

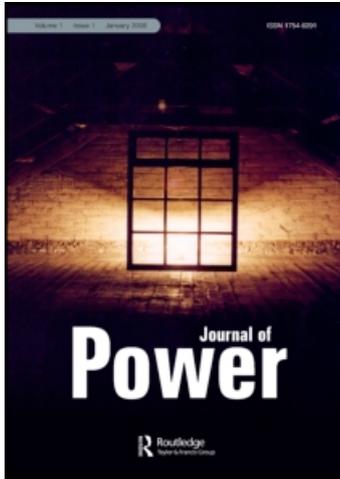
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## Globalization, Islamic activism, and passive revolution in Turkey: the case of Fethullah Gülen

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This article draws from the multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Turkey and the USA to illustrate how Muslim networks have taken advantage of economic globalization in an effort to passively transform the contours of social hegemony in contemporary Turkey. As a case study, this article presents the Turkish Gülen Movement (GM), a globally expansive, Islamic movement that is rooted in education, media, and business. In coalition with Turkey's governing 'Islamist roots' *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP), this article argues that the GM's market orientation, its promotion of the AKP's 'conservative democratic' political platform, its focus on education and civil society, and its global reach indicate a move to mount a Gramscian 'war of position' vis-à-vis rival factions in Turkey's elite. Unique within the field of Islamic activism, however, the GM works in the interests of domestic social transformation by striving to outperform rivals in the market, rather than to overcome them in political confrontation. The GM's attempt to wage a 'passive revolution' thus appears to focus more on 'increasing the Muslim share' than it does on 'Islamicizing' the secular institutions of the Turkish Republic.

**Keywords:** Islamic activism; passive revolution; conservative democracy; Turkey

Those who understand politics as political parties, propaganda, elections, and the struggle for power are mistaken. Politics is the art of management, based on a broad perspective of today, tomorrow, and the day after, that seeks the people's satisfaction and God's approval.

(M. Fethullah Gülen)

### Introduction: the Turkish 'War of Position'

On 27 April 2007, the *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri* (Turkish Armed Forces, TSK) intervened in Turkey's presidential nomination procedure by publicly expressing fear that a candidate nominated by the governing 'Islamist roots' *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party, AKP) would threaten Turkish secularism. At midnight, the TSK started a political crisis by issuing an electronic memorandum that stated the following:

It must not be forgotten that the Turkish Armed Forces do take sides in this debate and are the sure and certain defenders of secularism. Moreover, the Turkish Armed Forces ... will make their position and stance perfectly clear if needs be. Let nobody have any

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doubt about this .... The Turkish Armed Forces remain steadfast in their unwavering commitment to carry out in full the duties given to them by law .... The public has been respectfully informed (Turkish Mass Media Bulletin, 28–30 April 2007).

The next day, Turkey's Constitutional Court capitalized upon a loophole in the presidential nomination procedure by emphasizing that according to the 1982 Constitution, 367 deputies were required to be present in the chambers of the Parliament during the nomination. This resulted in a parliamentary vote in which the deputies from the two opposition parties did not attend. The AKP responded by calling for an early general poll to elect a new government. On 22 July 2007, the AKP was re-elected in a landslide taking nearly 47% of the electorate. Fearing a political backlash, deputies from the right-wing opposition Nationalist Action Party (MHP) attended the vote, and on 29 August 2007, the AKP Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, became Turkey's 11th president.

Gramsci's concept of 'passive revolution' refers to transformative social change that occurs gradually, without the overthrow of an existing political order. Passive revolutions occur when antithetical, 'subaltern' social groups move patiently through the hierarchy of institutions that comprise the production centers of a society's 'superstructure' (i.e. education system, the system of arts and culture, the media, etc.), for it is there that the dominant social group reproduces the conditions of their 'social hegemony.' By social hegemony, Gramsci refers to the degree of social power exercised by a dominant social group whereby, through the sophisticated mechanisms of cultural and moral authority, 'spontaneous consent is given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life' (Gramsci 1971, p. 12). By slowly redefining the contours of spontaneous consent (i.e. after taking over a society's superstructure), a passively revolutionary class/group wages a 'war of position' in the institutions of social and political power until its leaders accumulate enough legitimacy to engineer a new social hegemony from the inside out.

In this article, I contend that the liberalization of the Turkish economy in the 1980s coupled with the relaxation of laws regarding the public mobilization of religious communities led to a shift in the country's state-society relationship whereby previously marginalized groups took advantage of opportunities in the market to patiently penetrate the hierarchy of Turkish institutions. As a case study, I explain the discursive and organizational strategies of the 'Gülen Movement' (GM), Turkey's largest and most influential Islamic activist movement, and the primary powerbase in the AKP-led coalition. After introducing readers to the GM, I employ a Gramscian/Weberian approach to analyze Turkey's passive revolution by taking a step back to introduce the character and form of Turkey's state-managed development model. In so doing, I explain how before a transformative military coup in 1980, an oligarchic alliance of elites used the institutions of the Turkish state to reproduce the conditions of their social hegemony. And while understanding the rupture of the 1980–1983 military coup is crucial to understanding why the GM emerged when and in the manner that it did, it is also necessary to appreciate the tradition of charismatic leadership in Turkey and its significance in regard to the mobilization of grassroots Islamic activism in general. For this reason, I emphasize the impact of Gülen's predecessor, Said Nursi (d. 1960) and the mobilization of the 'Nur Movement,' a nation-wide phenomenon of which the GM is an updated offshoot.

In the second half of the paper, I draw from field data collected in Turkey and the USA to analyze the GM's impact. I argue that the GM has emerged as Turkey's

most influential non-partisan, non-military collective actor in an ongoing war of position for social hegemony. In coalition with the governing AKP, the GM leads this war of position by dividing the labor of the passive revolution between formal politics and market-based resource accumulation. The AKP mobilizes the 'political march' in parliament, the presidency, and the bureaucracies of the Turkish state, whereas the GM capitalizes upon its comparative advantage in education, business, media, and public relations to lead a corresponding 'civilian march,' through the institutions of Turkey's superstructure. As an alliance, these overlapping entities mobilize to effect a passive revolution in the interests of a new Anatolian bourgeoisie. For this reason, it is important to state that the war of position that characterizes contemporary Turkish politics is not an interclass class battle between dominant and 'subaltern' classes; it is an *intra*-class battle between old and new elites. Individuals recruited into the GM are not drawn from Turkey's working class, its disenfranchised, or its downtrodden, they come from an increasingly influential middle and upper class of social and economic conservatives. In other words, despite the conscious framing of the battle in cultural terms (i.e. 'Islam' versus 'secularism'), Turkey's passive revolution has emerged less as a reactionary movement against 'Western materialism,' than it has as a proactive effort to increase the Muslim share in Turkish capitalism.

### *The Gülen Movement in Turkey*

*Hocaefendi* ('esteemed teacher') M. Fethullah Gülen is Turkey's most famous religious personality. Born in 1938 (or 1941, depending on the source) in the northeastern city of Erzurum, Gülen started his career as a state-appointed religious functionary in the western coastal city of Izmir in the 1960s. There he attracted a small but devoted following of students who were drawn to his unique ability to synthesize a faithful identity within the dictates of twentieth century Turkish nationalism. As his influence expanded, however, so did suspicion about his motives. During the 1971 military coup, Gülen spent seven months in prison for allegations that he was the leader of a secret religious community, and upon his release, he was briefly banned from public speaking. Over the course of the 1970s, Gülen's students took advantage of the latest developments in information and communication technologies and were successful at disseminating his teachings to a national audience. By the late 1970s, Gülen was attracting tens of thousands of people to his sermons, and it was not uncommon for people to travel hundreds of kilometers across the country to hear him, to meet with him, and/or to attend one of several 'summer camps' that were organized by his disciples. In 1979, his community published the first edition of *Sızıntı* ('trickle'), a monthly periodical that focused on the reinforcing relationship between divine revelation and scientific discovery, a theme that in many ways came to shape the GM's engagement with mainstream Turkish society.

During the military junta of 1980–1983, Gülen's followers in Izmir and Istanbul consolidated a number of their foundational holdings into private education companies, and after the return to civilian governance, these first institutions provided a model for the emergence of similar learning institutions throughout the country. Considering Turkey's rigidity in terms of the role of Islam in the public sphere, the curriculum at these early 'Gülen schools' was careful to follow the state's requirements in regard to keeping religion out of the classroom. Instead, math and science were emphasized, and a very conscious effort emerged to develop a network of private

schools that could compete in Turkey's relatively young private education market. In 1991, the community expanded to Central Asia and the Balkans, and by the mid-1990s, the GM owned and managed schools in Russia, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Australia, the USA, Western Europe, and Latin America.

Adding another level of engagement to its initiative, in 1994, the 'Gülen *cemaat*' ('Gülen community') embarked on what was to become a permanent public relations campaign by bringing together a large number of Turkey's most influential journalists, academicians, and other public intellectuals for a meeting of minds in the mountain resort town of Abant. 'The Abant Platform' collectively asserted that Turkey's tensions between rival political factions hampered the country's political and economic development, and that 'tolerance' and 'dialogue' were necessary to move the country toward consensus. During this period, Gülen formed close relationships with many of Turkey's center-right and center-left political leaders; he met with high-profile religious leaders including the Armenian Patriarchate and Pope John Paul II, and his followers began to establish themselves as emerging players in media, finance, and trade.

Following Turkey's infamous 'February 28th Process' in 1997 (see below), the GM became a target for reactionary state forces. In 1999, Gülen was charged with being the leader of a clandestine organization that directly threatened the integrity of the Turkish state. The primary evidence in the case was a video excerpt leaked to the press, within which Gülen instructed his community to 'move in the arteries of the system, without anyone noticing your existence, until you reach all the power centers... You must wait until such time as you have gotten all the state power, until you have brought to your side all the power of the constitutional institutions in Turkey....'<sup>1</sup> By the time the clip aired on Turkish television Gülen had fled to the USA. And while he cited health reasons, his critics lambasted him for leaving the country instead of confronting the allegations directly. Gülen eventually responded as follows: 'because of conversations which were edited and intentionally misquoted in written articles, I am facing execution without trial' (Turkish Daily News 1999). Gülen has been living in the USA ever since. In August 2006, he was acquitted of all charges against him.

In recent years, the GM has attracted international media attention because of the 'mild,' and 'liberal' alternative to political Islam that GM schools provide to the world's Muslims (Economist 2008a, 2008b, Rabasa *et al.* 2006, Rasaba and Larabee 2008, Tavernise 2008). Critics, however, insist that GM schools are really missionary outposts spearheading a religiously motivated project of Turkish imperialism (Balci 2003), or worse, that they are educating soldiers for an imminent Islamic revolution (Çetinkaya 2007, Krespin 2007, 2009, Rubin 2008; Schwartz 2008; Yanardağ 2006). What factors explain the GM's mobilization, and what are its ultimate aims? In order to critically address this question, it is necessary to first introduce readers to the structure of political and economic development in Turkey, and to the unique characteristics of Anatolian Islamic activism.

### **The 'Laik' Republic and the politicization of Islam in Turkey**

After militarily forcing a second treaty with the Allies, Mustafa Kemal *Atatürk* ('Father Turk,' 1881–1938) oversaw the formal demise of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the modern Turkish Republic (est. 1923). Together with a single political party, the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (People's Republican Party, CHP),

President Atatürk's grand ambition was to politically, economically, and culturally reform Ottoman state institutions in accordance with a 'modern' model of society and governance that was rooted in *Turkish* rather than Islamic civilization. The most controversial of his early reforms, therefore, was the implementation of a rigid form of Turkish secularism that sought less to 'separate church from state,' than it did to inhibit religion in the public sphere. Modeled after French *laïcité*, Turkish *laiklik* (*laicism*) were intended to dramatically re-engineer social and cultural identity in line with a singular and indivisible Turkish nation. To protect the new republic from perceived internal threats, the regime granted the TSK the powers of political oversight, which laid the foundation for a number of successful and failed military interventions (the above-mentioned April 2007 'e-memorandum' being only the most recent).

To oversee the implementation of *laik* social reforms, the regime created the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, *Diyanet*, est. 1924), a sprawling state bureaucracy with a two-fold purpose: (1) to provide religious services to Turkish citizens, and (2) to define acceptable interpretations of Islam in Turkish society. The *Diyanet*'s authority replaced the Caliphate (abolished in 1924) and *cemaatlar* (communities) and *tarikahlar* (Sufi orders) (both outlawed in 1925). The abolishing of the former ended a thirteen-century-old tradition of leadership in Islamic civilization. The outlawing of the latter legally restricted organizational practices that under the Ottomans 'offered a mystical, emotional dimension that was lacking in the high religion of the *ulema* and [that] ... served as networks offering cohesion, protection, and social mobility' (Zürcher 2004, p. 192). Thus, in addition to facilitating the emergence of a universal identity rooted in ethnic Turkish nationalism, the Atatürk-CHP regime also politicized Islam and created the conditions for unyielding tension for generations to come.

### **Corporatism**

As Atatürk struggled to cultivate a 'collective conscience' based on a secular notion of ethnic nationalism, he was hampered by a contradiction between his desire to construct a pluralist modern democracy and his perceived necessity to develop an effective vanguard state bureaucracy (Heper 1985, pp. 67–68). What eventually emerged was a centralized system of political and economic power 'around singular and compulsory corporatist structures whose purpose was to increase government regulation and control rather than promote associational consultation' (Bianchi 1984, pp. 101–102). In this context, *corporatism* in Turkey referred to a development ideology that viewed 'liberalism ... as overly atomistic and consequently disruptive of social equilibrium, and [that viewed] the struggle and warfare, if not the sheer presence, of classes ... as detrimental to the maintenance of the social system' (Parla and Davidson 2004, p. 28). In 1925, labor unions and other trade associations were outlawed and opposition newspapers were closed. In 1931, the regime passed a new media law that stated the government could monitor and/or close any press organ that 'published anything contradicting the general policies of the country' (Zürcher 2004, p. 180). Economically, industrialization was concentrated in Istanbul, in the Western provinces, and on the western half of the Mediterranean coast, and was managed by an alliance of state economic enterprises and a small number of family-based holding firms. A rapidly developing urban bourgeoisie emerged against an agrarian Anatolian backdrop where the influences of underground religious communities remained

strong, and where access to social, political, and economic mobility was severely restricted (Heper 1985, Jacoby 2004, Mardin 1989, Zürcher 2004).

In 1946, Turkey reformed its electoral system and allowed for the formation of opposition political parties. In the same year, the ban on collective associations was lifted, which led to the development of the *Istanbul Tüccar Derneği* (Association of Istanbul Traders) and to a number of independent trade unions. Zürcher (2004) explains that much of these reforms were conscious on the part of the one-party regime, which wanted to stymie a growing opposition movement that demanded the expansion of political and economic freedoms (p. 217). These attempts, however, proved insufficient. In the 1950 national elections, the newly formed *Demokratik Parti* (DP, est. 1946) won an impressive 53% of the electorate, and subsequently an overwhelming majority of seats in Parliament (Zürcher 2004, p. 217). And even though the DP's economic policies closely resembled that of the CHP's, its political platform linking Islam, free enterprise, and social mobility resonated with Turkey's Anatolian heartland. For 10 years, the DP dominated Turkey's state apparatus, and ultimately succumbed to power's corrupting influence. In May 1960, the DP was forced from power in a military coup and its leader, *Adnan Menderes*, was executed. The TSK's official position was that the 'popularity of the DP was not 'real,' but derived from the exploitation of religious feelings...and from their bolstering of undemocratic patron-client relationships' (Heper 1985, p. 85).

In 1961, Turkey ratified a new constitution, which further pluralized the electoral system, expanded freedoms of the press and association, and created the conditions necessary for the rise of new collective actors (Biancchi 1984, Jacoby 2004, Yeşilada 1988, Zürcher 2004). Public debate, however, was quickly marred by a tendency toward ideological rigidity, and by the early 1970s, open conflict between left and right factions enveloped Turkey's major cities. This situation was overshadowed only by the fact that the TSK began and ended in the 1970s with the country's second and third military coup.

### ***Turkish Islamic activism and the legacy of Said Nursi***

I define *Islamic activism* as the political and/or social mobilization of actors who deploy an Islamic discourse to express their aspirations for social change. By using 'activism,' I mean to include overtly political (i.e. parties, insurrectionary groups, etc.) and more culturally and economically active revivalist movements. In Turkey, Islamic activism emerged in its political guise in the cracks of the left/right divide of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1969, the *Milli Görüş Hareketi* (National Outlook Movement) emerged, and soon thereafter, its leader, *Necmettin Erbakan* (b. 1926) established Turkey's first 'Islamist' political party, the *Milli Nizam Partisi* (National Order Party, MNP). In the context of the 1971 coup, the MNP was perceived as a threat and was closed by Turkey's Constitutional Court, a fate that three successor parties have suffered since. After the third MNP successor *Fazilet Partisi* (Virtue Party) was closed in 2001, a generational divide in the *Milli Görüş* led to the emergence of two new parties, the Erbakan-led *Saadet Partisi* (Felicity Party), and the younger generation AKP (see below). The reasoning behind the split had to do with the *Milli Görüş*'s rigidity in terms of its Islamic worldview, which, despite being reformed in the 1990s, was still quite polarizing. Thus, despite his success in creating an Islamic political identity in Turkey, Erbakan's partisan strategies were less effective at fostering an individually oriented religious revival (Yavuz 2003a). This responsibility fell upon underground *cemaatlar*

whose long-established connections were deeper and more diffuse than the party's, and whose stated objectives focused less on politics and more on social and cultural revival. Before the 1980 coup, the followers *Bediüzzaman* (Wonder of the Age) *Said Nursi* constituted one of Turkey's most influential Islamic communities and set the stage for the emergence of Fethullah Gülen (Mardin 1989, Yavuz 2000, 2003a, 2003b).<sup>2</sup>

Despite being a traditionally trained Islamic scholar, Said Nursi was an active participant in Turkey's nationalist project. In regard to the new Turkish government, however, Nursi became 'dismayed to find a lax and indifferent attitude toward Islam and their religious duties among many of the deputies in the assembly' (Vahide 2005, p. 169). He called on the new government to account for the loss of the Caliphate by assuring Turkish citizens that their sovereign nation was a Muslim nation. Aware of his influence, Atatürk tried to co-opt the leader by offering him a position in the *Diyanet*. Nursi declined. Instead, he reformulated a failed pitch he made to the Ottoman Sultan in 1907 for government funding to construct a 'modern Islamic university' in eastern Anatolia. His efforts were defeated in 1925 (Vahide 2005, p. 172). For the next 20 years, Nursi devoted himself almost entirely to study. Contrasting the 'old Said's' life as a political activist and warrior, the 'new Said' focused on the 'greater *cihad*,' which in Sufi Islam referred to the soul's internal struggle with the self (*nefs*). Drawing from his *Naqşibandi* roots, Nursi contended that Muslims had strayed from the straight path, and that it was necessary for the *umma* (community of Muslims) to return to Islam and to concentrate on the inner struggle against the corrupting influences of materialism, positivism, and moral decay. This message deeply affected an alienated Anatolian countryside that viewed its role in Turkey's modernization as marginal at best. The Nur community was, therefore, an influential collective supporter of DP in the 1950s; but with the exception of this period, Nursi spent most of his adult life in exile and/or under house arrest. His teachings were banned and shortly after his death in 1960, his tomb was moved to an undisclosed location.

Over the course of his life, Nursi authored a number of commentaries on Islam that his followers later collected into a volume titled *Risale-i Nur Kulliyeti* (RNK, Epistles of Light). Recreating their identity through text, Nursi's followers began meeting in small groups to read and discuss the RNK. Known as a *ders* (lesson), the Nur modified the *Naqşibandi* tradition of direct oral transmission from sheikh to disciple by disseminating knowledge at a *dershane* ('lesson house,' i.e. informal reading group). Because the RNK was written in Ottoman Turkish, instead of in Arabic or in Nursi's native Kurdish, the *dershane* also provided an alternative foundation upon which to construct a modern *Muslim* identity in *laik* Turkey, an 'embryo of civil society' that facilitated a shift from an Ottoman (universal) to a Turkish (national) sense of piety and belonging (Yavuz 2003b, p. 8).<sup>3</sup>

While never meeting Said Nursi, the young Fethullah Gülen was influenced by the Nur tradition, and in the late twentieth century, the GM became Turkey's most influential offshoot of the Nur phenomenon. Gülen's followers, however, go to great lengths to distinguish their leader from his predecessor. While misleading, such efforts are also practical as GM followers strive to preempt attacks from their enemies who consciously seek to slander them with titles such as 'Nurcu,' 'Gülençi,' and 'Fethullahçı.'<sup>4,5</sup> But if connections still exist what factors distinguish Gülen from Nursi? The answer is found in the applied strategies that Gülen's followers employ to affect a twenty-first century passive revolution.

## Battling for position: the case of the GM in Turkey

### *From Islamism to conservative democracy*

The 1980 military coup was a watershed event in Turkey's economic and political development. Responding to mass urban violence, the military arrested an estimated 30,000 people in the coup's first month alone (Zürcher 2004). As an antidote to ideological conflict, the military government implemented a pre-existing social policy that was developed by the conservative 'Intellectuals' Hearth Association.' Its view was that in order to steer Turkey toward national consensus, the ruling elite needed to reform the outdated articulation of classless, *laik* Turkish nationalism, and replace it with a more carefully constructed ideology:

[One] aimed at overriding particularistic interests by stressing the dangers of anarchy and social divisions to the family, nation, and state ... a new ideology [created] out of Ottoman, Islamic, and Turkish popular culture ... that reinterpreted the state as being integral to the nation and society, [and that deployed] Ottoman-Islamic symbols to make the past seem relevant to the present. (Yavuz 2003a, p. 71)

This new brand of Turkish-Islamic nationalism was codified in a new constitution based on a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis,' which created the foundation for a return to civilian governance in 1983 (Yavuz 2003a, 2006).

These new social policies coincided with new economic policies that sought to overhaul Turkish protectionism in favor of deeper integration with the global economy. This created the necessary pre-conditions for the emergence of a new, export-oriented economic elite in Turkey's rapidly industrializing interior. Unlike their counterparts in Istanbul, however, this new elite organized into regionally defined trade associations that received no subsidies from Ankara, and that relied primarily on the *global* marketplace for expanding their business model. Also unlike Istanbul's primary firms, most framed their enterprises in accordance with their religious leanings, which led to their collective recognition as Turkey's emergent 'Islamic bourgeoisie' (Buğra 1994, Demir *et al.* 2004, Özbüdü'n and Keymen 2002, Özcan and Çokgezzen 2003, 2006, Yavuz 2006). Channeling Max Weber, this new cohort of Turkish entrepreneurs framed their professional life and business pursuits as somehow fulfilling the moral and ethical dictates of their Islamic faith. They redistributed their wealth through religious community networks, they invested profits in parallel social programs, private schools, and international lobbying, and ultimately they organized as a politically conscious interest group. Moreover, Özcan and Çokgezzen (2006) explain, 'the spread of Islamic companies and their promised moral economic revival took root in social institutions often under the guiding leadership of a paternal figure who had indisputable authority and recognition' (p. 147). By the early 1990s, it became clear that Fethullah Gülen enjoyed such authority and recognition (see below).

The political consciousness of Turkey's Islamic bourgeoisie was central to the *Milli Görüş*'s political success in the early 1990s (Gülalp 2001). By that time, Erbakan's *Refah Parti* (Welfare Party, RP) began to downplay Islam, and to promote free trade, democracy, and 'moral values' in its stead. Nonetheless, despite its reformed discourse, the RP was still considered Turkey's primary 'Islamist threat,' and in 1997, the TSK intervened in Turkish politics for a fourth time to force the RP from power in what was later dubbed the 'February 28th process.' After the RP's overthrow and the banning of its successor FP in 2001, a younger generation of *Milli*

*Görüş* politicians who formed the AKP were aware of the opportunities provided by Turkey's global integration, of its bid to join the European Union, and of its continued economic growth through export. For these reasons, the AKP dropped its call for an 'Islamic alternative' all together, and advocated instead for something called 'conservative democracy.' According to the AKP leader *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* (2006), conservative democracy is 'a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition ... that accepts localism ... that does not disregard a spiritual meaning of life, and ... that is not fundamentalist' (p. 335). By fusing progressive globalism with traditional conservatism, the AKP managed to win a Parliamentary majority (34%) and to form a single-party government in 2002. It repeated its success by an even larger margin (47%) in 2007. The AKP did this by 'keeping together both the winners and the losers of the neo-liberal globalization process,' that is, by appealing across regional, class, and ethnic divides, and by insisting that, however conservative, *it was not Islamist* (Öniş 2009, p. 2).

I contend that the GM mobilizes as the most significant powerbase in the AKP's new conservative democratic coalition, and is a direct contributor to the AKP's ability to 'not stop and keep going' (*Durmak yok, Yola devam*). Spearheaded by an alliance of new political and economic elites, I argue that together the AKP and the GM have mounted an effective campaign to gain control over the creation and manipulation of Turkish public opinion in education, media, and politics, and have thus managed to maintain their legitimacy by succeeding at accomplishing two goals: (1) bridging social conservatism with international neo-liberalism (i.e. popular Islam with democracy, free markets, human rights, etc.), and (2) aligning the AKP's foreign policy of 'strategic depth' (i.e. its policy to broaden Turkey's bilateral relations with its regional neighbors, and with developing countries in Africa and Southeast Asia) with the GM's effort to deepen Turkey's cultural and economic relationships with developing countries the world over. As a coalition, the GM and the AKP constitute the leadership of Turkish conservative democracy, and via mutual support, they wage an effective war of position against the country's entrenched power elite.<sup>6</sup> Below I draw from field data collected from GM students, teachers, authors, journalists, bankers, and businessmen to illustrate the movement's impact in the new Turkey.

### ***The charisma of Fethullah Gülen***

At the beginning of each of his books, Gülen's editors write a brief hagiography about the author. In addition to these shorter pieces, there are a few larger hagiographies about him (Can 1996, Ergene 2005, 2008, Ünal 2005), a small number of available interviews (Akman 2004, Gündem 2005, Sarıtoprak 2005), an increasing number of internally produced articles and books (Carrol 2007, Hunt and Aslandoğan 2006, Ünal and Williams 2000, Yavuz and Esposito 2003, Yurtsever 2008), and a small number of academic studies (Ağai 2003, Aras and Caha 2000, Balcı 2003, Hendrick 2008, Park 2008, Turam 2004a, 2004b, 2006, White 2004, Yavuz 1999, 2003a) that are focused on the GM's growth and impact. Considering the GM's influence in Turkish society, the success of GM schools around the world, and the growing international prestige of its leader, what factors explain the lack of an academically rigorous biography of Turkey's most influential living personality?

According to Max Weber, charismatic leaders are unique because they emerge in times of crisis. In the absence of crisis, charismatic figures tend to create the illusion of crisis 'through their own actions by exaggerating existing deficiencies or threats to

the environment' (Shamir and Howell 1999, p. 261). Unlike Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' who must prove his worth rationally through verifiable facts and supportive evidence, charismatic leaders must prove themselves by performing miracles:

The charismatic hero derives his authority ... by proving his power in practice .... Most of all, his divine mission must prove itself by bringing well-being to his faithful followers; if they do not fare well, he obviously is not the god-sent master (Weber 1978[1922], p. 1114).

Gülen proves his powers by overseeing the GM's expansion, which is framed by his followers as evidence of his grace:

Fethullah Gülen ... possesses powers that an average educated person, an average person with average intelligence, could not possibly imagine. It is God-given ... If you find a more learned person in the world I would like to meet him. (Field Interview, 20 July 2007)

In an effort not to reduce Gülen's appeal to subjective feelings of helplessness and frustration, Enes Ergene (2008) argues, 'the Gülen movement did not rise upon the values of a past movement or period of crisis. The movement has produced its own appearance, structure, social and moral values, and institutions' (40). It is thus important that the world understands Gülen's appeal to be entirely original, and the GM to be neither reactionary nor a continuation of a pre-existing project (i.e. the Nur Movement). This is interesting when considering Gülen's account of modern Turkey:

For several centuries...our society has had the appearance of a wreck. It has been searching for an alternative system of order and thought in education, art, and morality .... Now let me ask you earnestly how and with what we should overcome this moral misery ... and how we should overcome the crises which form an even stronger and deeper whirlpool in ourselves as the days pass? (Gülen 2005, pp. 105–106)

Gülen's answer is to empower a 'golden generation' (*altın nesil*) of 'ideal humans' (*ideal insanlari*) who will emulate the perfection of the Prophet Muhammad, and who will lead Turkey toward a brighter future. Such a generation will emerge thanks to the dedication of numerous 'volunteers' under whose leadership humanity can prepare for the end of times:

Not ordinary people, but rather people devoted to divine reality ... people who by putting into practice their thoughts ... dedicated spirits ... who wander like [archangel] *Israfil* ... on the verge of blowing the last trumpet in order to prepare dead spirits for the Day of Resurrection ... This can be regarded as our final attempt...nations that have been wrung with various crises have also been awaiting such a breeze of hope ... how fortunate are the ones whose breasts are receptive to this breeze (Gülen 2004, pp. 105–110).

Despite Ergene's claims to the contrary, Gülen both invents and embellishes upon the crisis that he purports to address. And typical of all charismatic leaders, he surrounds himself with a tight network of loyal lieutenants whose promote and legitimize the larger charismatic movement.

Weber defines the cadre of the most devoted as a charismatic leader's 'aristocracy,' his 'select group of adherents who are united by discipleship and loyalty and chosen according to personal charismatic qualification' (Weber 1978[1922], p. 1119). Gülen's aristocracy is composed of individuals who were educated at the GM's

original student dormitories in Izmir and Istanbul in the 1970s and early 1980s, and who are now highly successful authors, journalists, editors, and businessmen. Gülen's role vis-à-vis this inner *cemaat* (community) is to provide 'advice' and 'guidance' rather than management:

He says, 'it would be good if it is done,' he never says, 'it must be done ....' For instance, he says, 'in our age, media and television are of the utmost importance.' Or he says, for example ... 'why don't you open a bank?' He never says 'you.' The person addressed may say there is no money. But a businessman can do it .... So he might not have the money. But if he [Gülen] says something, we believe that it is very important, and we have to do it. (Field Interview, 1 March 2007)

While I was in residence at *Akademi* ('The Academy'), the GM's central ideational node in Istanbul – an all-in-one think tank, publishing house, school, library, and mosque – I observed, interviewed, and became friends with a number of loyal lieutenants in the GM's inner *cemaat*. I interviewed editors, translators, writers, veteran teachers and administrators, and several of Fethullah Gülen's first generation students who are now high-level authority figures in the movement.<sup>7</sup> It was from such people that I learned how and for what purposes the GM marketized its activities, how and why it expanded to Central Asia, and why, in the interests of growth, the movement trans-nationalized to Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, the USA, and South America to proselytize 'ideal humanity' by way of *temsil* (passive persuasion).

### ***Competition and the opportunity of education***

The GM's first private schools were founded in 1982 in Izmir and Istanbul. A first-generation aristocrat at *Akademi* explained that the vision for these institutions was a market rationalization of religious persecution:

[During the 1980–1983 coup] Hocaefendi was inspired by a verse in the Qur'an ... This shows that hocaefendi acted in accordance with the primary sources of religion ... he changed the legal condition of the dorm and turned it into a school and registered it as private property. He gathered a board of directors consisting of businessmen. So that school wasn't taken by the military government because it was the property of a corporation. This school became a model for future schools. Anybody who wanted to open a [Gülen] school started a company and owned a school in the name of that company. It then spread abroad. (Field Interview, 8 March 2007)

In its first year, the GM's *Fatih* High School in Istanbul sent over 85% of its senior class to university and is now one of Istanbul's most reputable private educational institutions with six elementary schools, five high schools, and four dormitories (<http://www.fatihkoleji.com>). Similarly, in 2008, students from Izmir's *Yamanlar* High School took home 45 national and international science and math medals, including a gold medal at the 47th Annual International Physics Olympics in Hanoi (<http://www.yamanlar.k12.tr/>). Now operating 10 institutions, *Yamanlar's* graduating middle school students earned more points on Turkey's high school placement exam than did any other middle school in Turkey, a fact that helps explain the GM's comparative advantage in the contest for Turkey's youth.

Indeed, the importance of Turkey's competitive education system cannot be overstated with regard to the GM's emergence. Compulsory education in Turkey lasts eight years (raised from five in 1997), and high school and university placement are

both regulated by a rigorous examination system (Akşit 2006, Şimşek and Yıldırım 2004, Tansel and Bircan 2002). First administered in 1973, the *Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı* ('Student Selection Exam,' ÖSS) has a tremendous impact on a student's prospects for social mobility. One's score determines the university s/he is eligible to attend, and if s/he performs poorly, s/he must wait a year to retake the exam. In 2003, 1.5 million students took the ÖSS and fewer than 11% passed (Şimşek and Yıldırım 2004). In 2005, 1.6 million made the attempt, and again, fewer than 400,000 scored high enough to be placed at a Turkish university (Akşit 2006). In 2009, 30,000 students scored a zero (Güngör 2009).

Because of the ÖSS's primary importance, Turkey developed a private supplemental education system to teach to the test. Known as *dershaneler* ('lesson houses,' not be confused with the Nur *dershane*), supplemental education companies in Turkey now comprise a highly profitable industry. In 2002, the total out-of-pocket expenditure for *dershane* instruction was US\$650 million, nearly 12% of the country's personal expenditure (World Bank 2005, p. 21). In 2004, the average cost for a *dershane* course was US\$4711 (World Bank 2005, p. 21), despite a US\$6700 per capita purchasing parity (CIA World Factbook 2004). Considering their competition, therefore, *dershane* companies go to great lengths to advertise their students' successes on billboards, bus and building advertisements, and in print media across the country. Controlling approximately 12% of the Istanbul market, the GM's *FEM Dershanesi* (est. 1985) and its sister organization, '*Sevgi Çiçeği*' *Anafen* ('Beloved Flowers,' Primary science) are the country's market leaders.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Social networking and the power of a good product***

Lin (1999) defines social capital as 'resources embedded in a social structure, which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions' (p. 35). Focusing on the saliency of social networks in regard to the generation of social capital, Passey (2003) argues that after being socialized into a movement, individuals 'find themselves in an interactive structure that enables them to define and redefine their interpretive frames, [to] facilitate the process of identity-building and identity-strengthening, and [to] create or solidify political consciousness' (p. 24). Only after strengthening one's collective identity, therefore, can actors in a network make use of the 'structural connections' between institutions and individuals, and subsequently invest their accumulated social capital. In the GM, structural connections provide new recruits with access to a subsidized education, to subsidized room and board, and to a post-graduate network of professional opportunities.

In addition to its 'official' educational institutions (i.e. schools, *dershaneler*), extra tutoring is offered at GM *ışık evleri* ('lighthouses'), subsidized apartments occupied by four to six university students who have been recruited into the 'golden generation.' While studying, visiting students are asked if they would like to participate in *sohbet*, a rearticulated Nur *ders* that meets regularly to recite and discuss the teachings of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen. Similar to the Nur *ders*, *sohbet* groups function as social networking sites that connect people and information within the movement. After scoring well on the ÖSS, *dershane* teachers inquire about students' intended living arrangements for university. Freshmen students are offered a subsidized room at a GM lighthouse, and after moving in, they are asked to tutor younger students, to attend *sohbet*, and to participate in the community established at the house. When a student does this, s/he has been recruited into the GM network.

According to Gülen, lighthouses are where ‘ideal humans’ are conditioned to appreciate the challenges of the modern world and the role of faith in one’s personal life. They are places ‘where deficiencies of people that may have been caused by their human characteristics are closed up ... sacred places where plans and projects are produced, the continuity of the metaphysical tension is provided and courageous and faithful persons are raised’ (Gülen 1998, p. 12). In this way, lighthouses function as the GM’s primary institution of socialization, the sites where individuals are conditioned to become a member of God’s ‘cavalry of light.’

This cavalry of the light ... is now competing ... to turn those dry hearts that crave tolerance and love into the gardens of Paradise... They take such great pains to succeed in worldly affairs that people who see these valiant ones take them to be people of the world unaware of the Hereafter. When they see the love in them, however, they think of them as being of those of the highest rank. (Gülen 2004, p. 106)

*Selim*, an editor at *Akademi* who lived and worked at GM schools in Albania for seven years, explained how Gülen’s concept of a lighthouse living is *intended* to impact new recruits:

Let’s say a group of university students come together, stay together ... they have the same opinion, Hocaefendi’s and Said Nursi’s opinions ... you call it a lighthouse. In such a place, for example, naturally, you don’t watch everything on TV, like you know, obscene things ... or maybe you don’t have a television at all ... you have, let’s say ahhhhh ... parallel opinions with your friends, you pray, nobody drinks ... when you compare it to a traditional, common house or apartment where students live... they bring in their girlfriends, they watch pornographic movies, sometimes they have alcohol. Then you compare such things ... in one of them you pray, and you know, you read such books of Said Nursi and Hocaefendi ... you pray ... there is some spiritual pride. (Field Interview, 20 January 2007)

In its ideal form, lighthouses are sites where individuals learn to ‘succeed in worldly affairs’ and where they are conditioned to exude ‘spiritual pride.’

The above, however, is merely what Gülen and his aristocrats claim the GM should be, not necessarily what it is. I argue that on the ground the GM is a fluid and adapting organization of autonomous institutions that collectively ‘win’ the allegiance of many by offering high-quality services in a competitive market economy. In addition to ‘sacrificing’ individuality, young recruits also find access to potentially limitless professional opportunities. Moreover, even if an individual takes advantage of such opportunities, this does not mean that s/he is destined to become a devoted and loyal recruit. It does, however, mean that s/he will likely reap some sort of reward, and will thus likely come to sympathize with the GM’s overall aims. As the examples below indicate, the GM’s social network is organized via multiple spheres of belonging from the most devoted to the only mildly affiliated.

Lale is a literature major who attended the GM’s *Maltepe Dershanesi* in Ankara to prepare for the ÖSS. She explained that she originally did not want to go to Maltepe because she knew of its affiliation with the GM, and ‘did not want anything to do with them’ (Field Interview, 3 July 2007). Based on a pre-test, however, Lale qualified for two tuition scholarships, one at Maltepe and one at another institution. She accepted the latter. Lale explained that after watching unmotivated students treat the course more like a social space than a study hall, however, she made the switch to Maltepe despite her misgivings. At the GM school, Lale said that there were always extra

courses, extra help, and one-on-one lessons: ‘They force you to study...there are intense interactions with the students. At other dershaneler, people are not forced to study, it is up to them. At Maltepe, you are constantly watched and told to study’ (Field Interview, 3 July 2007). After scoring exceedingly well on the ÖSS, Lale earned a seat at Turkey’s prestigious Bogaziçi University. Just before she moved to Istanbul, Lale received a phone call from one of her teachers at Maltepe who offered Lale a spot in a GM lighthouse. After some thinking, Lale accepted because university dorms were very expensive and overcrowded, and because she had friends who had to leave school because they went into debt and she did not want to deal with a similar fate. For two years, Lale lived in a subsidized rental that was close to campus and that was, ‘worth the sacrifice.’ And while she described her experience with the GM as ‘a really really prolonged visit,’ she also said that living in the lighthouse was ‘good for her actually’ because she was ‘never lonely’ and because she enjoyed how much ‘everyone shared everything.’ When she began talking about the constant visitors at the house, however, Lale explained that her life with the GM was also quite troubling:

There was one time when I did not sleep for over a week, but it was my own psychology ... When they talk about ‘self-sacrifice,’ this is what they mean. Teachers work long hours for little or no extra pay, college students give free tutoring to dershane students, people go out of their way to help others when it inconveniences them. I was the only person who had a problem with everyone coming and going all the time. (Field Interview, 3 July 2007)

For Lale, participating in the GM had nothing to do with Islam; it was about opportunity, social mobility, and subsidized living. When she felt that her discomfort outweighed the rewards, she left. But despite her reasons for leaving, Lale made sure to let me know that she still had friends who lived at GM lighthouses, and that even though she smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol, and was not a practicing Muslim, they regularly let her know that she was always welcome to return.

*Yusef*, a university student in Istanbul who was recruited into the GM network as a high school student in Azerbaijan, explained that reality on the ground is sometimes even further from Gülen’s ideal:

There are some students who use the movement for their own benefit. They try to appear better to their eyes. They are not the way they seem to be. They claim to be good people. I don’t know, maybe they have some plans for the future. After graduation, if you ask for a job, Hizmet offers you one. (Field Interview, 9 February 2007)

A similar trend of rational opportunism emerged with thematic regularity. For every ‘ideal human’ who lived at a GM lighthouse there was another who used the resources provided by affiliation for his or her own benefit. When I mentioned this observation to a GM aristocrat at *Akademi*, I was told that even if a person does not become totally dedicated, at least they will become socialized as a ‘friend’ (*arkadaş*), and will look upon their experience as a service that deserves remembrance. When they become professionals in their own right, the hope is that the GM can rely on them as a potential client, financial supporter, or at the very least, as a sympathetic voice in the context of public suspicion/scrutiny.

### ***Emerging markets = emerging opportunities***

Living at a GM lighthouse exposes individuals to a social and economic network that extends throughout Anatolia, and since the mid-1990s, throughout the world. In a

process that began by funding schools in Turkey in 1991, the GM expanded to Central Asia and the Balkans. Affiliated entrepreneurs in Turkey's emergent Anatolian bourgeoisie set up trade networks that used inroads established by GM schools and lighthouses to facilitate the development of local trade relationships. Later in the decade, this model was extended to over 100 countries. The companies formed to outfit GM schools led to the development of *Kaynak Holding Group* (est. 1973). While originally dependent on GM schools, Kaynak has since become Turkey's largest producer, distributor, and exporter of education products and is involved in publishing, ICT, retail, paper, shipping, tourism, furniture, textiles, construction, and insurance. A Kaynak executive explained the holding's diversification as follows:

Let's analyze a human being. A human has many needs. This holding developed in that way. The first occupation of the holding was books, then audiocassettes in Izmir. When the schools opened, there was need for technical equipment and stationery. When there was demand, people started to manufacture these. I was visiting the schools since I saw them as the primary customers of this holding, and then I noticed that some publishers already started to publish the needs of the schools. You see, this is a market, an economic sector. (Field Interview, 8 March 2007)

The first of Kaynak's ventures was in cultural publishing and printing, which both started in Izmir in the early 1970s. *Zambak* publishing later organized the corporation's academic publications (e.g. textbooks, etc.), and *Sürat English Language Training* (SELT) organized all English language publication needs. Among its most successful brands is *Sürat Teknoloji*, a highly competitive ICT firm that has become an IBM global partner and that has developed a diversified portfolio that includes completed projects for the City of Istanbul, USAID, and the United Nations.<sup>9</sup> As a corporation, Kaynak now exports its products globally, and manages offices in 14 cities around the world (<http://www.kaynak.com.tr/index.asp>). But while Kaynak Corporation represents the core of the GM's big business enterprises whose growth is directly correlated with the expansion of GM schools, it is not alone.

When I asked a long-time confidant of Fethullah Gülen about the logic of the GM's economic network, he explained as follows:

You are a businessman, okay. Here you have 10 million people around the world, okay. If you are a businessman, you shall either sell something, or you offer a service. Okay. Out of 10 million who will need your service, they will come to you first. Why? Because they know about your character. You are already two steps ahead of your competition with these people. (Field Interview, 20 July 2007)

In South East Asia, GM followers set up the *Pasifik Ülkeleri ile Sosyal ve İktisadi Dayanışma Derneği* (Association for Social and Economic Cooperation between in Pacific Asian Countries, PASIAD). Based in Istanbul, PASIAD centralizes the organization of GM schools in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and has hosted and/or organized receptions for finance ministers and state elites from Singapore, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia (<http://www.pasiad.org/>). For Africa, GM loyalists started a similar organization, the *Türkiye Afrika Ülkeleri Kültürel Sosyal ve Ekonomik İşbirliği Derneği* (The Turkey–African Countries Cultural, Social, and Economic Development Association, AKSIAD), which now coordinates trade, education, and social services throughout the continent (<http://www.aksiad.org>). In 2005, 124 separate Anatolian regional associations representing over 10,000 businessmen came together to form Turkey's largest business-related NGO, the *Türkiye İşadamları*

*ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu* (The Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists in Turkey, TUSKON). TUSKON has since organized a series of trade conferences with Central Asia (September 2006), Pacific Asia (April 2007, June 2008), and Africa (May 2006, 2007, 2008), among others. At TUSKON's 2007 Turkey–Africa trade summit, Turkish and African businessmen signed \$2 billion in trade contracts, which equated to approximately one-third of Turkey's trade volume with Africa in the same year (TUSKON 2007). Two years later, a TUSKON trade delegation visited Kenya and Tanzania, and in two days, Turkish and African businessmen signed over \$500 million in trade contracts. Considering the AKP's policy to deepen Turkish interests in Africa, the former AKP deputy and current Turkish president, Abdullah Gül, accompanied the delegation. According to TUSKON's president, *Rizanur Meral*, Gül's participation during the trip was pivotal to its success, as it legitimized TUSKON's activities as having the full support of the Turkish state (TUSKON 2009). Meral has also noted on several occasions the crucial role played by 'Turkish schools' around the world, which allow affiliated exporters to establish close relationships in foreign markets:

Foreign trade is being conducted by graduates of these schools who are integrated with the global world both culturally and economically. They are cooperating with Turkish businessmen or working in companies established by Turks [abroad]. I can securely call the graduates of the Turkish schools 'trade ambassadors.' (Today's Zaman, 4 December 2007)

***'Degirmen suyu nereden geliyor?' ('Where does the water for the mill come from?')***

Since it began in 2005, TUSKON's primary sponsor has been the GM's *Bank Asya* (BA) (formerly *Asya Finans*), an 'Islamic finance' institution that began in 1996 upon the advice of Fethullah Gülen: 'Hocaefendi said it would be beneficial for [businessmen], for their future enterprises, and he asked them to pray. So people came together and [Bank Asya] started in this way' (Field Interview, 24 July 2007). BA is now Turkey's largest 'participation bank' with assets totaling more than \$4 billion. In May 2006, BA publicly sold 20% of its assets despite a demand that was 50% higher. When considering BA's growth and expansion, the answer to the ever-elusive question, 'Degirmen suyu nereden geliyor?' ('Where does the water for the mill come from?') comes into view.

First, all individuals loyal to Fethullah Gülen donate some portion of their income to the movement's continuation. Donation is called *himmət* (voluntary religious donation), and is collected from followers and affiliates alike:

I go to what they call *sohbet* ... where we talk about religion and values. And you see a face come from another town, and they started a school. And they thought that they could finish with the budget they had, but it's not finished .... They go around once, and they count the money. The brother says that he will take anything, but that they need this much. In one round, short. Second round, this much more. Third round, this much more. He then counts how much he needs, and gives the rest back. Then they [the rest of the group] says, 'No! You keep this, you keep the extra too, because you made the wrong calculations and now you may need it ....' This was my first experience. This happened 15 years ago.' (Field Interview, 20 July 2007)

As mentioned above, *sohbet* groups are sites where GM loyalists meet to create community, to recruit followers, and to reproduce social networks. At higher levels,

however, *sohbet* also function as pitch meetings for collecting investment/bailout capital for various GM projects. Like other social norms in the GM such as attending *sohbet*, living at a lighthouse, tutoring younger students, and obtaining a working knowledge of Gülen's and Nursi's teachings, giving *himmet* is a signifier of one's dedication to the 'community,' which has both social and economic returns.

According to *Osman Bey*, a managing editor at *Akademi* who worked as a principal at a number of GM schools in Tajikistan in the 1990s, this model of redistributing wealth through social networks is best understood as a system of 'friendship marketing.' Within such a model, the tendency to seek guidance from a religious leader is an efficient way to assure who one's friends are:

People from Gülen Movement have needs .... Someone has to fulfill these needs, and people want to do this business. Let's say the bank. How many banks went bankrupt in the last 20 years in Turkey? Many. A religious leader has to find a solution to these problems for the people ... He must give people hope and guide them ... He [Gülen] said ... 'Only if some reliable businessmen come and found a non-interest bank, approvable by Islam.' He only suggested this. After this, the listeners of these ideas ... came together from Antep, Istanbul, etc., and decided to found a bank .... There was advice and it was carried out .... Schools are a different entity, Kaynak is a different entity .... There's Sema Hospital, it's a different entity, too. Its management is separate. Do they make some contracts between them? Yes, they do, but it's a trade-based relationship. (Field Interview, 13 February 2007)

The GM collects, invests, and produces value via a network of mutually cooperative enterprises. Once a school, company, or institution is self-sustaining, *himmet* funding is no longer required, and market rationality can take over. Social and economic ties between these institutions provide Turkey's conservative democratic coalition with an economic base from which it can draw to reproduce its influence and to expand its position. These ties are promoted and reproduced, moreover, through affiliated media, which works to manufacture consent in the new conservative democratic Turkish Republic.

### ***Friendship marketing and media: mapping the conservative democratic coalition***

The literature on Muslim politics agrees that when possible, Islamic activists focus on expressing themselves through media (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, Eickelman and Anderson 2003, Cooke and Lawrence 2005, Hefner 2004, Mandaville 2001, 2006, Wiktorowicz 2004, Yavuz 2003a). With the rise of the AKP in 2002, however, a new era began. The AKP's victory coincided with a new law that allowed private media conglomerates to expand their enterprises into other sectors. Kaya and Cornell (2008) explain that this led to an environment whereby media moguls sought favors from the government, 'given the expectation that their media outlets' attitude toward the government could influence their chances in privatization tenders' (p. 2). This granted the AKP to employ 'soft state power' when deciding whether 'to accord or not accord various companies the licenses and tenders they seek' (p. 2). Lending evidence to this analysis was the ownership transfer of Turkey's second largest media conglomerate, *ATV-Sabah*, which was seized by the Turkish government in April 2007 and which was sold to the GM-affiliated *Çalık Group* for US\$1.1 billion later the same year. In addition to its close relationship with the GM, allegations of nepotism over the *ATV-Sabah* deal reached a global audience, as Prime Minister Erdoğan's son-in-law was

the Çalık Group's General Director. This was compounded by an unprecedented \$750 million state-administered loan that the AKP secured for Çalık to complete the deal in December 2007.

In addition to being Turkey's newest media mogul, Çalık Holding's CEO, *Ahmet Çalık*, is also the single largest shareholder in the GM's BA, and is Turkey's the primary figure atop a \$2.4 billion corporation that deals in textiles, power/electricity, and pipeline construction (Hayward 2007).<sup>10</sup> With a history dating back to the 1930s, it was not until the early 1990s when Çalık expanded its operations to Turkmenistan that it became one of Turkey's most influential corporate actors. There, Çalık funded a number of GM schools, supported the production and distribution of a Turkmen edition of the Feza's *Zaman* newspaper, and eventually became a close personal advisor of the Turkmen dictator *Saparmurat Niyazov Turkmenbasha* (Mamedov 2005, p. 58). After diversifying into energy in the mid-1990s, Çalık went global and became a major shareholder in the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline Company (TAPCO) project, which broke ground in April 2007. The TAPCO project will make use of pre-existing passageways created by the 1776 km *Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan* pipeline, which was lobbied for heavily by Ahmet Çalık with overt support from the US government (Fried 2007, Roberts 2004).

Before the AKP's rise in 2002, the Çalık Group was relatively unknown to non-business elites. Since 2002, however, Çalık has become a regular feature in Turkish media, especially since its 2008 takeover of ATV-Sabah. The most readily available coverage of Çalık's dealings, however, is found in one particular news source, the GM's *Zaman Gazetesi* (Zaman Newspaper). *Zaman* is the flagship brand under *Feza Gazetecilik* (Feza Media Group), a news corporation with modest beginnings in 1986, that now produces Turkey's most circulated news daily (*Zaman*), Turkey's most widely circulated news magazine (*Aksiyon*), Turkey's most widely read English language news source (*Today's Zaman*).<sup>11</sup> Feza's CEO, *Ali Akbulut* is also BA's Supervisory Budget Auditor and a BA shareholder. Together, Çalık and Akbulut now rival Turkey's primary media moguls in the production of manufactured consent in Turkish society.

### ***Manufacturing consent***

A first generation student of Fethullah Gülen explained the GM's initial interest in media as follows:

A crowd of people consisting of students at the schools plus their families...the people who listened to Hocaefendi's preachings in the mosques of Izmir and Istanbul, in Sultanahmet, Suleymaniye, etc. People overcrowded the mosques and not everybody could listen to him. And there was a need to inform people correctly ... So, a more general medium was needed. Media fulfilled this. (Field Interview, 1 March 2007)

While its original intent might have been to promote Gülen's teachings, in the mid-1990s, at Gülen's request, a handful of young GM recruits attended journalism school in the USA. Upon their return in 2001, *Zaman* underwent what one interviewee described as a 'rebirth' (Field Interview, 17 April 2007), and Feza's success since has been undeniable.

The group of men who managed *Zaman's* rebirth met at a GM lighthouse while attending university in Istanbul in the early 1990s. Under the tutelage of their *abi*

(elder brother), these young men formed the 'Zaman Research Group' and put together news reports and opinion pieces that were later published in *Zaman*. Now in their mid-forties, these men are executives at *Feza Gazetecilik*, and are considered by inner-circles to be the architects of the GM's renovated presentation (Field Interview, 17 March 2007, 23 March 2007, 20 July 2007, 28 August 2008). The primary intent driving this renovation is to present the AKP's conservative democratic coalition as collectively embodying the social mores of modernity *to a greater extent* than Turkey's oligarchic elite. It does this by publicly lambasting its adversaries, not for being 'un-Islamic,' but for being 'undemocratic,' 'status quo,' and/or 'fascist.'<sup>12</sup> Just before the snap July elections of 2007, a *Zaman* columnist and founding GM brother who helped launch *Zaman* in the 1980s explained to both his Turkish and English language readers that it was not the AKP that was running for re-election in Turkey, but 'democracy' that was running for its life:

July 22 is a moment of decision ... Ask your conscience: Stability, peace and domestic integrity? Or tension, row, crisis and polarization? ... Democracy or status quo? ... Remain the inferior 'other' or enjoy the protection of the fundamental rights under a civilian democracy? Ask your conscience: Ethnic nationalism or a brotherhood fostered through mutual tolerance and respect? (*Zaman* [Turkish]/*Today's Zaman* [English], 20 July 2007)

Despite its clear endorsement and support for AKP policies and for the continuation of AKP power, however, according to the GM, democracy was the winner in 2007:

Everyone knows ... 95% of this community votes for the same party. But nobody articulates this. Even in their home, because we are far from politics. I know, for example, I assume, that 95% of our community voted for the AK party, maybe 99% ... But nobody talked about this at their homes, or in their sohbet. Unfortunately, in the last elections, since there was a huge conflict ... [the issue] was not supporting the party, but supporting 'democracy' ... so people talked a lot more than expected. And also, *Zaman* newspaper and STV television, and some other friends blamed us for being more partisan now. But it is not partisanship. This is supporting democracy. (Field Interview, 28 August 2008)

By demanding accountability in terms of 'democracy,' 'peace,' and 'stability,' *Zaman* journalism also projects the degree to which the categories of political and economic liberalism have expanded in Turkish society, and how 'liberalism carries with it not the seeds of its destruction, but the seeds of its expansion' (Keck and Sikkink 1998, pp. 205–206).

According to Feza journalists, *Zaman* and the GM's other print and broadcast media are 'more liberal' and 'more supportive of democracy' than other news sources in Turkey. This is because GM journalists and opinion makers realize that in order to 'win' the discursive battle for public opinion, they must appeal to a global audience. That is, they must reframe 'Islamic issues' like the ban on Muslim headscarves at Turkish universities to universal issues such as individual freedom and human rights. Indeed, with a diversified public message, GM media constitutes the loudest and most consistent supporter of the AKP's 'conservative democratic' Republic. For this reason, when someone reads *Zaman*, they will not find a disclaimer announcing the paper's affiliation with Fethullah Gülen. Gülen never writes for the paper, and when asked, GM aristocrats insist with a straight face that *Zaman* is not 'organically' a GM institution. Just as *Zaman* reporters and columnists do in regard to their coalition with

the AKP, they simultaneously deny support when giving it, and deny affiliation when affiliation is clear. Instead, they focus on alternative means to frame a story that seeks to avoid skepticism and to pre-empt criticism. The GM increases its legitimacy, therefore, by emphasizing the movement's national value for a skeptical Turkish audience, and by emphasizing its universal value for a qualitatively more forgiving global audience (Economist 2008a, 2008b, Tavernise 2008, Rabasa *et al.* 2006, Rasaba and Larabee 2008). The result is that 'moderate Islam,' a la Fethullah Gülen, has become an eagerly sought after commodity in the world's intellectual marketplace, and is now second to none in receiving support and praise from influential opinion makers in European and American journalism, academia, and politics.<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

According to Sydney Tarrow (1994), 'state structures create stable opportunities, but it is changing opportunities within states that provide the openings that resource-poor groups can use to create new movements' (p. 18). In Turkey, changing opportunities provided openings for resource-poor Islamic activists to mobilize into resource-rich political interest groups. Neo-liberal restructuring in the 1980s created opportunities for accumulation through trade. Openings in Turkish education, media, and trade, moreover, led to the mobilization of Anatolian social and economic networks that relied on each other rather than on the state for economic support. Such opportunities were compounded by a redefined state attitude toward Anatolian Islam, which subsequently freed Turkey's religious marketplace and which allowed for an open competition for community allegiance. Adapting Nursi's influence to a post-Kemalist Turkey, the community of Fethullah Gülen took advantage of all such opportunities by expanding its networks in education, media, trade, and finance throughout Anatolia's transforming countryside, and in many ways, set the stage for a national shift from Islamic activism to conservative democracy, from *Milli Görüş* to AKP:

The boundaries between these new elites and the Gülen movement supporters are blurred and it is the members of this Anatolian bourgeoisie who actually fund and establish Gülen schools ... Many provincial Islamist politicians have also sent their children to Gülen schools ... Gülen media is the largest in almost all Anatolian cities. (Yilmaz 2008, p. 914)

By promoting Gülen's teachings through social networks, media, and outreach, the GM is responsible for helping 'a younger generation of Islamists to be comfortable as far as Islam and their minds and hearts are concerned' (Yilmaz 2008, p. 914), and is thus largely responsible for the success of Turkey's conservative democratic passive revolution. Considering its impact, how should observers of Turkish politics anticipate the GM's future?

According to Asef Bayat (2007), Egyptian Islamic activists are worth studying because they mounted a large-scale social movement without ever transforming the contours of state/political power. By contrast, in Iran, a transformational political revolution occurred despite the absence of a large-scale Islamic social movement. Unique to both of Bayat's cases, in Turkey, Islamic activists took advantage of the country's integration into the global economy to mount a (so far) successful war of position by dividing the labor of the passive revolution between civil/market activism and partisan politics. Spearheaded by the GM and the AKP, however, this collective effort seeks less to 'Islamicize Turkish society' than it does to manufacture a 'Turkish-Islamic ethic of capitalism' – a socially conservative and economically

liberal worldview that strives to increase and legitimize the Muslim share in Turkey's political economy. Despite the inclination toward passivity, however, the TSK's failed attempt to effectively influence the July 2007 elections, the Constitutional Court's failed attempt to close the AKP in 2008, and the constant attempts on the part of rival media to slander Gülen and GM followers together illustrate that (1) tensions within the Turkish elite are far from subsiding, and (2) conservative democracy is winning. Moving throughout the networks of social power are new discourses of Turkish national identity, new companies accumulating resources, and new power brokers negotiating for influence. The GM is a primary collective actor in this contest, and its increasing influence is indicative of deep transformations already underway.

## Notes

1. The full text and translation is widely published online and video is available for viewing at Youtube.com: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNi3Z3qZ7Z4&mode=related&search>.
2. For the purposes of this study, Said Nursi is introduced to provide the reader with an overview of the 'Nur' tradition, to which Fethullah Gülen and the GM are affiliated. The RNK is published by a number of publishing houses in Turkey, most of which are affiliated with one of the several 'Nur communities.' The RNK is divided into multiple volumes: *The Words*, *The Letters*, *The Rays*, and *The Flashes*, each of which are often found subdivided or abridged for easier access and publication. A complete e-copy of the RNK is available at: <http://www.nursistudies.com/>. For a detailed account of Nursi's intellectual biography from a sympathetic perspective, see Vahide's (2005) *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. For a detailed account of his sociological impact on the formation and mobilization of Islamic political identity in Turkey, see Mardin 1989, Yavuz 2000, 2003a, pp. 151–178, 2003b, pp. 1–18.
3. As with all formations in civil society, differences of opinion among the *Nur* led to divisions. The primary split occurred when a group of students sought to mass-produce the RNK (and thus to reform the text in accordance with the Turkish language reform of 1928). In 1971, they published selections from the RNK in modern Turkish in a mass-produced journal called *Yeni Asya* (New Asia). A smaller group contended that the RNK was a work of art and spirituality and that its mass production robbed the work of its spiritual value. Known as the *Yazıcılar* (scribes), this latter group sought to reproduce the RNK by hand in its original Ottoman script. While many smaller groups exist, the primary divisions in the larger 'Nur Movement' are as follows: *Yeni Asya* (New Asia), *Yazıcılar* (Scribes), *Yeni Nesil* (New generation), *Yeni Zemin* (New Earth/Ground), *The Abdullah Yeğin Grubu*, Followers of Mehmet Kırkinci, and the community of Fethullah Gülen.
4. While conducting research at the GM's *Akademi* in Istanbul, a group of editors, writers, and executives took a fieldtrip to visit *Mustafa Sungur*, a living student of Said Nursi and the leader of the *Abdullah Yeğin Grubu* branch of the larger Turkish Nur Movement (Field Notes, 18 April 2007). This was a much-anticipated event. One informant shared with me that the objective of the visit was to pay respects to the aged leader. They took photos with him, and listened to a reading of the RNK. What was most curious about this meeting was that those who attended were told specifically not to share their experience with me, the American sociologist conducting research at the Academy. Having already told me about the meeting before he was told not to do so, my informant considered that he had broken no rules, nor anyone's trust.
5. In Turkish, the suffixes, '-ci,' '-cı,' '-cu,' and '-cü' are used similarly to the English suffix, '-ist.' To many, however, referring to someone as an '-ist' connotes an ideological orientation, and is thus understood to be derogatory. Fethullah Gülen comments as follows: 'The word *Nurcu*, although it was used a little by Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, is basically used by his antagonists to belittle the Nursî's movement and his followers and to be able to present it as a heterodox sect ... I've never used suffixes like -ci, -cu ... My only goal has been to live as a believer and to surrender my spirit to God as a believer.' Many authors prefer to use '*Nurcu*' when discussing followers of Said Nursi. Out of respect for my research informants, I do not.

6. In the aftermath of the 27 April 2007 'e-memorandum,' and less than a year after its reelection, the AKP came under indictment by a state prosecutor for being 'an axis of anti-secular activities,' a charge for which it was narrowly acquitted in August 2008. While on trial, the AKP initiated a massive investigation into Turkey's so-called *derin devlet* ('deep state'), which has long been the most articulated conspiracy theory in Turkish society. Believed by some to be a remnant from Ottoman times, and by others to be a Turkish 'gladio' created to stymie left mobilization in Turkey during the Cold War, the existence of a *derin devlet* is unquestioned in Turkish society. When a Turkish journalist is assassinated (e.g. Hrant Dink in January 2007), when a foreigner is murdered (e.g. three Christian missionaries in *Malatya* in April 2007), or when a random act of violence disrupts a public event (e.g. five judges shot by a lawyer in May 2006), Turkish media and politicians erupt with conversations about 'derin devlet.' In June 2007, Turkish police raided an apartment in Istanbul that was filled with weapons and explosives. This event sparked an investigation into the sources from which these weapons were obtained. This led to a still on-going investigation into 'Ergenekon,' the name given to a network of retired military personnel, political leaders, and journalists who are alleged to have conspired to instigate social/political tension in the interests of overthrowing the AKP. In the first indictment, 89 people were accused of conspiring against the government. The *Ergenekon* trial began on 21 October 2008 when prosecutor's started to read the 2455-page indictment. As of the writing of this article, the trial continues amidst claims from all sides of conspiracy, scorn, praise, fabrication, ineptitude, and corruption. Since the initial discovery of a weapons cache 2008, GM media has covered the *Ergenekon* story as the country's top priority. In its English language daily, *Today's Zaman*, the GM has published on average 1.6 stories a day dedicated to the story, excluding hundreds more opinion pieces and editorials (see 'The Ergenekon File': <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=150458>. From 29 January 2008 to 27 January 2009 (363 days = 580 stories related to the Ergenekon investigation and/or trial). Defending his paper's heavily weighted treatment of *Ergenekon*, the Editor-in-Chief at *Today's Zaman* commented as follows: 'Economic crises are temporary, but the troubles caused by shadowy Ergenekon-like networks will be permanent unless they are completely eradicated' (Kenes 2009).
7. Of the nearly 100 employees at the academy, nearly all are male, which highlights the survival of male privilege and conservative culture in GM's inside world. In seven months at *Akademi*, I observed four female employees, three who worked in children's publishing and one who worked in the kitchen, and who was thus employed by an affiliated catering company and not by the publishing house. See Turam (2006) for further discussions of gender dynamics in the movement.
8. Turkish Ministry of Education 'Private Education General Directorate' 2007 'list of schools,' <http://ookgm.meb.gov.tr/OkulListe.aspx> [Accessed 10 April 2007]. In addition to its 47 branches in Istanbul, FEM operates another 118 branches around the country. Anafen operates 43 branches in Istanbul and another 55 around the country. Other successful GM-affiliated supplemental education companies include *Yeşilirmak Dersanesi* in Bursa, *Maltepe Dersanesi* in Ankara, *Nil Dersanesi* in Erzurum, and *Korfez Dersanesi* in Izmir to name only the most famous. In the 2007 ÖSS exam, the majority of students in the top 1% in the ÖSS-examination in each of the above cities attended these respective preparation schools and/or attended GM-affiliated private high schools (*Zaman Gazetesi ÖSS'de başarı arttı, dereceleri Türkiye'ye yayıldı* [The results of the most successful students on the ÖSS are published], 13 July 2007).
9. The City of Istanbul contracted the Kaynak subsidiary, *Sürat Technology*, to build a city-wide surveillance system known as 'Mobile City Information and Security System' (MOBESE). In its first phase, 700 cameras were installed around the city and were all linked to a Cisco-developed GSM-surveillance network. *Sürat Technology* developed the MOBESE Command Control Center, and is responsible for support and maintenance of the entire system. Kaynak worked with the USAID in its 'Rebuild Iraq Project' supplying educational furniture and equipment, and with UNESCO in Afghanistan to whom it supplied similar resources ([www.kaynak.com.tr/projects/references.asp](http://www.kaynak.com.tr/projects/references.asp)).
10. In order to assure collectivity in the administration of BA, private shareholders are not permitted to own more than 9.99% shares in BA. Through two subsidiaries, B.J. Tekstil

- and Orta Doğu Tekstil, the Çalık Group owns more than three times any other shareholder (Bank Asya 2007).
11. Turkish Press Advertising Organization 2008: The average daily sales in June 2008 for Turkey's top five selling print dailies were as follows: (1) *Zaman*: 785,309, (2) *Posta*: 634,666, (3) *Hürriyet*: 521,100, (4) *Sabah*: 410,523, and (5) *Milliyet*: 209,318. *Posta*, *Hürriyet*, and *Milliyet* are owned by Doğan Media Group. *Sabah* is owned by the AKP/GM 'friend company,' the Çalık Group. In June 2008, *Today's Zaman*'s circulation was 4101/day – <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj.asp>.
  12. See opinions and editorials in *Zaman Gazetesi* and *Today's Zaman* in Spring–Summer 2007 during the presidential nomination process of Abdullah Gül – specifically, see Kenes 2007.
  13. Since 2005, GM satellites in Europe, the USA, and Australia have sponsored a series of conferences dedicated to the mobilization of the Gülen Movement in thought and practice. Participants at these conferences include activists and affiliates directly related to GM institutions, as well as academicians who focus on the GM as a topic of scholarly research. The largest of such conferences to date was held in London in January 2008 and was co-sponsored by the GM's London-based *Dialogue Society* in conjunction with the House of Lords, The English Parliament, The London School of Economics, SOAS, The University of Sussex, and The Middle East Institute. The first was held in Washington, DC, in 2002 and was sponsored by the GM's *Rumi Forum* in conjunction with The Center for Muslim Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. This was followed in April 2005 by a conference in Madison, WI, which was sponsored by the GM's *Dialogue International*, followed by another in Houston sponsored by the GM's *Institute for Interfaith Dialogue* (IID). Following Houston, the IID sponsored successive conferences dedicated to the GM in March 2006 in Dallas, TX (with SMU university), and two in November 2006 in San Antonio, TX, and Norman, OK (in conjunction the University of Texas, San Antonio and the University of Oklahoma, respectively). Following the Dialogue Society's October 2007 London conference was a follow-up in Rotterdam, Holland, and another in the USA sponsored by the *Turkish Cultural Center* in New York City. Both were held in November 2007. In November 2008, the Rumi Forum in Washington, DC, hosted its second GM conference at Georgetown University ([www.gulenconference.us](http://www.gulenconference.us)), and in March 2009, the *Atlas Foundation* in Louisiana sponsored a follow up at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. At the writing of this essay, the most recent conference was held at Potsdam University in Berlin and was sponsored by the GM's *Forum for Intercultural Dialogue Berlin* (FID BERLIN e.V.). GM outlets in the USA have received praise and support from such notable and influential people as former President *Bill Clinton*, Secretary of States *Hillary Clinton*, *Madeleine Albright*, and *James Baker*, and dozens of national and state congressional senators and representatives.

### Notes on contributor

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