

# THE INFLUENCE OF THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT IN THE EMERGENCE OF A TURKISH CULTURAL THIRD WAY

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## Abstract

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.

For the last 5 years, the debate on democratization in the Islamic world has been very lively. As the result of a shift in the studies of the Islamic countries in the 1990s when the opposition between authoritarian regimes and “political Islam” stopped being considered as the only socio-political framework to study the Islamic countries, many specialists started promoting the idea that the “fourth wave of democratization” was about to rise in the Middle East and North Africa (after Southern Europe, South America, and South-East Asia). The focus of the current US administration on promoting the democracy in a “Greater Middle East” has had a strong impact on the academia and research centres. The topic of “democratization in the Middle East” has become the latest thing. But in spite of some symbolic policies to “pull the wool” over western eyes, the grounding of democracy in most of the Muslim countries remains only intentional; very few Muslim-majority countries are considered indeed as fully democratic.

In this still pessimistic surrounding, Turkey represents a unique case, due to exceptional historical opportunities. From 1923, Mustapha Kemal “Atatürk” annihilated the old institutions of the Ottoman Empire and introduced a secular, bureaucratic, and centralized system; the latter earned a democratic facade in 1946 when the electoral system authorized bi-partism. In fact, until very recently, the military controlled the system through the National Security Council, a half-military half-civilian organism in charge of defending the spirit of the secular republic as conceived by Atatürk; this council had the power to force ministers to implement certain policies and the legitimacy to instigate a coup whenever it was believed necessary – which occurred four times in the history of the Turkish republic, in 1960, 1971, 1980, and again in 1997 against the Islamist Prime Minister Erbakan. However, the conditions set up by Brussels to start the process of EU membership stimulated a reform of the system. In 2002, the Turkish Parliament adopted a series of legislative and constitutional amendments that took effects in 2003. Moreover, since the 1980s, during the governments of Turgut Özal, social activities have increased and diversified. Among the actors of the blooming civil society, the pro-Islamic organizations have had an important influence by their support to the cultural reislamisation of the society within the constraints of its secular political system.

At the heart of those pro-Islamic partakers of the democratization process, the movement based on Gülen’s ideas spread in the last two decades through an intellectual, educative, healthcare, and media network. Articulated around the concepts of education, tolerance and inter-religious dialogue and unity, the movement pretends to encourage a return to the dialogue between the religious and scientific worlds since “science and religion as two manifestations of the same truth” – God’s existence and purpose (Gülen, 2004: 82) The notions of compassion, love, and tolerance dominates the vision of the Islamic master in every aspects of life including politics, international relations and any kind of relationships. This paper intends to answer the following question: what has been the specific role of Gülen’s movement in the emergence of a new Turkish culture? I will argue that Gülen’s cultural and religious influence on both the business and political classes within the Islamic movement has driven the moderation of political Islam and open the way toward the integration into the new reality of globalization where the frontier between religion and business are blurred and those notions are brought together within a new conception of Culture.

The first part of this paper will focus on how Fethullah Gülen introduced his own style in Turkey, universalizing the Ottoman heritage of religious tolerance, emphasizing the points of convergence of all the monotheist religions in the world, and encouraging the achievability of his vision through a solid network of schools, charity, and media. The second part contrasts the evolution of political Islam in Turkey from radical ideas (for instance, the creation of an

Islamic State) to a moderate and pro-democratic with Gülen's political ideas. In the 1990s, his movement favoured a "Turkish Islam" encompassing the principles of democracy and moderation, therefore rejecting the radical ideals of Necmettin Erbakan's Refah party. After the soft coup of 1997 to bring the Erbakan's government to an end, the pro-Islamic businessmen became more disinclined to support a party that could threaten their business interests and position. Consequently, a reformist branch led by Istanbul Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also started adopting those principles of democracy and religious freedom as part of its new political line and finally won the general elections of November 2002.

Finally, observing the convergence of three groups, the religious-conservative businesspeople, the followers of Gülen, and the Muslim democrats of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the third section will try to situate this socio-cultural alliance in the context of globalization. "*Islam de marche*", a concept of Patrick Haenni, refers to this new culture born from Globalization where business activities and success are efficiently used to translate thinking or religious beliefs into something practical and take cultural influence from the State.

## **Gülen and His Followers within the Turkish Islamic Movement**

First of all, the Gülen community occupies a unique place in what Jenny B. White has analyzed as the "Islamic movement" (White, 2001). Far from being homogeneous, the latter encompasses different ideologies, motivations, goals, or organizations, all united around a strong commitment to Islam; Jenny B. White also associates the movement with the local roots and values of its members such as the constant use of interpersonal relations – but, despite local, middle class roots and volunteer networks, this aspect will be leveraged in the case of the Gülen movement given that this group has usually been perceived as based on elitist institutions pretending to go beyond the local tradition (Anatolian bonds and piety) or the national ideology (Kemalism<sup>1</sup>) joining forces with other religions to revitalize universal principles of faith and moral.

During the prime ministership of Turgut Özal in the 1980s, the policies of socio-economic liberalization that were carried out triggered the rise of Islamic-oriented activities and lifestyles that the Kemalist ideology had tried to eradicate since the beginning of the Republic in the 1920s. The Islamic movement relied on people based either in the rural parts of Anatolia or the underprivileged suburbs (*varoş*) of Istanbul and Ankara where they had recently migrated in search of a better life. These people organized themselves in networks of solidarity that reproduced the *imece* (mutual support), "the rural tradition which villagers help one another at harvest, without then be obliged to help that particular family back" (White, 2001: 68). Refah, the Islamist party that was the latest continuation of previous political organizations led by Necmettin Erbakan, took advantage of this "community-based form of cooperation" to develop a door-to-door activism and secure the vote of a large segment of the Turkish society. Concurrently, new media, holdings related to old Sufi *tarikatlara* (brotherhoods), even

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<sup>1</sup> We regard Kemalism as the ideology promoted by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) after the creation of the Republic of Turkey in 1922: "Kemalism as a political doctrine cohered loosely around certain principles that came to be known as the Six Arrows: republicanism, laicism, nationalism, populism, statism, and reformism." (White, 2002: 36) In this contexture, "laicism" is different from "secularism" (the separation of the State and religion) since the State fully controls religious affairs (through an organ called *Diyamet*) and independent Islamic institutions are virtually illicit.

Islamic banks<sup>2</sup> and business associations like MÜSİAD<sup>3</sup> or İŞHAD (linked to F Gülen), have represented a bridge between modernity and the traditional Anatolian society.

Among those many manifestations of an Islamic blooming, the followers of Fethullah Gülen occupy a pre-eminent place as the agents of an alternative elitist culture. Initially, the Gülen movement was entirely based on the personality and teachings of Fethullah Gülen because, as we mentioned, the Hocaefendi (beloved master) had been able to bring back “Turkish Islam”<sup>4</sup>, highlighting the universality of its principles that could be found in other religions and the need for an inter-religious dialogue. Books and articles have been already dedicated to his life but it is still important to recall it briefly and to show how his trajectory itself symbolizes what we call a form of Turkish “cultural third way” that is neither Kemalism nor Islamism but a mix of “Turkishness”, Islamic Sufi thought, and the appropriation of the Americanized globalization.

Born in 1941 in Erzurum, Eastern Anatolia, Fethullah Gülen was raised in a very pious family. His father, an Imam, taught him very early Arabic and Persian. When he became an adolescent, he attended lectures in religious sciences from the professor Muhammed Lütfi, a member of the Qadiri Sufi order, but also received a “modern” education in literature, philosophy, and history; he also sympathized with students of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1961) and was introduced to his writings, the “Letters of Light” (Risale-i Nur), that supported the idea that Islam was compatible with science, reason, and modernity. The discovery of the contemporary Sufi thought was a major step in F Gülen’s intellectual and spiritual training. Around the age of 20, he left his homeland to teach in the mosque of Edirne and later joined the Kestanepazari Qur’anic School in Izmir. At that time, the success of his lessons was so high that a first “community of Izmir” emerged spontaneously. After the coup of March 12, 1971, Gülen was arrested for clandestine religious activities and spent seven months in prison. He spent the rest of the decade visiting several cities of western Anatolia and preaching his vision of Islam with great popularity. Through his sermons, private conversations, and conferences on topics as religious as social, economic, and philosophical, he became a magnet for students, doctors, academics, civil servants, and businessmen. In the 80s, although he was under the protection of the Prime Minister Turgut Özal, Gülen remained highly suspicious for

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2 From the very start of his first mandate, Turgut Özal deleted the article 163 of the new constitution repressing all those who, “exploiting religion... endangers the State’s safety”, and carried out on December 16, 1983 a Decree-Law 83/ 7506 relative to the “special financing institutions” (ÖFK/ Özel Finans Kurumları), in other words, the “Islamic banks”. This decree legitimates the right to have recourse to an interest-free financial system taking into account the prohibition of riba (interest on money).

3 The “Independent Association of Industrialists and Businessmen” (MÜSİAD – *Müstakil Sanayiciler ve İşadamları Derneği*) was created by five pro-Islamic businessmen – among whom Erol Yerar, Ali Bayramoğlu, Natık Akyol and Abdurrahman Esmerer - on May 5, 1990 in Istanbul. The principal objective of MÜSİAD is to help the small and medium-sized entrepreneurs of Anatolia to increase their business potential and to export. The association especially will make it possible to create networks between the provincial towns and the national level.

4 Aras and Çaha (2000) affirm that the concept of “Turkish Islam” was formulated by the Nurcu movement and some nationalist thinker. They give a definition: “The main premise of “Turkish Islam” is moderation. Since people of Turkish origin first accepted Islam, they perceived and practiced it under the influence of Sufi ideas. Sufi-oriented Islamic movements kept a certain distance from the politics of their times in contrast to other Islamic movements. For example, the Shiites or Haricis defined themselves according to an imagined other (those who do not support the truth) and became associated with specific political stances over the proper nature of the state and who should hold power. Sufi tradition, however, has described itself as being based on the philosophy that all creatures should be loved as God’s physical reflection and objects of the Creator’s own love. There is no place for enemies or “others” in this system.”

the laic and military elites. His efforts to promote the inter-faith dialogue whose climax was a visit to the Pope John Paul II in 1998 did not have the softening effect that could have been expected from the State authorities in those circumstances, since not only Gülen was promoting a peaceful and tolerant vision of Islam in the Western world but he was also, in some way, publicizing Turkey as a religiously modern and open-minded Muslim country. Nevertheless, victim of the anti-Islamic repression wave of the late 1990s, Gülen was forced to migrate to the United States. He is currently the honorary president of the Rumi Forum, a platform of inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue founded in 1999 and located in Virginia.

One can perhaps wonder whether Fethullah Gülen would benefit from such recognition in Turkey and abroad if his ideas had not been practically applied and had not influenced the life of thousands of young people around the world. One should not neglect the key role of his group of followers. Privileging education for the integration in the modern world, the Gülen community holds and manages today around one hundred Turkish schools whose instructors graduated from the best Turkish universities. The message of the “Hoca” also dragged young people from the cities, in particular doctors, professors and some businessmen, who regard as an honour to take part in the activities of two of his foundations, the Turkish Teachers’ Foundation (TOV) and the Turkish Journalists’ and Writers’ Foundation. At the beginning of the 1990s, the movement of Fethullah Gülen grew rapidly, expanding its presence in Central Asia through the support of the successive governments which, after the fall of the Soviet empire, tried to impose Turkey as a new leader in the newly independent Turkic republics - Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The Community founded about 200 schools throughout the world, from Tanzania to China, and mainly in these Turkic republics. The objective was, and still is, to form local elites regarding Turkey as a model. Beyond the strong educational network, the followers of Gülen have built a reputation in the media and even the business at large. Outside the bank Asya Finans that was created to finance projects in the Turkic republics, the community manages the daily newspaper Zaman, the television channel STV (Samanyolu or “Milky Way”), the radio station Burç, and an advertising agency, İŞİK. Rather intellectual and available in English, Zaman proposes insightful articles on national and international issues, economy, sciences and new technologies. Finally, İŞHAD, the Business Life Solidarity Association, was created in 1993 and based in Istanbul. It pretends not to have any Islamic ideology, even if the majority of its 500 members back Gülen’s educative activities; besides, many have responsibilities in the school boards. They also recognize bonds with the Journalists’ and Writers’ Foundation of Fethullah Gülen. Their objective is triple: to improve the business outside Turkey, to reinforce the structure of the companies-members, and to support the dialogue with the various actors of political and economic life. Like the Gülen movement, they do not acknowledge any political view nor support any party in particular (we will outline Gülen’s views on politics, democracy, secularism, and the West later on this paper).

One can argue that the Gülen movement was not the only one to use this network-implantation strategy. Using the donations of their members, other brotherhoods or communities became true companies, when the informal bonds between the members were progressively rationalized. Some even succeeded in creating their own holdings. A former popular brotherhood founded by Bahaeddin Nakşibend (1318-1389), the Nakşibendiyya knew how to adapt to modernity and addresses today to its two million followers a modernizing speech where Muslim moral values and worship mix with instruction, technocracy and middle-class values (see Manço, 1999). At the media level, the Nakşibendi owns three reviews: *İslam*, printing 100000 copies, *Mektup* (“The Letter”) and *Kadin ve Aile* (“Woman and Family”), designed

for women. Within the Nakşibendiler, the community of the İskender Paşa mosque in Istanbul is regarded as the most famous branch. The leaders of the community strongly encourage their members to become rich as a means to compete with the Kemalist establishment in the economic, political, and intellectual life and so prove the superiority of the Islamic ethics. This community set up its own businesses thanks to its relationship with powerful families, chiefly the Özal and the Topbaş.

Not only the Nakşibendiler but also another community considered as a dissenting and conservative branch of the Nakşibendiyya, founded by the sheik Sayyid Abdhülhakim Arvasi (1865-1943) and known for its nationalist and very conservative ideology, organized itself in such a way. İhlas Holding, founded and chaired by Enver Oren, is considered the most powerful “cemaat holding”. Able to compete with the Turkish largest conglomerates, namely Sabancı and Koç, İhlas is an immense company, especially present in publishing activities (books, newspapers, and magazines), construction, healthcare, and education. Among its publications, the daily newspaper Türkiye is very popular. The TV channel TGTR and the advertising agency ÖNCÜ are as renown as STV or IŞIK (see Buğra, 1999).

So, if other Sufi-inspired communities have followed the same path as Gülen’s, what make his movement so unique inside and outside the Turkish Islamic movement? The similarities between the three Sufi communities are actually very strong in the media; nevertheless, only the Gülen movement has developed an extended network of schools, and that is by far their main achievement. Furthermore, the other communities are Turkish-centred and do not especially look for a better dialogue with the West. By preparing a future generation as confident with the principles of Turkish Islam as with modernity and scientific knowledge, the community is not only looking for present but future influence – like the private schools called Imam Hatip have influenced a generation of Islamist activists in the 80s-90s. And doing so, it is expected to become stronger and stronger, gaining gradually “share” on the socio-cultural realm in Turkey and abroad.

As a consequence of the personality and message of Hoca Gülen on top of the leadership in activities of its most educated followers (students, teachers, businessmen, journalists, and educated professionals), this community may have been perceived, inside the Islamic movement, as quite sophisticated and potentially out of reach for the poorest and least learned people that felt more attracted by populist leaders such as the Islamist Necmettin Erbakan (see White, 2001: 112-113).

## **Addressing the Question of the Influence of Gülen on the Moderation of Political Islam in Turkey**

Now that we established what distinguishes the socio-economic organization of the Gülen community from the other Sufi communities, we would like to consider its political stance and its potential role in the evolution of political Islam since this possibility has not been really addressed. Could it be possible that the Gülen movement, especially the idea of its Hoca, have influenced the whole political dimension of the Islamic movement? Initially this assumption may look odd as the link between Gülen and the political Islam is far from being obvious, contrary to what many Kemalists have claimed. Instead, in the 80s and 90s, the relationship between the Gülen movement and the Islamist Refah party were rather cold, each accusing the other of “secretive fanaticism” (White, 2001: 112). Aras and Çaha (2000) reported: “Relations with Refah supporters are tense given that Refah supporters widely believe that the secular establishment uses Gülen’s community to obstruct their path. Necmettin

Erbakan, Refah's long-time chairman, even accused Gülen of accepting government support to threaten Refah." Considered as an elitist movement, the Gülen movement had "little recognition in rural and working-class areas" (White, 2001: 112) while Refah had developed since the 60s as a result of the support of the voters from the eastern and central Anatolian towns since the 1960s. Therefore, the two groups attracted different publics and send out different messages, one asking for the compromise with the secular system and the other proposing a rupture with the Kemalist principles.

Furthermore, contrary to the Islamist Erbakan, Fethullah Gülen has always been against the application of the Shariah Islamic law by the State and considers the democracy as the best kind of government, accepting "Western civilization as a suitable foundation for material life while considering Islamic civilization suitable for spiritual life" (Aras and Çaha, 2000). In an interview in 1995 quoted by Kuru (2005: 265), he criticized anti-Western feelings: "Anti-Westernism should force us out of civilization". The only political positions he has consistently advocated have been: 1) the return to the relations of independence between the State and the religion as they were fairly maintained at the time of the Ottoman Empire – and that also exists today in most of the Western Democracy - and 2) the integration of Turkey to the European Union – which should secure religious freedom and a neat separation between the State and religion. In July 2005, The Muslim World published a special issue on Fethullah Gülen and his works, including a series of academic articles and a long interview of the religious leader. In this interview, Gülen stated that the Muslim religion included a moral duty of political control by the believers' community, as well as the respect for the rights and freedoms of the other religious minorities. The Hoca did not perceive the necessity of establishing an Islamic State based on the principles of the Shariah since he distinguished the rules of Islam, such as they appear in the Koran and the Sunnah, from the successive historic experiences which corresponded to the appropriate needs of their times. But today, as the consensus or "mutual contract" between Muslims was essential in government, a "caliphate" could not be imposed on the populations by force, as it would probably occur in the case of hypothetical application: "the revival of the Caliphate would be very difficult [today] and making Muslims accept such a revived Khilafah would be impossible". On the other hand, Islam is particularly related to democracy because if "in a democratic society the source of law is colour-blind and free from ethnic prejudice" favouring then the "development of human rights, political participation protection of minority rights...", "no one can ignore the universal values that the Qur'an and the Sunnah have represented with regard to the rights mentioned above". For the Muslims who live in democracy, "there is [thus] no need to seek an alternative state".

Between 1982 and 1998, i.e. the rise and decline of Refah, Gülen's ideas had little influence on the Islamists that privileged a more aggressive stance, including the introduction of the Shariah, the establishment of an Islamic common market, and an Islamic pact of defence. The party became stronger when it started attracting not only the Anatolian poor and middle class and the urban immigrants but also a new Islamic bourgeoisie with Anatolian origins and represented through the MÜSİAD association (see note 3). In the elections of March 27, 1994, Refah collected 19.1% of the votes becoming the ruling party in the city halls of Ankara and Istanbul. But its major breakthrough was the victory at the general elections of December 1995 which caused a great surprise. Without majority, Refah achieved a coalition with Doğru Yol (the "Party of the Right Way" or DYP) that was very quickly called the government Refahyol. Under Refahyol, the high aspirations of social justice and Islamisation of the Turkish society were quickly passed over due to the need to cooperate with Doğru Yol

to remain in the government. In spite of the lack of real Islamist policies, the officers of the Turkish army supervised closely Refahyol; certain initiatives, like the trips to Iran and Libya or the will to remove the headscarf ban in universities and public administrations, worried the authorities and the most laic segment of the population. Finally, on June 18, 1997, after one year in the government as Prime Minister, Erbakan was constrained to resign, under the pressure of the military. In the months following this “soft” coup d’état, all the Islamic-oriented organizations, especially the Refah politicians and the pro-Islamic businessmen suffered severe pursuits. Even Fethullah Gülen who had tried to remain outside the tensions between Refah and the military was accused of fanaticism for an interview he had had on TV, slightly criticizing the Turkish system.

All of a sudden, after this anti-Islamist repressive wave, the discourse of the Islamist changed dramatically, endorsing the democratic ideal, and became very similar to the views that Gülen had invariably prescribed. This shift surprised many observers, for example Marvine Howe: “During a six-week visit to Istanbul the summer of 1998, I talked to a wide range about Islamic activists and found little echo of the old anti-American, anti-NATO, anti-Israel, anti-Europe rhetoric. Instead, even militant Islamists were now asking for basic American rights: freedom of religion, assembly, enterprise, speech, and dress.” (Howe, 2000: 179-180). Thus, the new party which succeeded Refah, Fazilet or the “Virtue party”, adopted a different ideology. In a discussion with Marvine Howe, Abdullah Gül, then appointed of Fazilet, recommended “democratic moderation”; he who formerly qualified Refah of “Islamic-oriented party”, now described Fazilet in these words: “this is not a religious party; we are open to all citizens, not only religious people.” (Howe, 2000: 183). Proof of a major change in their speech, the Islamists now supported the accession of Turkey to the European Union in order to accelerate the adoption of the basic rights associated with the Western democracies, starting with religious freedom. At the end of July 1999, the “renovating” branch of Fazilet, led by Recep Tayyip and Abdullah Gül, split with the “old guard” of Erbakan’s followers. The “Party of Justice and Development” (or AKP) was founded in 2001 and ran against Erbakan’s Saadet (the “Happiness Party”) for the prime ministership in the general elections November 2002. As we know, the AKP was largely victorious gaining 34% of the votes, while Saadet did not reach 3%. Erdoğan, once Prime Minister, continued to promote the new discourse, advocating for the “Muslim democracy” or “conservative democracy” which he compared to the German Christian democracy, stressing the complementarities, not antagonism, of Islam and democracy.

This little detour off Gülen and his movement was necessary to show how the Islamic movement shifted politically from a radical anti-western stance to the endorsement of democracy and religious tolerance through a moderate communication and behaviour. They understand that if they wanted to promote their vision of a tolerant society where women would be able to wear headscarves in public places including administrations and universities and where private Islamic schools (Imam Hatip) would be fully recognized as an option in the Turkish educative system, moderation and the recourse to a Western democratic rhetoric were the answer. Indeed, that was what Fethullah Gülen strongly believed and had advocated for years.

However, how to verify the influence of the Hoca on the moderation of political Islam, especially knowing that the relationships between the followers of Gülen and the Islamists has been consistently very distant? At the moment, there is no clear explanation for the moderation of the Islamists. Seda Demiralp and Todd A. Eisenstadt (2006) believe that the 120-day prison stay of Erdoğan in 1999 for a discourse he had pronounced may have been a key factor: “As Erdoğan sat in the darkness of a prison cell, he must have wondered whether it

had been worth it. While in jail, he met with RP party members Abdulkadir Aksu and Azmi Ates. The three talked about the future of the party and criticized its leadership for the party's vote share decline in the 1999 national parliamentary elections... Radical confrontation between the RP and the military-secularist establishment was not beneficial to Erdoğan and its party anymore." For these authors, moderation would have only relied upon one man and his ambition. Another explanation has been outlined by Ziya Öniş (2006) regarding the role of the Islamic bourgeoisie in this moderation process: "The fact that winners of globalization are part of the broad electoral coalition [of Erdoğan's AKP] also explains, in part, why Islamist politics in Turkey has been evolving in a moderate direction in recent years since these groups, far more than the poor and underprivileged strata of society, have a lot to lose from open confrontation with the secular establishment and the state elites". The "winners of globalization" he refers to are that class of businessmen that emerged in the 80s<sup>5</sup> and gained a significant economic power in the next decade. Usually members of the MÜSİAD, an association created to represent them (see note 3), these entrepreneurs were proud to belong to the employers' class and therefore aspired to a place among the elites, which was denied<sup>6</sup> (see Buğra, 1999). As a reaction, those businessmen assumed openly Islamist positions<sup>7</sup> and benefited from the political ascension of the Islamist party.

As a result, the "process of February 28" following the destitution of Erbakan in 1997 had also an impact on these businessmen as they were clearly considered as related with political Islam. The director of the MÜSİAD and some companies-members were prosecuted. At that point, the specific positioning of the "Islamist bourgeoisie" revealed its limits: how to reconcile the aspiration for social recognition, which requires the integration in the pre-existing system, and political identity, which conversely shocks with this established order? For the "other", more intellectual Islamic bourgeoisie who followed Gülen's principles rather than Erbakan's, there was no dilemma since their belief in a strict separation of the public and private spheres made compatible religious commitments at home and through social, apolitical activities, with the respect of the current institutions of the Turkish Republic. Furthermore, for the middle class observant Muslims including the businessmen and politicians, Gülen's Ulama background gave his discourse a legitimate Islamic authority that Erbakan did not have as he was an engineer.

At the end of the 90s, most of the Islamic businessmen had understood that keeping a low profile concerning their political views was the only way to secure their social position and, in the same time, to keep growing as key economic actors of the civil society. We may still wonder who had the major influence on the new moderate thinking: Erdoğan himself after his hard experience in prison. The Islamist businessmen worried to loose their privileged lifestyle and economic welfare? Or Hoca Gülen that was the first ideologue to insist on ideas that became those of almost the whole Islamic movement at the beginning of the new century?

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5 Coming from the interior of the Turkey, they are often referred as the "Anatolian Tigers" (*Anadolu Aslanı*) due their strong attachment to the provincial identity and the preservation of their traditional and religious values.

6 The traditional Turkish elites (senior executives, staff officers, and industrialists protected by the State and generally brought together within the TÜSİAD, the "Turkish Association of the industrialists and the business men") are characterised by their determination to preserve the laic, Kemalist principles. These established elites had little will to share their hegemony with businessmen, mainly owners of small and medium-size companies, that had not been raised in the city and were self-confessed very religious.

7 This ideological affiliation seemed to obey a strange mechanism of re-conquest of an undergone mechanism. The emergence of SMEs relying on the Anatolian and Islamic values was the consequence of total economic opportunities. Nevertheless, the contractors of the MÜSİAD tried to adapt this reality, by conceiving it like the effect of a practical application conscious of the Islamic economic principles. The entrepreneurship became thus an act of faith.

While it is quite difficult to tell which group has had the foremost influence, researchers and academics have outlined the inter-connexion between the Islamic bourgeoisie, the moderate Islamists, and the Gülen movement. It is noteworthy that many of these business people as well as some Virtue and later AK Party politicians sent their children to Gülen's schools. Furthermore, Zaman is the second largest daily newspaper, the largest in Anatolian towns, and the majority of Virtue & AK party's supporters, including the businessmen, are regular readers. The triangulation appears clearly in a report of the European Stability Initiative (ESI) on the recent economic development of central Anatolia (Orta Anadolu), especially in the city of Kayseri. With the growth of the main cities of central Anatolia in the last fifteen years, the traditional Anatolian society has profoundly changed. Living henceforth mostly in urban areas, the population of central Anatolia is more educated, more industrious and infinitely more modern in its tastes and modes of consumption.

All of this success is due to the multiplications of private enterprises that used their money to modernize and improve the living conditions of the local population. Surprisingly, the businessmen of Kayseri refer openly to entrepreneurial values that have been associated with the Protestants since the publication of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by Max Weber in 1905: hard work, productive investment, honesty in business relations, risk-taking, charity, and community service. Unexpectedly, the interviews carried out to 94 businessmen of Kayseri reveal an iterative reference to Protestantism and its values. To support its observations in theory, ESI refers to the Turkish sociologist M. Hakan Yavuz, a specialist of the Gülen movement<sup>8</sup>; an aspect is particularly underlined by the article: the impact of the Nur movement on the "Muslim renewal" (tajdid) – similar in some ways to the protestant reform. In the Nurcu speech<sup>9</sup>, the search for profit and for the welfare of the Muslim community became as important as prayer and fast. There would be thus a convergence between the modern Nurcu thought and the new Anatolian entrepreneurship. The Islamic capitalist speech grew within the new industrial districts of Anatolian and an effervescent associative life whose activities are mainly financed by the private contributions of the local businessmen. Interestingly, Abdullah Gül, the second leader of the new Muslim-democrat AK party, comes from Kayseri. It seems that Islamic factions came together at some point: the Islamic bourgeoisie, emblemized by the MÜSİAD association or the companies linked to powerful brotherhoods and communities, and the Islamic intellectual elite writing columns in Zaman) or participates in the Writers' and Journalists' Foundation.

Finally, the Abant platform was a strong source of inspiration and creativity for the pro-Islamic intellectual elite. Consisting of participants with really diverse opinions (atheists, agnostics, Marxists, leftists, Islamists etc.), this regular conference held all over the world<sup>10</sup> aimed to discuss sensitive issues such as laicism, democracy and Islam, globalization, diversification, education, liberalism, the Middle East and the EU and confirmed that it was possible to reach an agreement through dialogue - as Gülen had repeatedly advocated. Many of AK party founders, MPs, ministers attended its meetings well before they founded AK Party. Through this kind of initiatives and intellectual approximation, the concepts of Business, Turkish Islam, and Conservative Democracy have gradually converged to re-elaborate the

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8 See Hakan Yavuz, M., and Esposito, John L. (2003) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press)

9 Even if Gülen denies being a Nurcu, he was highly influenced by Nursi and both communities are considered close in terms of discourse and beliefs.

10 Abant meetings have been held in important cities such as Washington, D.C., Paris, Brussels, Moscow and Cairo.

cultural content of the Islamic movement in a more western-democratic and capitalist way.

To conclude with the topic of Islamists' political moderation, the apparent division inside the Islamic movement between an elitist and intellectual minority linked to and a more down-to-earth majority related with the Refah party of Necmettin Erbakan has tended to be blurred as the Islamic bourgeoisie move apart of political Islam and took over the leadership of a new pro-democratic and pro-European party at the beginning of the 21st century. While we cannot establish the role of Gülen in this process, the cultural change in the direction of his long-claimed socio-political ideals was highly beneficial giving more significance to his movement in Turkey and abroad

## **Gülen's Contribution: Enlightening the Cultural Content of Globalization**

Finally, we find very important to place the new Muslim culture in a broader context, that of globalization. The intensification of trans-national relations, especially in the socio-cultural and economic fields can also explain the shift to a more moderate Islamic culture in Turkey since the means offered by globalization are huge, including better media coverage of the thinking of the socio-cultural actors and precious business tools to finance and implement their activities and economic power. Ahmet T. Kuru (2005: 258) sees the extraordinary potential for the organizations that, in the past, were limited by a strong State control:

“The relationship between globalization and the nation-state is not a zero-sum game. Globalization empowers the free market system at the expense of the statist regimes... It weakens state monopolies in different areas (that is, the economy, the media, and education) through a free market system and the spread of communication technologies”.

Referring to the Gülen movement, Kuru considers it as a perfect illustration of the success that Islamic institutions that are both able to benefit from “international opportunity structure shaped by globalization” and develop a “tolerant normative framework open to cross-cultural interactions” can have. He especially insists on the international opportunity structures:

“First the movement has been very successful in English instruction, which has been in high demand in many countries... The second resource of the movement is that it has created a synergy based on cooperation between educators and businesspeople. The sympathizers of the Gülen movement have been powerful enough to establish an interest-free bank and insurance company. Without the financial donations of businesses, the movement's schools could not have afforded to operate.” (Kuru, 2005: 62)

The link between business and religious communitarism appears clearly here: developing business activities seems to be only way to translate a thinking or religious believes into something practical. In the case of Gülen, the international opportunity structure has been the need for English-speaking elitist schools in Turkey and abroad. But only what Kuru called a “tolerant normative framework”, which is a positive thinking, could make the vision of the community come true. This “recipe” of success through moderation and opening can also explain the change operated by the Anatolian Tigers and the political faction of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. To succeed in their businesses, the Anatolian Tigers needed excellent relationship with the businessmen of diverse export countries – Europe, Russia, and some Muslim countries as well; on the other side, a friendly relationship with the European Union leading to a future membership would secure the political settlement of Erdoğan and his followers, and avoid any ban from the military. The benefits of adaptation to the new international system,

highly superior to any form of resistance, explains\ perfectly why these three movements have joined their force at the beginning of the 21st century to promote a new culture, neither Islamist nor Kemalist but in-between, and at one with globalisation.

The business dimension of the new pro-democratic Muslim culture is very important because it allowed its actors to bring back the benefit of globalization to the local ground and influence their peers' thinking through their new instruments (namely marketing and advertisement). From their broad media representation, the Muslim communities that we mentioned in the first part of this paper made Islam more visible in a public field that had been monopolized by the Kemalists. Their advertising agencies (IŞIK, Öncü and Panel Ajans) and television channels (STV, TGTR and Kanal 7) benefited from the growing demand of the urban, young, and Islamized generation in search of consumer goods compatible with their religious identity and their need to distinguish themselves from the prevalent laic culture. Using inventiveness and persuasion, the Islamic companies created an alternative culture going beyond the Western copy-paste offered by the classic media. By using a language more adapted to the lower layers of the population, these communities created a bridge between them and modernity, opening people's mind to the capitalist culture but, at the same time, keeping control of media instruments allowing them to influence morally and culturally modernity.

So gaining “market share” as a media holding and gaining “cultural share” as a thinking movement over concurrent philosophies in a given society are converging today and redefining to some extent the concept of culture. To describe this phenomenon in the Islamic context, the sociologist Patrick Haenni uses the concept of Islam de marché (market Islam) which, I believe, is extremely relevant for explaining the cultural move in Turkey: “Au croisement d'une Islamisation qui s'embourgeoise et de son découplage avec la matrice Islamiste, une nouvelle configuration religieuse est en train de naître que nous qualifierons d'Islam de marché en raison de ses affinités avec des institutions du champ économique qui lui servent de support, et avec la nouvelle culture d'entreprise à laquelle elle emprunte les catégories de son discours. ” (At the crossroad of an Islamisation becoming more bourgeois and its separation with the Islamist matrix, a new religious configuration is being born which we will describe as Islam de marché because of its affinities with institutions of the economic field it uses as a support, and with the new business culture from which it borrows the categories of its speech) Basically, the market religious culture (religion entrepreneuriale) trusts in private enterprise (not State interventionism) and piety. For Haenni, the globalization is allowing the market religious culture to expand in many different context, in the Muslim communities as in other groups – as the Christian churches in the United States that have been using for years capitalist methods to build up their circle of believers.

When Fethullah Gülen decided to stay in the USA and to keep promoting his ideas from there through an American NGO of inter-religious dialogue, he ultimately changed the fate of his movement. By mixing with the American society and people from other religions, many of them Christians, he is making his message even more universal. In this country where hundred of different religious movements operate, his ideas are very well received, not only by the Muslim and Turkish minorities but also the Christian communities. The book written by Jill Carroll and published last April, *A Dialogue of Civilization: Gülen's Islamic Ideals and Humanistic Discourse*, received excellent response. Living in the United States, the centre of this new religious market thinking, undeniably places the Hoca as a key interlocutor of the Muslim version of a culture well established there.

## **Conclusive Remarks on Fethullah Gülen and His Movement: What Impact on the Muslim World?**

The movement became the strong network that it is today because it has been able to combine successfully the peaceful discourse of the Hoca supported by intellectual institutions and a solid media group and a network of schools where these ideas can develop and guide new generations all around the world. This movement benefited from a set of opportunities that help its influence to increase within the society and indirectly politics. For example, the quality of the education provided by its schools while the Imam-Hatip schools were becoming obsolete convinced many pro-Islamic businessmen and politicians to put their children in its schools and therefore they become familiar to the movement's principles and purpose. On the other end, the climate of hostility against the Islamic businessmen and politicians favoured, among them, new behaviours of opening to the West and the secular elites so Gülen and its inter-religious dialogue became gradually a point of reference. At the end of the 1990s, more of the Islamist politicians abandoned their extremist discourse and adopted pro-Democratic views very similar to those of Gülen who advocated for "Tajdid", the Islamic renewal through social reform.

By anticipating the need to adapt Islam to the present times, confident that the Turkish republic would have to adapt too and open itself to more diversity, Gülen has been a visionary. He has unlocked the way to a new global culture that places Muslim Democrats ahead of any radical thinking and he has sent a strong message to the Muslim world showing a successful way towards democratic transition and gradual adaptation to Globalization without losing landmarks and religious background. To the Muslim world, the "Hoca" says that there is nothing to fear about democracy and globalization because the Qur'an teaches compassion, love and tolerance and, through these principles, nothing should impede a Muslim to be, at the same time, a servant of God and a first-class citizen within a democratic country. Nothing should hinder him either to seize the benefits of a business-oriented society that will improve his lifestyle and help him promote the splendour of his religious beliefs.

Gülen's new social movement has been able to benefit from the capitalist globalization by efficiently using newly-available marketing instruments and become a bridge between modernity and a large segment of the Turkish society. At that point, cultural influence relies on the gain of market share in the media realms, which a new way of putting things because it means that only the people able to be in command of the capitalist game will triumph culturally in the long run. So not only the followers of Gülen participate in the emergence of a new Turkish culture but also to a new understanding of what culture consists of.