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F R I D A Y

## The Influence of the Gülen Movement in the Emergence of a Turkish Cultural Third Way

by Marie-Elisabeth Maigre

This paper aims to understand the role of Fethullah Gülen’s movement in the emergence of the new Islamic culture in Turkey.

Among the Islamic dynamics that emerged in the 80s, the movement based on Gülen’s ideas is unique not in that it spread through an intellectual, healthcare and media network – this is true of other Sufi communities – but in its development of an effective educational programme now comprising more than 300 schools around the world.

In the 1990s, this movement favoured a ‘Turkish Islam’ encompassing the principles of democracy and moderation, and so rejected the radical ideals of Necmettin Erbakan’s Refah party. After the 1997 ‘soft coup’ removed the Erbakan government, pro-Islamic businesspeople became more disinclined to support a party that could threaten their business interests. A reformist branch led by Istanbul mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, began to adopt the principles of democracy and religious freedom as part of a new political argument, and eventually won the general elections of November 2002.

It seems that three actors – the Islamist reformists, the businessmen, and Gülen’s followers – converged around the common concepts of Turkish Islam, Conservative Democracy, and Business to re-elaborate the cultural content of the Islamic movement with a more Western-democratic and capitalist orientation. The phrase ‘Islam de marché’, coined by Patrick Haenni, refers to the culture, born of globalisation, in which business success is efficiently used to translate thinking or religious beliefs into something practical and derive some cultural influence from association with the state.

Fethullah Gülen, whose movement is a paradigm of these new approaches, could be considered a far-sighted visionary since he anticipated the need for Turkish people, whether secular or Islamist, to adapt to the present times, and the strong potential of globalisation to diffuse his vision of Islam.

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**Panel:**  
The Gülen Movement in Redefining Turkey and Anatolian Muslimness

**Venue:**  
Lecture Theatre,  
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

26.10.07 Panels	Parellel Session 1	Parellel Session 2
9:30-11:30	<b>Presentation: 02</b>	
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		

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