspired movement are numerous, international and costly in terms of human and financial capital. Critics of the movement often question the financing of these initiatives – with some convinced of collusion with Middle Eastern governments, others (within Turkey) suspicious that Western governments are financially backing the projects. For a response to such questions, see Helen Rose Ebaugh and Dogan Koc, 'Funding Gülen-Inspired Good Works: Demonstrating and Generating Commitment to the Movement', a paper presented at the 'Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', conference that was held on October 25–27, 2007, at the House of Lords in London organized by SOAS, the London School of Economics and the Leeds Metropolitan University, online at <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/2519/53/>
44. The author has a copy of the indictment dated 22 August 2000, entitled: 'Republic of Turkey, ANKARA, State Security Court, Prosecutor's Office'. No other bibliographical details are available.
45. 'Every Jesuit must bear his part of the burden of the schools.' *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Jesu* (1965–1986/2nd edn) v.3, Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, Rome, 305–06.
46. Gülen, *Prophet Muhammad: Aspects of his Life*, 105–06.
47. 'The main duty and purpose of human life is to seek understanding. The effort of doing so, known as education, is a perfecting process though which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of their beings, the rank appointed for us as the perfect pattern of creation. . . . Education is different from teaching. Most people can teach, but only a very few can educate. Communities composed of individuals devoid of a sublime ideal, good manners, and human values are like rude individuals who have no loyalty in friendship or consistency in enmity.' ('Education from Cradle to Grave' from a summary of his series of articles published in monthly *Sızıntı*, No: 26–41, March 1981–June 1982). See, <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/777/16/>
48. The *dershane* is a venue for social and cultural activities and interaction.
49. Agai, *Zwischen Diskurs und Netzwerk*, 136–53; Yavuz and Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, 32.
50. Gülen, *Criteria or Lights of the Way*, 59–61.
51. 'Science also can be described as comprehending what things and events tell us, what the Divine laws reveal to us, and striving to understand the Creator's purpose. Created to rule creation, we need to observe and read, to discern and learn about our surroundings so that we can find the best way to exert our influence and control. When we reach this level, by the decree of the Exalted Creator, everything will submit to us and we will submit to God. . . . There is no reason to fear science. The danger does not lie with science and the founding of the new world it will usher in, but rather with

ignorance and irresponsible scientists and others who exploit it for their own selfish interest. . . . Although science might be a deadly weapon in the hands of an irresponsible minority, we should not hesitate to adopt both it and its products and then use them to establish a civilization in which we can secure our happiness in this world and the next. It is pointless to curse machines and factories, because machines will continue to run and factories to operate. Science and its products will begin to benefit us only when people of truth and belief begin to direct our affairs.' (Gülen, 'İlim ve Tekniğe Küskünlük').

52. Agai, 'The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education'.
53. For an informative work and critical analysis of the Gülen community that focuses on educational institutions in Central Asia, see Balçı 2005.
54. For Üzeyir Garip's comments about these schools, 'As far as I saw, these schools are giving secular education. I visited many of them to see whether they are Muslim missionary institutions established on Islamic standards and pursuing an Islamic unity. I saw that they are not. Students are raised very well.' see, *Hürriyet* daily, April 11, 1996.
55. 'Educational Services Spreading Throughout the World', see [http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/778/16/\[0\]](http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/778/16/[0])
56. Ali Bayramoğlu, *Yeni Yüzyıl* daily, October 31, 1996.
57. Vicini, 'Gülen and Sources in Islam for Interfaith Dialogue'.
58. Sevindi, *Fethullah Gülen ile Global Hoşgörü ve New York Sohbeti*, 118.
59. For differences between the two communities see Michael David Graskemper, 'A Bridge to Inter-religious Cooperation: The Gülen–Jesuit Educational Nexus', a paper presented at the 'Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', conference that was held on October 25–27, 2007, at the House of Lords in London organized by SOAS, the London School of Economics and the Leeds Metropolitan University, online at <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/2511/53/>
60. Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State*, 426.
61. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 235.
62. Fethullah Gülen, quoted in Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*, 23.
63. *Ibid.*, 244–5.
64. In 2000 Roncalli's name was given to the street where the Vatican Embassy is located in Istanbul; thus the name of the street was changed from *Ölçek Sokak* to *Roncalli Sokağı*.
65. Troy, "'Catholic Waves" of Democratization? Roman Catholicism and Its Potential for Democratization'.
66. 'Fethullah Gülen's Speeches and Interviews on Interfaith Dialogue' see, <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/1334/11/>. Note however that Turkey's Presidency of Religious Affairs has also made 'dialogue' a part of its agenda from 1998. However recently it has become a concept that has been expressed more and more by the authorities: 'I believe that one of the most effective steps to solve such problems is to establish ways for strong dialogue among religions as well as cultures. Such a dialogue will not only help to wipe out the prejudices of the followers of different faiths, but also contribute to solve the above-mentioned problems. I believe that lack of sincere dialogue causes the discourse of the clash of civilizations to gain ground.' ('Peace and Tolerance', a speech made by Ali Bardakoğlu, the President of Religious Affairs in the Conference on Peace and Tolerance II, co-sponsored by Appeal of Conscience Foundation and Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, November 7–9, 2005).
67. For 'Repercussions from Gülen–Bartholomeos Meeting' see, <http://en.fgulen.com/content/category/148/252/11/>
68. See Necip Hablemitoğlu, *Yeni Hayat (New Life)*, Issue 52.
69. See, Mehmet Sevkett Eygi, 'Papalıkla Gizli Anlaşma' [Secret agreement with Papacy], *Milli Gazete (National Gazette)*, May 26, 2000.

70. See, Y. Alp Aslandogan and Bekir Cınar, 'A Sunni Muslim Scholar's Humanitarian and Religious Rejection of Violence Against Civilians', a paper presented at the 'Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', conference that was held on October 25–27, 2007, at the House of Lords in London organized by SOAS, the London School of Economics and the Leeds Metropolitan University, online at <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/2463/53/>.
71. An interesting comparison would be with Benedict Anderson that asserts the necessity for amnesia to become a nation in *Imagined Communities*. For an opposing view, see Pim Valkenberg, 'Fethullah Gülen's Contribution to Muslim–Christian Dialogue in the Context of Abrahamic Cooperation', a paper presented at the 'Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement', conference that was held on October 25–27, 2007, at the House of Lords in London organized by SOAS, the London School of Economics and the Leeds Metropolitan University, online at <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/2138/31/>.
72. Kösebalaban, 'The Making of Enemy and Friend', 172–3.
73. Gülen, *Kırık Testi*, 100.
74. A substantial amount of these works appear to be, to say the least, 'extremely flattering' like comparisons of Fethullah Gülen with most prominent names of intellectual history as Confucius, Plato, Kant, Mill, and Sartre (see, Caroll, *A Dialogue of Civilizations*). Other works, however, especially many written by Turks, highlight a conspiracy theory between the movement and hardline Islamists in Turkey. In addition, there are other, more objective works. See, for example, Balcı, *Orta Asya'da İslam Misyonerleri: Fethullah Gülen Okulları*; Hendrick, 'Transnational Religious Nationalism' (the author of this unpublished paper is about to complete a PhD dissertation on Gülen networking); Koyuncu-Lorasdağı, 'Globalization, Modernization, and Democratization in Turkey'; Özyürek, 'Feeling Tells Beter than Language'; Park, 'The Fethullah Gülen Movement'; Toprak et al., *Türkiye'de Farklı Olmak: Din Ve Muhafazakarlık Ekseninde Ötekileştirilenler*, 144–70; Turam, *Between Islam and the State*; White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, 111–13, 207, 278; Yavuz and Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*.
75. Articles, speeches, interviews, etc. by Fethullah Gülen can be found at the movement's website at <http://www.fgulen.org>.
76. In an interview undertaken by the present writer with one of the followers of the movement on March 20, 2009, I was told that, 'I think it is important to recall and consider Gülen's views on democracy, state and politics in context. One of Gülen's early public speeches on democracy was at the launch of the Journalists and Writers Foundation in 1994. There he said that there can be no return from democracy; that while not perfect it is the best form of governance and that we should strive to perfect it further. From a personal point of view, I remember this statement having an effect on me as a teenager wondering whether I could internalise this value and whether doing so would run contrary to my faith. Many practising Muslims had similar dilemmas – including perhaps our current prime minister. It is no exaggeration to say that at the very least a significant proportion of the conservative practising Muslims of Turkey were extremely ambivalent about internalising democracy. They were happy to utilise it, but couldn't bring themselves to sincerely accepting it as a viable (and religiously permissible) form of governance. The stumbling block was their understanding of faith, religion and society. They were taught that accepting democracy will lead to disbelief; at the most it must be exploited to be subverted, but that's it. It was at this juncture that Gülen came out strongly supporting democracy. He didn't just argue that Islam "permist" democracy but has increasingly argued that it in fact necessitates "democratic engagement" which is important for me. You might be interested in watching his most recent video clip on this released just this week. His support of

democracy back in the 1990s was instrumental in facilitating the practising Muslim mass' internalisation of democracy.' (Interview with Özcan Keleş of the The Dialogue Society at the society's headquarters in London)

77. Park, 'The Fethullah Gülen Movement'.

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