ROBUSTNESS AND CIVILITY: THEMES FROM FETHULLAH GÜLEN AS RESOURCE AND CHALLENGE FOR GOVERNMENT, MUSLIMS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

The 7/7 (2005) attack on London Transport by Muslims brought up in the UK shocked the Government, many Muslims, and the wider civil society. Subsequently, the UK's 'multi-culturalist' policy consensus has been subject to intensive questioning. Politicians and some parts of civil society have challenged a perceived 'separatism' among Muslims; emphasised a need for shared values and social cohesion; and advocated the promotion of 'moderate Islam' and 'moderate Muslims'.

This paper argues that, in legitimising simplistic distinctions between 'good' (understood as 'liberal' or 'modernist') and 'bad' or 'suspect' (understood as 'traditionalist', 'radical' or 'fundamentalist') Muslims and forms of Islam, there is a risk of eliding the condemnation of terrorist crimes conducted on religious grounds into the criminalisation, or at least social marginalisation, of religious conservatism and/or radicalism. This approach, it is argued, is more likely to undermine the development of inclusive approaches to the common good and that what is needed instead are authentically Islamic approaches that can offer both a resource and a challenge to Government, Muslims and the wider civil society.

Finally, it is argued that such resource and challenge can be found in themes from Fethullah Gülen's teaching. Gülen, on Islamic grounds, condemns terrorism in the name of religion. Further, being rooted in a confident Ottoman Muslim civilisational heritage and having during the period of the Turkish Republic engaged with both ideological 'secularism' and political 'Islamism', he also offers a critique of the political instrumentalisation of Islam while arguing for an active Muslim engagement with the wider (religious and secular) society based on a distinctive Islamic vision characterised by a robustness and civility that could make a positive contribution in the present UK context.

Introduction

This paper takes as its contextual starting point the situation in the United Kingdom (UK) following the 7/7 (2005) attack on London Transport by those claiming to be Muslims and brought up in the UK. This attack shocked the Government, many Muslims, and the wider civil society. Subsequently, the "multi-culturalist" policy consensus that had shaped UK public policy for several decades has been subject to intensive questioning.

Politicians and some parts of civil society challenged a perceived "separatism" among Muslims, in the light of which they began to emphasise a need for shared values and social cohesion and advocated the promotion of "moderate Islam" and "moderate Muslims". However, this paper argues that legitimising simplistic distinctions between "good" (understood as "liberal" or "modernist") and "bad" or "suspect" (understood as "traditionalist", "radical" or "fundamentalist") Muslims and forms of Islam does not ultimately help in combating terror or building a properly inclusive society.

Instead, this paper suggests that such reactions run the risk of eliding the condemnation of terrorist crimes against humanity conducted on religious grounds into the criminalisation, or at least the social marginalisation, of religious conservatism and/or radicalism. It is also argued that this way of framing the issues is likely to undermine the development of inclusive approaches to the common good. In contrast, it is proposed that what is needed are authentically Islamic approaches that can offer both a resource and a challenge Government, Muslims and the wider civil society.

Finally, it is suggested that such approaches can be found in themes from the Turkish Muslim scholar, Fethullah Gülen who, on Islamic grounds, condemns terrorism in the name of religion. But it is also highlighted that Gülen's contribution is not only one of critique. Rather, being rooted in a confident Ottoman Muslim civilisational heritage, it also offers constructive impulses. Importantly, too, for the current situation in the UK, Gülen's contribution - emerging as it does from the context of the modern history of the Turkish Republic - is one that has developed and matured through engagement with both ideological "secularism" and political "Islamism".

Because of all this, Gülen's teaching offers both a critique of the political instrumentalisation of Islam while at the same time providing a basis for active Muslim engagement with the wider (religious and secular) society in ways that are based on a distinctive Islamic vision that is characterised both by an Islamic robustness and an Islamic civility, a combination of which, it is argued, can make an important and positive contribution to the present UK context.

7/7 and the British Bombers

The 7/7 (2005) attacks on London Transport and which resulted in the deaths of 52 people and the injury of 700 others, followed by the failed attempts of 21/7 shocked the UK Government, many Muslims, and the wider civil society. "Mainland" Britain, and especially London, had previously experienced high levels of violence designed to inculcate terror and to advance a political cause – namely that pursued by the Provisional IRA (Irish Republican Army) in pursuit of British withdrawal from the North of Ireland.

But there was a widespread sense that these most recent atrocities were different in nature. First of all, in contrast with the PIRA bombings experienced by Belfast, London, Birmingham,

Manchester and other cities during the 1970s and 1980s, and also as distinct from the 3/11 (2004) Madrid train bombing, in these more recent attacks, the bombers acted without regard to their own personal safety and security. Indeed, from videos later seen and made by those who took part in the 7/7 bombings, it was evident that the fact that the bombings brought death to their perpetrators was something not to be avoided but rather to be embraced, being understood by them as an act of martyrdom. Indeed, these attacks were the first instance of such "suicide bombings" to occur in Europe. They were later officially claimed by Al-Qaeda.[1]

Second, while bombings of this kind had been carried out in the name of Islam in other parts of the world, another dimension of 7/7 that particularly shocked and concerned many people in the UK was that the bombings were perpetrated not by people coming from outside the country and whose experience might have been directly shaped by the horrors of war and destruction experienced by people living in Chechnya, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza, the West Bank and the Occupied Territories. Rather, they were carried out but by young men brought up in the UK and who were, to all outward appearances, integrated members of British society.[2]

On 1st September 2005, a tape featuring one of the bombers, Mohammad Siddique Khan, was broadcast on the Arab satellite TV station, al-Jazeera. In this tape, he explained that:

> I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our drive and motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam, obedience to the one true God and following the footsteps of the final prophet messenger.
>
> Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters.
>
> Until we feel security you will be our targets and until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation.[3]

This message, and one from Shehzad Tanweer, later broadcast on the eve of the first anniversary of the bomb attacks, had been edited. In editing they were accompanied by statements from Ayman al-Zawarihi, often described as second in command to Osama bin Laden, and who sought to associate the bombers with al-Qaeda. On the second tape, al-Zawarihi claimed that Khan and Tanweer had attended an al-Qaeda training camp, although this claim has not been independently verified.

"Multi-Culturalism" and Social Policy

The realisation that young Muslims brought up in Britain were seeing the world in this way and drawing consequences from it to inform actions of this kind merged with a questioning

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1 . In a 1st September 2005 video, broadcast on the Arab television network al-Jazeera.

2 The bombers who died were: (Edware Road Tube) Sidique Khan, aged 30, who lived in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, with his pregnant wife and child; (Aldgate Tube) Shehzad Tanweer, aged 22, who lived with his mother and father and worked in a fish and chip shop; (Russell Square) Germaine Lindsay (19), who lived in Aylsbury, Buckinghamshire, with his pregnant wife; and (Tavistock Square), Hasib Hussain (18), who lived in Leeds with his brother and sister-in-law.

3 Khan spoke in English. The text and video is available from Wikisource at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Tape_of_Mohammad_Sidique_Khan.

that had, in any case, already begun in relation to "multi-culturalist" policy consensus that had been the basis for UK public policy on ethnic and religious plurality ever since the Labour Government Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, had brought in Britain's second, 1968, Race Relations Act.

Ahead of the passage into law of the Race Relations Act, Jenkins (1967: 269) set out what became the classic consensus formulation of: "I do not think that we need in this country a melting-pot, which will turn everybody out in a common mould, as one of a series of some-one's misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman", clarifying that Government policy was aiming for "integration" (understood in those days as the opposite of 'assimilation'), defined as: "….equal opportunity, coupled with cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance."

However, in the context of The Satanic Verses controversy, an editorial in the generally liberal UK newspaper, The Independent, under the title 'Limits to mutual tolerance' (18.2.89) noted that,

> Roy Jenkins' philosophy was predicated on the expectation that the minorities would also demonstrate tolerance, and the implicit belief that all manifestations of cultural diversity would be benign. It is becoming disturbingly apparent that this is not the case. The time has therefore come for an examination of how a tolerant, multi-cultural society should handle the intolerant behaviour on the part of a minority.

Indeed, at the height of the controversy around Rushdie's book Lord Jenkins (1989) was himself recorded as saying: "In retrospect we might have been more cautious about allowing the creation in the 1950s of substantial Muslim communities here." Such questioning from one of the architects of the previous policy consensus was a sign of things to come.

In the aftermath of the summer 2001 disturbances in the northern English mill towns involving youth of Muslim background, and even more so following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the USA, such sentiments became more widespread amid heightened security fears (see Allen and Nielsen, 2002). Such fears became intensified especially following the arrest of Richard Reid, the British so-called "Shoe Bomber", who was arrested on 21st December 2001, for an attempt to destroy an American Airlines Flight from Paris to Miami, though setting off explosives hidden in his shoes. This underlined that UK Muslims might also be being caught up in the emergence of a global struggle, as had also the involvement of suicide bombers of Muslim background from Britain, including one from the author's home city of Derby, in the 30th April attack on a bar in Tel Aviv, Israel.

The change of approach to social policy that accompanied these developments was highlighted in a statement released by the Chair of the former Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, on September 22nd 2005. In this, Phillips (2005) argued that: "….the aftermath of 7/7 forces us to assess where we are. And here is where I think we are: we are sleepwalking our way to segregation. We are becoming strangers to each other, and we are leaving communities to be marooned outside the mainstream." At a Government level, an emphasis on "cohesion" was gathering pace (see Kundnani, 2007), in some contrast with a former more positive celebration of "diversity" and in this context, the Government announced the creation of its Commission on Integration and Cohesion.[4]

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4 . The Commission reported in June 2007, under the title of Our Shared Future.

Head Coverings and 'Separatism'

By 2006, many of these general concerns and policy trends had become symbolically clustered around a series of statements by high-profile Labour politicians criticising some forms of head covering worn by some Muslim women – a mater which, until then (and in contrast with the situation in Germany and, especially, in France) when there had been any issues arising in the UK had been handled by relatively low-key negotiations at local level.

This series of statements – which appear to have all the hallmarks of a co-ordinated use of the media rather than a random collection of unrelated initiatives - were initiated by Rt. Hon. Jack Straw, MP, the former Home Secretary, and Member of Parliament for Blackburn, a constituency with a very high proportion of Muslim residents.

In October 2006 Straw suggested to the local newspaper The Lancashire Evening Telegraph, that women wearing a niqab[5] can inhibit good community relations. He explained that he had asked women visiting his constituency surgeries to consider uncovering their noses and mouths in order, in his opinion, to allow for better communication. He made clear that he did not support a legal ban on the wearing of such coverings, but also stated that he wanted Muslim women to abandon the practice.

It is against this background that politicians and some parts of civil society have increasingly engaged in challenge of a perceived "separatism" on the part of Muslims and have emphasised a need for shared values and social cohesion.

'Moderation', 'Radicalism', 'Extremism' and 'Terrorism'

Others have framed the issues as part of the struggle against terrorism and, like the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, have echoed President George W. Bush's language of a "war on terror". In his speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, the former British Minister, Tony Blair (2006) argued that, "…we will not win the battle against this global extremism unless we win at the level of values as much as force…."

In this context, Blair referred to "an elemental struggle about the values that will shape our future" and argued that: "It is in part a struggle between what I will call Reactionary Islam and Moderate, Mainstream Islam". Against this background, there has been an attempt on the part of Government and other public bodies to promote a "moderate Islam" and "moderate Muslims" and to marginalise by association with terrorism what can be seen as "radical", "fundamentalist" or "extremist" Islam.

A good example of such an approach – and which this paper would argue tends to confuse rather than to illuminate, by eliding different issues into an overall "terror" model - can be found in the kind of public discourse that followed the most recent, July 2007, attack on Glasgow Airport. That attack came as Gordon Brown took over the office of Prime Minister from Tony Blair. Among Brown's new appointments was Admiral Sir Alan West, appointed as Security Minister.

Admiral West's (2007) interview on ITN (Independent Television News) of 8th July was reported in the on-line media service, BT, Yahoo News, under the headline of "Tackling

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5 . *Niqab* is the term used for a piece of cloth which covers the face and, sometimes, through a transparent part, the eyes also. While *hijab* – which refers to the covering of the rest of the body except face and hands – is generally seen by Muslim scholars as being obligatory, there are differences of view concerning the *niqab*, with only a minority of scholars seeing this as obligatory.

Terror (my italics for emphasis) will Take 15 Years". Having, in its headline, introduced the theme of "terror", the report then went on to say the following, in which it will be seen that while key words are switched, an assumed continuity of reference is maintained: "Tackling radicalisation could take 15 years, Gordon Brown's new Security Minister has warned". The report then went on to say that: "Admiral Sir Alan West conceded the Government was finding it hard to get its anti-terror message across, but stressed that preventing people from being recruited to extremism (again, my italics for emphasis) was central to beating terrorism."

From the above it will be noted how easily the editorial voice slides easily from "tackling terror" to "radicalisation" to "extremism". While it is certainly the case that, through personal, organisational and ideological means there can be some linkage between these phenomena, in general I would argue that it is very important they should be clearly distinguished. This is because failing to do so will result in additional difficulty in trying to isolate those who are prepared to use indiscriminate and criminal terror in pursuit of their goals from those who may share some aspects of their understanding of the world, but would not resort to criminal violence.

In other words, it is very important to be clear that – even taking such words at their face value in terms of popular and general usage – that "radicalised" Muslims are not necessarily "extremists", and that "extremist" Muslims are not necessarily going to undertake terror actions. "Extremism" is a weasel word that pits an assumed "centre ground" as always being the natural and right one over and against those who are perceived to take a position that is "beyond the pale" of the prevailing consensus.

Thus, depending on one's starting point, the designation of others as "extremists" can simply be a way of marginalizing people from engagement, but without recognising or seeking to understand the content of their views. With regard to "radicalism", it could also be argued from a perspective of religious seriousness that this is an entirely appropriate way of being religious.

Etymologically and also in religious reality, "radicalism" can be understood as something that is concerned with going back to the roots, and which entails a critique of traditionalism for its own sake. Thus the question and issue at stake is not "radicalisation" among Muslims per se, but the forms that such radicalisation takes and also in what it results (see Abbas, ed. 2007). In a world where naked power and military violence seem to be stacked against many predominantly Muslim countries and people, is perhaps not surprising, especially among young Muslims in the UK whose own experience of minority status has been one in which religious discrimination and disadvantage (see Weller, 2004, 2006) will also have played a role in their perceptions of the world, that the prevailing economic, cultural and military powers-that-be will be questioned.

Therefore this paper argues that it is important not to legitimate simplistic distinctions between "good" (understood as "liberal" or "modernist") and "bad" or "suspect" (understood as "traditionalist", "radical" or "fundamentalist") Muslims and forms of Islam. This is because such reactions run the risk of eliding the condemnation of terrorist crimes against humanity conducted on religious grounds into the criminalisation, or at least social marginalisation, of religious conservatism and/or radicalism.

Some 'Tendencies' Among Muslims

By contrast, what is needed is a more sophisticated and grounded understanding of the tendencies present among Muslims and in Islam that goes beyond the ephemera of political rhetoric and media reportage. In this connection, the European Muslim scholar and reformer, Tariq Ramadan, in his book Western Muslims and the Future of Islam, identified what he (2004: 24-30) calls "six major tendencies among those for whom Islam is the reference point for their thinking, their discourse and their engagement" - thus excluding "sociological" or "cultural" Muslims for whom, in their own self-understanding, Islam is not a major point of reference.

The trends that Ramadan identifies include what he calls: "Scholastic Traditionalism"; "Salafi Literalism"; "Salafi Reformism"; "Political Literalist Salafism"; " 'Liberal' or 'Rationalist' Reformism"; and "Sufism". These categorisations can, of course, be questioned. Others categorisations for indicating something of the diversity that can be found in Islam could be put forward (see Andrews, 1994) and especially for the diversities among Muslims of South Asian origins (see Robinson, 1988) who comprise the majority of Muslims in the UK.

Those suggested by Ramadan are included, not because they have to be agreed with, but for the illustrative purpose of underlining that there is diversity as well as unity in Islam and among Muslims, and this is one way of attempting to describe that diversity. But they are also included because Ramadan is a Muslim intellectual who has worked on issues concerning the acculturation of Islam in the European context and whose approach has been referred to in a number of debates in Britain post-7/7.

Ramadan argues that what he calls "Scholastic Traditionalists" have a distinct way of referring to Qur'an and Sunnah by strict and sometimes exclusive reference to one of the classical schools of jurisprudence, relying on scholastic opinions that were codified between 8th and 11th centuries. He (2004: 25) says: "There is no room here for ijtihad or for a rereading, which are taken to be baseless and unacceptable liberties and modernizations" and that "They are concerned mostly with religious practice and in the West do not envisage social, civil or political involvement."

Of "Salafi Literalism", Ramadan (2004: 25) explains that, although those from this tendency are often confused with "Scholastic Traditionalists", in fact they reject the mediation of the texts by the interpretation of traditional schools and scholars: "The Qur'an and the Sunnah are therefore interpreted in an immediate way, without scholarly enclaves." Ramadan points out with regard to this tendency that it "refuses any kind of involvement in a space that is considered non-Islamic."

What Ramadan calls "Salafi Reformists" have significant differences among them.[6] However, says Ramadan (2004: 26), what unites them is "a very dynamic relation to the scriptural sources and a constant desire to use reason in the treatment of the Texts in order to deal with the new challenges of their age and the social, economic, and political evolution of societies." In terms of social engagement, Ramadan (2004: 27) observes that: "The aim is to protect the Muslim identity and religious practice, to recognize the western constitutional structure, to become involved as a citizen at the social level, and to live with true loyalty to the country to which one belongs."

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6 . Ramadan numbers al-Afghani, al-Nursi, Mawdudi, and Qutb among this tendency, although it should be noted that many with a knowledge of Islam in Turkey would challenge Ramadan's inclusion of al-Nursi in this category.

"Political Literalist Salafists" are "Salafi Literalists" of a kind that Ramadan (2004: 27) says is, "…essentially born of the repression that has ravaged the Muslim world" Their approach is "a complex blend that tends towards radical revolutionary action…the discourse is trenchant, politicised, radical and opposed to any idea of involvement or collaboration with Western societies, which is seen as akin to open treason.

'Liberal or 'Rationalist' Reformism is born from the influence of Western thought in the colonial period which, according to Ramadan (2004: 27), "presenting itself as liberal or rationalist, has supported the application in the Muslim world of the social and political system that resulted from the process of secularisation in Europe." Of this approach in relation to the wider society, Ramadan (2004: 27) says, "In the West, supporters of liberal reformism preach the integration/assimilation of Muslims from whom they expect a complete adaptation to a Western way of life."

In relation to "Sufism", Ramadan (2004: 28) says that: "Sufis are essentially oriented toward the spiritual life and mystical experience" and that: "There is a call to the inner life, away from disturbance and disharmony." However, and importantly, Ramadan notes that "This is not to say that Sufi disciples…have no community or social involvement; the contrary is often the case."

An Islamic Resource for Civility

Against such a varied background, it should be clear that defining the issues in simplistic ways is, in fact, more likely to undermine the development of inclusive approaches to the common good. In particular, it can be counterproductive for the Government overtly to try and define and, even more so, to try to create what it might see as a "good moderate British Islam" over against a "bad radical Islam". This is especially so because of the high levels of distrust which exist among Muslims in the context of British foreign policy, and especially the military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But it is also important to bear in mind the evidence that exists concerning the experience among Muslims in the UK of discrimination and unfair treatment on the basis of religion (see Runnymede Trust, 1997; and Weller, Feldman and Purdam, 2004) that can be expressed in fully developed form and specific form in terms of what come to be known as Islamophobia (see Weller, 2006a), as well as the impact (see Fekete, 2004) that a growing security apparatus 'reach' among Muslims in the UK can have among Muslims' own sense of security as well as on the perceptions of them by others and, in turn, their own perception of these perceptions.

Therefore, even from a pragmatic perspective, the best possibility for combating the attraction of young Muslims to understandings that see the world in highly dichotomised ways, is for authentically Islamic approaches to make a contribution that can offer both a resource for civility and a challenge to Government, Muslims and the wider society alike. One such resource can be found in the teaching of the Turkish Muslim scholar, Fethullah Gülen, and in aspects of the practice of the movement and community that has gathered around his teaching (See Hunt and Aslandoğan, eds., 2006)

It is important to understand that Gülen does not fit any of Ramadan's categorisations of Islamic tendencies. While some have argued that he can be seen within the frame of Sufism, as Saritoprak (2004: 169) has argued, "Strictly speaking, Gülen is not a Sufi" although he has what might be called a "*tasawwuf-style*" of living. At the same time, his teaching and the

movement that has developed around it are oriented towards tajdid, or the 'renewal' of Islam. As Gülen (in Ünal and Williams, 2000: 53) himself puts it, "Since Islam is misunderstood, implemented incorrectly, and perceived as a simple religion belonging to the past, today the Islamic world is in a pitiful state" and therefore that:

> As Muslims, we must ask ourselves why? Taking the Qur'an and sunnah as our main sources and respecting the great people of the past, in the consciousness that we are all children of time, we must question the past and present. I am looking for labourers of thought and researchers to establish the necessary balance between the constant and changing aspects of Islam and, considering such juridical rules as abrogation, particularization, generalization, and restriction, who can present Islam to the modern understanding.

Thus while rooted in a confident Ottoman Turkish heritage, he does not take refuge in any invocations of an idealised past as a solution to the weakness of Islam in the present. Rather, he seeks to provide a clear analysis of the kind of global and historical context that has led some Muslims into seeing the world in terms of an epic, militarised global struggle of almost Manichean dualism between *dar-al Islam* and *dar-al harb*. Thus Gülen (2004: 239) has observed that:

> Islamic societies entered the twentieth century as a world of the oppressed, the wronged, and the colonized; the first half of the century was occupied with wars of liberation and independence, wars that carried over from the nineteenth century. In all these wars, Islam assumed the role of an important factor uniting people and spurring them to action. As these wars were waged against what were seen as invaders, Islam, national independence and liberation came to mean the same thing.

In describing this historical development, Gülen recognises the factuality of what has occurred in the interaction between Islam and the broad currents of global politics, economics and military power. But he also identifies the roots of a current concern in which, for many, Islam has become a political ideology bringing with it what, he argues, are damaging consequences for Islam, Muslims and the world.

An Islamic Challenge to Terror

Gülen (in Ünal & Williams, Eds., 2000: 248) does not question the objectivity of the current situation in which Muslims often find themselves on the wrong side of right, but he also argues robustly that:

When those who have adopted Islam as a political ideology, rather than a religion in its true sense and function, review their self-proclaimed Islamic activities and attitudes, especially their political ones, they will discover that the driving force is usually personal or national anger, hostility, and similar motives. If this is the case, we must accept Islam and adopt an Islamic attitude as the fundamental starting point for action, rather than the existing oppressive situation.

Gülen argues that without such a robust self-examination and re-evaluation among Muslims, "The present, distorted image of Islam that has resulted from its misuse, by both Muslims and non-Muslims for their own goals, scares both Muslims and non-Muslims" (in Ünal & Williams, Eds., 2000: 248). Indeed, in the adoption of terrorist activities and justification of them, such an ideologised version of Islam has further both distorted Islam and its image in the wider world. On Islamic grounds Gülen clearly condemns terrorism in the name of religion. Thus he says (in Çapan, 2004: 1),

In Islam, killing a human is an act that is equal in gravity to unbelief. No person can kill a human being. No one can touch an innocent person, even in time of war. No one can give a fatwa (a legal pronouncement in Islam) in this matter. No one can be a suicide bomber. No one can rush into crowds, this is not religiously permissible. Even in the event of war – during which it is difficult to maintain balances – this is not permitted in Islam.

In his "Message Concerning the September 11th Terrorist Attacks" Gülen (in Gülen, 2004: 261-262) went further to state clearly that, "Islam does not approve of terrorism in any form. Terrorism cannot be used to achieve any Islamic goal. No terrorist can be a Muslim, and no real Muslim can be a terrorist", while in his piece entitled "Real Muslims Cannot be Terrorists", Gülen (in Gülen, 2004: 179) he explains this further, in the following way:

The reasons why certain Muslim people or institutions that misunderstand Islam are becoming involved in a terrorist attacks throughout the world should not be sought in Islam, but within the people themselves, in their misinterpretations and in other factors. Just as Islam is not a religion of terrorism, any Muslim who correctly understands Islam cannot be or become a terrorist.

Specifically in relation to the Al-Qaeda network, Gülen is quoted (in Çapan, 2004: 4) as saying about Osama Bin Laden that: "….he has sullied the bright face of Islam. He has created a contaminated image. Even if we were to try to repair the damage that he has done, it would take years to repair" and that "Bin Laden replaced Islamic logic with his own feelings and desires." In relation more generally to those who invoke Islam and yet take the pathway epitomised by Bin Laden, Gülen (in Çapan, 2004: 5) argues for a self-critical approach and for the need to recognise that, "It is our fault…..A real Muslim, one who understands Islam in every aspect, cannot be a terrorist….Religion does not approve of the killing of people in order to attain a goal."

British Muslims Post 7/7

In a question originally posed in the Turkish context, but which is likely to touch a raw nerve of sensitivity among the elders of the Muslim community in the UK, Gülen also asks "What kind of responsibility did we take in their upbringing so that now we should expect them not to engage in terror?"

With relevance to this, in a recent piece in The Guardian (9.7.2007) newspaper, the journalist Madeleine Bunting (2007) wrote of the reaction of Muslim leaders gathered in London immediately following the 7/7 bombings. Of these leaders, Bunting said many "refused to accept that it might have been Muslims", and that because of this: "The discussion had the younger generation of professional British-born Muslims grinding their teeth with frustration at the stubborn naivety of an older generation of leadership. Their elders had completely failed to grasp how the community had been swept up in a global political conflict that was interacting with a local crisis of identity and a generational conflict."

Bunting also pointed, however, that by contrast after the attempted central London and Glasgow airport bombings of July 2007, full page adverts were taken out in national newspapers, and on 7th July imams and activists from across the country gathered to tackle extremism. Thus the Islam is Peace organisation's "Not in Our Name" campaign[7] adverts stated clearly that: "The Muslim communities across Britain are united in condemning the attempted bombings in London and Glasgow"; that "Islam forbids the killing of innocent people" and that: "We reject any heinous attempts to link such abhorrent acts to the teachings of Islam."

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7 . See http://www.islamispeace.org.uk/p.php?id_art=1

In the light of this, Bunting noted that: "Britain's Muslims have launched their most concerted attempt yet to win the hearts and minds of the public and distance themselves from the activities of violent extremists who claim to act in the name of their faith". Her conclusion is: "What's remarkable is that these subjects are being aired in public and even discussed with non-Muslims; for years the charge of washing dirty linen in public ensured silence. But Britain is now the arena for one of the most public, impassioned and wide-ranging debates about Islam anywhere in the world."

Islamic Analysis

Post 7/7, Muslims in Britain have a very specific place within "Islamic world in transition" that is the leitmotif of this conference. If Bunting is correct, then the opportunity that at present exists for resources such as those offered by Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen community to make a positive impact is highlighted. What is particularly important about Gülen's contribution on these matters is that it is based not on mere condemnation of terrorist activity, but also on a realistic understanding of the dynamics of the world, and on a deep understanding of Islamic tradition.

Thus, while clearly condemning the 9/11 attacks on the USA, Gülen also warned about the kind of response that the USA might make, and of the likely consequences that could flow from that. Addressing this in words, the force and resonance of which are only underlined by what has occurred since then, Gülen (2004: 262) said,

> Before America's leaders and people respond to this heinous assault out of their justified anger and pain, please let me express that they must understand why such a terrible event occurred and let us look to how similar tragedies can be avoided in the future. They must also be aware of the fact that injuring innocent masses in order to punish a few guilty people is to no one's benefit; rather, such actions will only strengthen the terrorists by feeding any existing resentment and by giving birth to more terrorists and more violence.

Sadly, the prescience of Gülen's warning can be seen all too clearly in the continuing instability of Afghanistan; the quagmire of death and destruction that Iraq has become; the tangled metal and bloody aftermath of the train bomb in Madrid in March 2004; and the London Transport bombings of July 2005. Thus, as Shehzad Tanweer, one of the 7/7 bombers expressed it:

> For the non-Muslims in Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government who in turn have and still continue to this day continue to oppress our mothers and children, brothers and sisters from the east to the west in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of more than 150,000 innocent Muslims in Fallujah.

> We are 100 per cent committed to the cause of Islam. We love death the way you love life. I tell all you British citizens to stop your support to your lying British government and to the so-called war on terror. And ask yourselves: why would thousands of men be ready to give their lives for the cause of Muslims?

> What you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a series of attacks which will intensify and continue to until you pull all your troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq. Until you stop all financial and military support to the US and Israel and until you release all Muslim prisoners from Belmarsh and your other concentration camps. And know that if you fail to comply with this then know that this war will never stop and that we are willing to give our lives 100 times over for the cause of Islam. You will never experience peace until our children in Palestine, our mothers and sisters in

> Kashmir, and our brothers in Afghanistan and Iraq feel peace

> In the face of such deep-seated rage, articulated in a way that clearly undermines the Government's oft-repeated mantra that these actions are nothing to do with foreign policy, what is needed is not only a clear differentiation of Islam from terrorism, but also a form of Islamic teaching and, even more so of an embodied practice. It is the kind of practice exhibited by the movement that has grown up around Gülen's teaching that is needed - a practice in which authentic Islam can itself become a resource for Muslims to engage with the issues and challenges of the modern world among themselves, while also being capable of communicating in a serious way with people of other religious faith, as well as those of secular perspectives.

In other words, in order to contribute to the growth of civility in our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society, the actions and perspectives of those such as Shehzad Tanweer need robust challenge from Islamic resources that draw upon the deep wells of Qur'an and Sunnah; are informed by the rich history of multi-cultural Islamic civilisation; and yet are also fully engaged with the contemporary global realities of modernity.

Gülen's teaching can offer such resources because, as the editor of Gülen's book, Towards a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance, (M. Enes Ergene in Gülen, 2004: viii) explains it in his Introduction to that book: "Gülen's model is….the essence of the synthesis created by the coming together of Turkish culture with Islam". It is especially a development of the Sufi tradition and that "re-generates this tolerant interpretation and understanding of Muslim-Turkish Sufism within contemporary circumstances, albeit highlighting a broader, more active, and more socially oriented vision…. Gülen opens up this framework and vision to all societies in the world, transforming and broadening it.

South Asian Muslims and Islam with a Turkish Face

Of course, the potentials for, and constraints upon, the influence of Gülen's teaching in the UK are limited by the fact that the primary face of Islam and of the organised Muslim community groups in the UK is a South Asian, rather than Turkish (or an Arabic) one, albeit that these latter groups are quite numerically significant, especially in London.

The predominant South Asian groupings are shaped by a strong minority consciousness and experience arising from British Imperial India. While this can offer resources for living also as a Muslim minority in the UK, it also brings with it particular weaknesses as compared with the heritage of those Muslims whose background is shaped by more a confident majority history. South Asian Muslim movements with a heritage that developed in the British Indian Empire (Hardy, 1972) have been generally less self-confident in interaction with the wider public life, and more concerned with preserving Islam in a sea of alien cultural influence.

By contrast, Islam in the Turkish context, and as reflected in Gülen's teaching and the practice of the community gathered around this, is rooted in a confident Ottoman Muslim civilisational heritage that has allowed the possibility of developing an approach that is characterised by a greater openness towards people of other ways of believing and living. This relative ease with diversity was a part of the Ottoman heritage. But while there was a tradition of dealing with religious diversity, since the Kemalist revolution in Turkey this tradition has also, of necessity, had to learn to engage both with modernity and secularity, and also with currents that go beyond secularity alone into stances that can be characterised in terms of ideological secularism.

During the period of the Turkish Republic and in very polarised social contexts that have

included three coups (1960, 1971 and 1980), periods of community violence and military rule, Gülen and the community that has emerged around his teaching have had to chart a course that both engages with, and differentiates from the twin challenges that arise from ideological "secularism" and "political "Islamism". Forged in this crucible, Gülen's teaching offers a critique of the political instrumentalisation of Islam while arguing for an active Muslim engagement with the wider (religious and secular) society in ways based on a distinctive Islamic vision characterised by robustness and civility which could make a positive contribution in the present UK context

Neither Traditionalism nor Reformism

What Gülen's teaching represents and offers is the possibility of finding an alternative path that is reflected in the title of Ahmet Kuru's (2003: 115-130) essay on "Fethullah Gülen's Search for a Middle Way Between Modernity and Muslim Tradition". Of course, steering a 'middle' or 'third' way is a project that is fraught with difficulty. In politics, 'third ways' have often been viewed with a certain scepticism on the basis that, in the end, they have turned out not to have been 'third ways' after all, but rather variants on one or other dominant ideology.

There remains a possibility that this may become the fate of the movement initiated by Gülen. At this point in time the outcome cannot definitively be known. However, what is significant and potentially creative with regard to Gülen and his teaching is that the 'middle way' that he advocates is not a road of mere 'compromise' but is one that is rooted in a particular understanding and application of traditional Islam and in which Islam is itself identified in terms of a 'middle way'. As Kuru (2003: 130) argues: "Gülen does not try to create an eclectic or hybrid synthesis of modernity and Islam or to accommodate the hegemony of modernity by changing Islamic principles. What he does is reveal a dynamic interpretation of Islam that is both compatible with and critical of modernity and Muslim tradition."

So, for example, in relation to debates around the niqab, in Turkish society where the issue of female head covering in the public sphere is extremely divisive, Gülen has made clear that he regards this as a matter that is not an 'essential' but a 'detail' of Islam, which differs in form in relation to its appropriate implementation according to the cultural context in which it is found. Thus, in Gülen's own words: "If a person takes her headscarf off, she does not become an unbeliever. This subject belongs to furuat [secondary methods of jurisprudence]. That is not like the conditions of amentu [basic principles of belief]. It is not the same as not accepting the basic tenets of Islam." (http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1731/3/)

This should not be misunderstood or misrepresented as meaning that Gülen views head covering as unimportant. However, it is illustrative of the fact that Gülen employs a hermeneutic which is more in line with the classical traditions of the interpretation of Islam, and quite different from the 'flat' approach of modern Islamists. As Hakan Yavuz (2003: 29) summarises matters more generally: "Gülen's views on the precepts of Islam are pragmatic and contemporary without being liberal".

It is precisely because it is not "liberal" in the populist or modernist sense that Gülen's teaching is capable of resonating with those Muslims of more traditionalist orientation, drawing as it does upon a strong commitment to Islamic sources and Ottoman history. At the same time, its contextual focus contributes to the conditions that facilitate the possibility of dialogue between such traditionalists and those of a more contemporary and secular outlook, as well as with those of other faiths. The particular strength of contribution that Gülen can make

in relation to the socially and religiously conservative circles that form the majority of the Muslim organisational scene in the UK is that, at one time, Gülen himself was not a stranger to concerns about the impact on Islam of western influence and a perspective in which the 'secular' is almost automatically equated with the 'immoral'.

Thus, in a 2000 interview with Hakan Yavuz (2003: 45), Gülen acknowledged: "We all change, don't we? ……By visiting the States and many other European countries, I realized the virtues and the role of religion in these societies. Islam flourishes in Europe and America much better than in many Muslim countries. This means freedom and the rule of law are necessary for personal Islam." On the basis of this re-evaluation, rooted in an openness to learning from experience, Gülen critiques the kind of superficial reading of religion in European and Western societies that can be found among many Muslim traditionalists, observing that:

> Some people might be tempted to say that religion has no place in the life of society in developed countries such as America and those of Western Europe. We must immediately point out that such a statement is in no way correct and that these countries have been and are attached to their religions. Just as we have expressed earlier, although religious values may have been weakened over the last two centuries throughout the world, humanity today is again searching for religion, and is once again inclining toward it. Even though the population may be indifferent to religion, to a certain extent in Western Europe, those in the administration seem to be, on the whole, rather religious. Among these, there have always been religious people at the highest levels of administration, and there still are today. Moreover, though secularism is the rule in all these countries, there has never been a mentality dictating that the guidance of religion should be abandoned in social or even in the political life of a country.

In making these observations, Gülen contrasts a civil society understanding of the 'secular' that is concerned with the participation of citizens of all religions and none in the public life of a society with an ideological form of secularism that is concerned to promote positivist philosophical positions and their philosophical consequences.[8] In other words, Gülen is arguing for a society in which support for the robustness of a rich and deep-rooted religious integrity is something that can challenge the kind of dichotomous and Manichean views of the world that lead to the perpetration of indiscriminate terror. It is a perspective that is in principle able, though its robust integrity, to promote the development of an inclusive civility. As summarised by Sahin Alpay (1995), "Hodjaefendi opposes the use of Islam as a political ideology and a party philosophy, as well as polarizing society into believers and non-believers."

In this way, Gülen is able to project an image of Islam that facilitates what can then also be the reality of a contribution to civility and the common good that Islam and Muslims can make in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society of the kind that the contemporary UK has become. Such a contribution can also challenge the Government and the wider society to continue to work at negotiating a way forward for British society that continues to draw on the distinctive strengths of its component parts rather than requiring them to lose what makes them who they are as a price for full participation.

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8 . For an exploration of the various and contested meanings of 'secular' in different social contexts, see P. Weller. (2006b). 'Human rights', 'religion' and the 'secular': variant configurations of religion(s), state(s) and society(ies). Religion and Human Rights: An International Journal. 1, 1, 17-39.

Islam for Civil Society, Religious Freedom and Dialogue

Traditionalist Muslims often highlight a tension, if not an outright incompatibility, between what is identified as *dar al-harb* (referring to territory that lays outside the sway of Islam) and what is called *dar al-Islam* (referring to those lands in which Islam has taken root). Others - of which Ihsan Yilmaz (2002) sees the community associated with Gülen's teaching as an example - are more concerned with what Yilmaz identifies as *dar al-hizmet*. This reflects a movement away from an instrumentalisation of religion in politics to a public life of service based on religious motivations, contributing to civil society as one contribution alongside others.

This contrasts with the approach of those of whom Gülen (2006: 40) says: "There are those who are uncomfortable with other people's freedom of conscience and religion. While saying 'freedom of conscience and religion,' there are people who perceive it as only their own freedom. There are such fanatics and bigots." Thus the deep-seated commitment of Gülen's vision, and of the practice of the community formed around his teaching, to inter-religious dialogue is another important resource that is offered. As Bekim Agai (2003: 65) points out:

> Although many Islamic leaders may talk of tolerance in Islam, it may be problematic to put it into practice. Gülen himself has shown that he has no fears of meeting leaders of other religions, including the Pope and the representative of the Jewish community in Istanbul. He also crossed the borders of Islamic discourse to meet with important people in Turkish society who are atheists. These activities were not easy from a religious perspective because Islamic discourse in Turkey has definite boundaries that do not appreciate close ties to the leaders of other religions and nonreligious persons. Also, his support for the Alevis was not very popular among most Sunni-Islamic groups.

In a compact and accessible way, the main contours of Gülen's thinking on dialogue can be found in his article on "The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective" (in Ünal & Williams, Eds., 2000b: 241-256) and in his piece on "At the Threshold of a New Millennium" (in Ünal & Williams, Eds., 2000: 225-232), the texts of both of which, it should be noted, were written before the global religious and political shock of 9/11 and its aftermath, thus underlining that Gülen's advocacy of dialogue is not merely reactive and pragmatic, but is also rooted in his vision of Islam and the contemporary world. Thus Gülen stands against ways of thinking and acting that promote what can all too easily promote the illusion that the uncomfortable plurality of the contemporary world can simply be abolished. Against such illusions Gülen (2004: 249-250) warns that:

> …different beliefs, races, customs and traditions will continue to cohabit in this village. Each individual is like a unique realm unto themselves; therefore the desire for all humanity to be similar to one another is nothing more than wishing for the impossible. For this reason, the peace of this (global) village lies in respecting all these differences, considering these differences to be part of our nature and in ensuring that people appreciate these differences. Otherwise, it is unavoidable that the world will devour itself in a web of conflicts, disputes, fights, and the bloodiest of wars, thus preparing the way for its own end.

Reflecting on the history of violent conflict in Turkey that preceded the military coups in 1971 and 1980, Gülen (in Çapan, 2004: 7) said: "Everybody was a terrorist. The people on that side were terrorists; the people on this side were terrorists. But, everybody was labelling the same action differently. One person would say, 'I am doing this in the name of Islam'. Another would say 'I am doing it for my land and people'. A third would say, 'I am fighting against capitalism and exploitation'. These were all just words. The Qur'an talks about such

'labels'. They are things of no value. But people just kept on killing. Everyone was killing in the name of an ideal."

Towards the Future: Resource and Challenge

Madeleine Bunting's Guardian article previously referred to was published under the headline, "Hearts and minds of young Muslims will be won or lost in the mosques". Bunting pointed out that: "It is estimated that 90% of Britain's male Muslims attend Friday prayers, making it the best place to connect with the core constituency."

In contrast with what she says has been the "self-defeating" approach of those who argued that "the government should withdraw from any engagement with organisations with historical links to Islamism, the broad 20th century movement of political Islam", she cites the work of the Metropolitan Police Muslim Contact Unit, of whom she says they are "well aware that their best chance of drawing extremists away from violence is through those who know how to argue the case on Islamic grounds and redirect the religious fervour of hot-headed young men."

It is the contention of this paper that it is precisely at this time of transition in the particular corner of the world that Fethullah Gülen's teaching can play such an important role. This is because Gülen is one "who knows how to argue the case on Islamic grounds" and thus to have the possibility to "redirect the religious fervour of hot-headed young men" from violent and near Manichean confrontationalism towards a self-critical renewal. Gülen's teaching is not 'modernist', and so it cannot, with integrity, be denounced as a 'sell-out' to secularism. Nor is it "reformist" in the sense that many mean by this.

Instead, what Gülen's teaching offers is a contribution that is devout, and looks for the renewal of Muslims through deeper engagement with the sources of Islam. At the same time, this Islamic depth calls for deployment of an appropriate ijtihad that is directed towards Islamically faithful engagement with the realities of the current historical and geographical and socio-political contexts. All of this, together, is then directed towards tajdid or "renewal" of Islam and of Muslims that can actively develop and enrich both the 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (see Weller, 2005) that religions can offer to the wider civil society.

As Yilmaz (2003: 208-237) puts it in the title of a paper on the movement that has formed around Gülen's teaching, what his Gülen's teaching stimulates is an "*ijtihad* and *tajdid* by conduct". As one whose vision and practice of Islam was honed in the cauldron between 'Islamist' and 'secularist' absolutisms in conflict in modern Turkey, Gülen's Islamic integrity, robustness and civility can contribute towards the laying of more secure foundations for civility among Muslims. At the same time, his contribution can also bring to the wider Christian, secular and religiously plural society the challenge of a rich religious and civilisational heritage that is Islam, in the forms that it took shape in the Ottoman Turkish and Sufi Muslim heritage.

In view of the increasingly important role of Turkey vis-à-vis the European continent and its possible future entry into full membership of the European Union (Bilici, ed., 2006), this heritage in itself is likely to play a more important part in emergent Muslim identities in Europe. And in the setting of the transitional context for Islam and Muslims that is Britain post-7/7, the teaching of Gülen can offer a secure and robust Islamic basis for challenging the equation of Islam and Muslims with terrorism and extremism.

In all these circumstances there is, this essay would argue, a conjuncture of factors in which a

resonance for Gülen's teaching can emerge. And on the basis of such an emergent resonance, Gülen's teaching and the that is movement associated with it can positively contribute to the development of a 'style' of Islam in the UK in which Muslims are open to being informed by the strengths of the broader British and European culture and inheritance, while also themselves being confident enough to continue to make a distinctively Islamic contribution that is characterised by both robustness and civility.