

Discursive and organizational strategies of the Gülen movement

The following paper aims at explaining the reasons for the success of the movement of Fethullah Gülen in the field of education. The basic assumption is that Fethullah Gülen developed specific patterns of organization and special ideas of how to serve Islam best, making the given social and political reality a crucial variable for his activities. This mixture between new forms of organization and his Islamic discourse, teaching his followers how Islam should be practiced in the 21st century, is a key to understand why the Gülen-movement is so successful on a global level and why it is the only Turkish movement which succeeded in reaching beyond Turkey to a significant extent.

Historical foundations of the Gülen network – the emergence of new forms of Islamic self-organization

When Fethullah Gülen was born in Erzurum in 1938, he grew up in an epoch entirely new for Islamic life in the Muslim world. The proclamation of the Republic in Ankara on October 29th, 1923 marked a revolutionary shift in the relationship between state and religion as well as of the position of religion in the public sphere. Radical secularization and the outlawing of the Islamic brotherhoods shook the cultural foundations of the former Islamic state (Jäschke 1951, 33-55; Kaplan 1999, 159). The abolishment of the classical Islamic educational institutions (*medreses*) was commented by Atatürk with the words: "The medreses, established by the old Turks, are degenerated ruins, unable to be reformed in the light of a modern academic mentality." (Coskun 1996, 9). Between 1933 and 1948, higher Islamic learning was not possible in a country with an almost 100% Muslim population (Özdalga 1999, 420-431).

Evidently, Kemalism viewed Islam as potentially dangerous for the modern national state in this period. The aim of the project was to modernize Turkey, give it a Western outlook and make it compatible with modern, respectively Western civilization.

Fethullah Gülen's socialization within the "Islamic circles" and his role in the Nurcu-cemaat

Fethullah Gülen came from a family with a strong religious background and was educated in an alternative system of religious education, the so-called "hidden medreses". They were run on a voluntary, however not basis to counter the state monopoly on education. For this reason, Gülen had to gain recognition of his general schooling and religious knowledge in front of a state commission. In his youth, he was surrounded by people who voluntarily supported the Islamic cause. He had contact to self-organized Sufi circles, learned in the self-run *medreses* and in 1957 he was introduced into the Nurcu-*cemaat* and subsequently became an active member, teaching Islam according to their tradition (Erdoğan 1997, 33-78). Their discourse and patterns of organization are the key to understand the further developments in the life of Fethullah Gülen. The Nurcus are a *cemaat*, which is a specific Turkish form of Islamic self-organization that evolved during the above mentioned repressive years for the Islamic community. The emergence of the *cemaat* as a new form of Islamic self-organization is moreover linked to the urbanization process in Turkey, which weakened classical kin relations and former forms of organization such as the Islamic brotherhoods (Özdalga 2005, 435). The *cemaat* is a specific network where relations and discourse are strongly influenced by models put

forward by the founder, trying to form an alternative atmosphere of socialization within the secular Republican context.

The founder of the Nurcu-*cemaat*, Said Nursi (1877-1960), tried to find a way of Islamic teaching which was to combine the demands of the modern world with Islamic knowledge in order to make Islam compatible with modernity. Like Fethullah Gülen, he was convinced that the modern nation state had to be accepted and ought to be shaped through participation (Nursi 1996: 107). He promoted his ideas in his *cemaat*, the organizational form of which had some structural advantages in the early Turkish Republik: Unlike the Sufi brotherhoods, the *cemaat* has neither the require of formal membership nor a rite of initiation nor does it need any specific room to convene. Becoming a member is a process rather than a specific single act and the *cemaat* evolves wherever its members come together. The relations within the *cemaat* are based on a common discourse as well as the acceptance of and submission to the hierarchical order of the social relations within the *cemaat*. The more these are accepted and the more a person works for the cause of the *cemaat*, the stronger his inclusion into the *cemaat* (Mardin 1989: 23f.). Fethullah Gülen was part of the Nurcu *cemaat* and respected his elders – even if he had different ideas – until he emancipated himself from the Nurcus.¹

The Nurcus had a pragmatic approach towards the Turkish secular system and did what they could for the Islamic cause within the given social and political framework. In establishing their *dershanes* as places for regular students to stay, they created zones of religious socialization within the secular educational setting. Its semi-legal status in the Turkish history² favored the establishment of close and multiplex relations within the *cemaat*. The Nurcu-*cemaat* has a specific practice constituting discourse and network, which Gülen later modified for his own *cemaat*: The texts of Said Nursi (the Epistles of Light) are studied jointly in every local Nurcu-*dershane* and the authority over the interpretation of the text lies in the hands of the so called *ağabeyler* (the elder brothers). Their position combined the control over the relations in the *cemaat* with the control over its discourse, even though today the atmosphere principally may be more open towards discussions than in the past. The *cemaat* is a religious as well as a social network that fosters social relations among the members and promotes trust. Until today, these forms of organization are followed among the core religious followers of Fethullah Gülen and in his Turkish writings, the *cemaat* gains important meaning as a religious and organizational unity, as we will see later.

Within the 1960s, Gülen was able to gain more and more influence within the Nurcu-*cemaat* and always kept good relations with the so called "religious circles" to whom he was connected due to his profession as a state-employed preacher. Gülen's weak ties to a broader public by his preaches, audio tapes of his sermons, summer camps for the youth as well as lectures helped him to overcome to limits of the dense Nurcu-*cemaat*. Through his popular activities outside the discursive and organizational boundaries of the Nurcu-*cemaat*, Gülen knew how to mobilize resources. These activities served as a bridge connecting the *cemaat* with a broader public. This flexibility became a general attitude of his followers, within the *cemaat*, however,

¹ On this period, see Erdoğan 1997 (33-78). Though downplaying his role in the Nurcu-*cemaat* in the 1990s, in newer statements he again stresses his personal involvement within the Nurcu-*cemaat* by showing his relations to different important *ağabeyler* (Ünal 2001: 21, 41, 43, 60, 95, 102, 147, 174, 214ff.)

² Spuler 1973 gives a detailed description of the prosecution of Nursi and his followers.

this popularization of the Nurcu-approach was discussed controversially and not all parts of the *cemaat* were happy with his interpretation of *hizmet* (serving the cause of God) (Çelik 2000). They especially criticized that he did not admit to being Nurcu publicly in order not to shy away people. For Gülen himself, however, it was more important to teach a minimum of Nursi's message rather than telling everyone of his being a Nurcu. The network of the Nucu-*cemaat* soon became too dense and the discourse to fix for Gülen.

In the second half of the 1960s, Gülen supervised religious summer camps near Izmir, in which he taught a growing number of pupils the basic principles of Islam as well as classical Islamic knowledge and the writings of Nursi (Erdoğan 1997, 117-24). These activities were based on the *cemaat* and justified in a *cemaat*-specific way, but were designed to attract people from outside the *cemaat* as well. This dual way of organization became characteristic for the Gülen network.

The beginning of the Gülen-cemaat – stepping into the educational sector

In the 1970s, Gülen established his own *cemaat* employing different means such as large public sermons in front of thousands of listeners and public lectures, which were recorded and sold throughout the country. In his imminent environment, Gülen attracted people who supported his ideas with money and labor force. Specific community houses, so called "houses of light" (modified Nurcu-*derhanes*), were established utilizing private flats or houses. In this modification of the Nurcu-*derhanes*, Islamic education was and is taught on the basis of both Nursi's writings and Gülen's teaching, making use of the latter's tapes. These units make up Gülen's own *cemaat*, the nucleus of his educational network, which is however much larger than the *cemaat* itself (Agai 2004, 136-153; Yavuz 2003, 32ff.).

By the end of the 1970s, the teaching of ordinary subjects – especially science – in normal schools became a major concern for the movement. In a time of political turmoil, Gülen and his followers hoped to educate a generation equipped with modern knowledge as well as Islamic morals. In 1978, his movement established its first study center (*dersane*) to prepare pupils for the central entrance examination for university access. Thus, they specifically targeted universities, perceived as strongholds of the secular elite (Gülen 1997a, 106). In 1979, the movement began to publish the journal *Sizinti* [www.sizinti.com], promoting a synthesis of scientific knowledge and Islam. His message was now spread through a combination of public sermons, private and public lectures and summer camps, as well as on tapes and in printed form, exceeding the *cemaat* which is based on personal relations.

Educational activities in and far across the Turkish boarder

The military coup of 1980 favored the educational engagement of Fethullah Gülen and his followers. His nationalistic, pro-junta state, anti-leftist and anti-Iranian discourse was completely in line with the Turkish-Islamic synthesis promoted by the state after 1980 (Agai 2004, 224f.).

Legal changes enabled the building of state-controlled private schools and the financial support of public schools. While all other Islamic groups supported Imam-Hatip schools or Qur'anic courses, Gülen advised his followers to invest in private secular elite high schools. His hope was that the combination of Islamic morals

and secular knowledge would create a new Islamic-conscious Turkish elite, the "golden generation", that was to lead the country (Gülen 1998a, 30).

Gülen's ideas were welcomed and adopted by a new Islam-oriented middle class, which aimed at worldly success and Islamic morale (Yavuz 1999, 585). Motivated by his ideas, Gülen's followers became active in the educational field. In the 1980s and 90s, more than 150 private schools, as well as 150 *dersanes* offering additional courses were established (Agai 2004, 13ff.). By now, the movement has established over 250 educational institutions outside of Turkey in nearly all parts of the world. They are concentrated in the post-communist Balkan countries as well as the former Soviet Union. In most non-Western countries, the group's activities are fully supported by the Turkish state and included in its foreign policy. Working in the field of education has made Gülen's network the most influential Turkish-Islamic movement both in Turkey and abroad. Nearly all schools are based on a secular curriculum, and use English as language of instruction.

The organizational secret of success

In terms of formal organization, all facilities set up by Gülen's followers are independent units and promote themselves as such. Yet they are joined in an "educational network of virtue", as all the leading figures were socialized within the *cemaat*, participate in the *cemaat's* life and are connected to each other through the close interpersonal links of the *cemaat*. Field studies show that the leading personale from Turkey comes from the core of the network, the *cemaat*, as do the Turkish tutors. The *cemaat* ensures that qualified and motivated people move within the network to the places where they are needed. On the personal level, the *cemaat* may help to enhance social and spatial mobility, because membership is a resource which helps to unite the personal religious belief with the work in the secular sphere. In this sense, the *cemaat* profits of its members as the member does from the *cemaat*.

In the field of education, this part of the identity is however not stressed and teachers from outside the *cemaat* work at these schools as well. They may be non-Muslims and in many cases the pupils have never heard of Fethullah Gülen. In this sense, the schools may not be considered as Gülen-*cemaat* schools. But this assumption would deny the fact that without Gülen and the people of the *cemaat*, who view their work as a religious service, these schools would not exist. Without the tutors and teachers who learned through the socialization in the *cemaat* that education is the highest religious service, there would be no school in far remote places like Siberia. But as the schools do not stress their religious background, there are other reasons for registering at these schools: Some parents simply want the best possible education for their children without any regard to religious matters. Others are influenced by the idea of the *cemaat* and believe that this type of education will help their children to be successful in life and thereafter. What Gülen managed to do was to strengthen the influence of his *cemaat* through opening it and making it part of a larger educational network. This was only possible because of the Gülen discourse, which explains to the *cemaat* why it is necessary to leave its boundaries and to justify compromises and which is able to attract people from different backgrounds including them in the shared common interest of education.

The Gülen discourse

How can we understand why an Islamic movement is focusing on non-Islamic education? How do we explain the transformation of the dense Turkish-Islamic *cemaat* into a global movement? How did the innovative ideas of Fethullah Gülen, a person deeply rooted in a conservative Islamic environment, emerge?

In the light of his extensive writings, it becomes clear that Fethullah Gülen does not advocate a new theology. In this he distinguishes his approach from that of the state, particularly as the latter is propagated in the state universities. His understanding of Islam is comparable to conservative mainstream ideas. Yet Gülen produces new outcomes by introducing a crucial factor to his argument: social reality, which in his regard needs to be changed and which requires compromises that are Islamically justifiable for him. This approach gives him and his followers a flexibility that is the basis for the interaction within different contexts and that can motivate conservative Muslims for progressive actions. This, for example, means that gender relations may be redefined in practice if required by educational work, but remains an ideal inside the *cemaat* and is never touched on in theory.

It is Gülen's personal charisma as a conservative and pious Muslim which allows both him and the movement to sometimes be more liberal in practice than in theory. The movement's conservative image allows people who would never be reached by the state's reformist discourse to participate in new forms of Islamic engagement. The movement's practice, moreover, permits the integration of people into its activities, who would never have been reached by any other Islamic group.

Crucial for the understanding of the educational activities is Gülen's discourse on education, which consists of numerous elements that can only be roughly summarized in this paper. Some of these elements may not have education as such as a subject, but may be important for work in the field of education. One general feature of this discourse is an ambiguity of statements, as well as the "packaging" of ideas in different ways suited for the respective audience. Gülen shows a distinct readiness to adopt his message, theorized in writing, to the targeted audience. Gülen justifies this approach by claiming that for the promotion of Islam (*tebliğ*), it is necessary to make the proposition of the other the basis for one's arguments (see below).

Islam, the secular state and knowledge

Fethullah Gülen's basic ideas on Islam, the state and the place of secular education are rooted in the teachings of the Turkish-Islamic reformer Said Nursi (see Agai 2005b). Both see the modern secular state as a given figure. Direct confrontation can only harm one's own Islamic interests. They state clearly that God judges each individual personally for the life led. Any Islamic reform movement must therefore concentrate on guiding individuals along the right path: The state order must be accepted as framework for one's own dealings so that more important tasks on the individual level can be concentrated on. This attitude opens the possibility for shifting the interest of Islamic activities from the state level to the level of society. Religious guidance for Gülen is nothing fix, religious service, *hizmet*, has to be rendered according to time and space and ought to be in a state of permanent transformation in order to be successful. The schools can therefore

be understood to be a result of this interpretation, finding the best path for Islam in view of a specific historical context (Agai 2002, 29-32; 38ff.).

Second, with regard to Islam and the challenge of modernity, Gülen argues that man lives in an age of science and technology for which there is no alternative. The only options are to shape this age in a religious way or to forfeit the power to exert any influence at all. Fethullah Gülen elaborates on this with the remark: "The dissatisfied have never shaped history." He seeks a "middle way between modernity and the Muslim tradition" (Kuru 2003, 129f.), which can only be applied if modernity is shaped in an Islamic sense. This requires compromise. Gülen thus refutes a revolutionary approach. He counters the idea of retreating from secular society, prevalent in religious circles under the notion of *hijra*, with active engagement as a contribution to social reform. Both Nursi and Gülen believe that it is possible to separate science from materialism and positivism, concepts which they perceive as enemies of religion, through active participation in scientific discourse.

Third, regarding the relationship of science and religion, Nursi and Gülen emphasize that, if combined with an Islamic approach, science can serve as a means to rationally comprehend God by studying His creation (Agai 2002, 31). This is the only way to preserve religion in the modern age, which is shaped - as indicated above - by science and technology. Such a concept enriches the rational study of the world, taught in the secular school, with a religious significance. Furthermore, science forms the basis for economic prosperity, social harmony and national independence: all goals necessary for the survival of both the modern Turkish state and Islam. This social vision is important for both Nursi and Gülen and in their eyes justifies the reconsideration of Islamic education in view of current needs.

Fourth, on matters of theology and modernity, Gülen emphasizes that theological debate does not have priority in an era in which the very existence of religion itself is threatened. Theology should thus emphasize areas in which there is consensus and gloss over the more detailed issues. Conservative Islamic views on gender relations, pluralism and religious obligations ought therefore not to be challenged in theoretical debates. For Gülen - unlike other reformers - the headscarf still remains a religious obligation according to the Qur'an, but he advises that if a girl has to choose between the headscarf and access to higher education, the latter is the more important Islamic obligation. This enables him to maintain traditional Islamic arguments while being "Turkish secular" in practice. Gülen thus sidesteps theological debates by introducing socio-political reality as a key variable within the Islamic discourse, giving priority to participation in modern society. At the same time, he manages not to question established interpretations of Islam. He argues that it is more important to shape the secular educational system with Islamic teachers, rather than attempting to create an Islamic state, which might bring Turkish society to civil war and thus harm long-term Islamic interests.

After having discussed these foundations of Gülen's vision of Islam in the modern context, we shall come to his ideas of the organization of the Islamic cause, as it is through this way that his ideas become relevant in practice. Aiming at a large audience while at the same time still relying on the *cemaat* is one reason for the success for Fethullah Gülen.

The way to reconciling Turkish nationalism, Islam, religious pluralism and globalization

A crucial factor in Fethullah Gülen's ascendance in Turkey is his synthesis of Turkish nationalism and Islam. His adherents in other countries have adopted this approach, expanding the nationalist principle to suit local conditions and developing it into local forms of patriotism (Turam 2003). Gülen and his followers accept today's world of nation-states and open borders and do not propagate a utopian ummatist state. Even though he demanded the introduction of "visas" for foreign cultural influence in the 1980s and early 1990s (Gülen 1997b, 43, 178), Gülen now advocates open borders, democracy and dialogue. In doing so he hopes to regain validity for Islam, which had to be protected in the past. As Gülen sees no way of halting globalization, it must be harnessed as an opportunity (Yavuz 2003, 27ff.)

This task requires a secular background education rather than a theological one, as well as targeted use of modern media and economic means. All other main Islamic groups in Turkey agree with Gülen that there is no need to discuss Islamic obligations and unanimously criticize any material or ideological dependency on the West with its materialistic and positivistic orientation. For Gülen, however, the solution lies in education rather than politics, as this exerts influence on modern society. According to Gülen, national and cultural independence can only be preserved if Muslims succeed in shaping the modern world according to their own beliefs, rather than rejecting modernity and losing all control over its developments. In this regard, he urges his followers to accept the secular state and to gradually change it through their own actions, as their aims in society can only be achieved when given a place within a legal framework and when based on general desires. Gülen's schools are a good example of this, in that they do not stress the Islamic identity of the founders to begin with.

It would appear that in the long run the movement learned from missionary schools in Turkey, which it criticized heavily until the early 1990s, seeing them as reason for the false orientation of the Turkish-Western elite. Initially, the movement polemicized them as "blood cancer", "Trojan horses," and "parasites" that poisoned society from within and aided the Western conquest of Turkish society (Gülen 1995, 79, 240; 1998b, 14; 1997c, 60; Agai 2004, 217-220). Yet this initial cause for concern was gradually recognized as a possible solution. Indeed, by influencing the education of future elites - perceived as the root of the problem at hand as shown above -, Gülen's network could publicize and spread its own ideology, thus counteracting the impact of Western ideologies.

Gülen's earlier writings, based on conspiracy theories against Turkey, are full of anti-missionary and anti-Western passages (Gülen 1997a, 108; Gülen 1997b, 42b; Gülen 1995, 140). Today, he accepts religious plurality as a fact and stresses the common factors of all religions wherever possible. Gülen is obviously aware that his own movement can only succeed in an atmosphere of religious tolerance, as it has shared interests with other religious groups. This change of heart is due to direct contact with other cultures, caused by focusing on education. My field research clearly showed that the younger generation, well-traveled and educated in foreign languages as well secular subjects, see the world differently from some of the first generation in the *cemaat*, who did not travel far and did not know any Western languages. Contact with other cultures and religions has smoothed the nationalistic and sometimes very Turkish-Islamic rhetoric of Fethullah Gülen and many of his followers. Dialogue and tolerance are today key words in promoting the

movement's ideas. It is important to stress how much Fethullah Gülen has changed himself and how he has managed to change his followers. Today, many of his new followers might not even know his statements of the past.

Morality and Education before Politics and Theology

As mentioned above, Fethullah Gülen's sermons are not necessarily theologically innovative. He preaches classic Islamic maxims of conduct: *jihad*, the "exertion" on the path to God; *irşad*, religious and moral guidance; *tebliğ*, the dissemination of Islam and above all *hizmet*, which is the peaceful "service" in God's name. It is conspicuous how conventional his religious reasoning is when persuading listeners of what is right according to Islam, whilst simultaneously proposing entirely new ways of implementing these convictions within the given framework. This is the reason why the followers of Fethullah Gülen make themselves known not through political actions, but through their social activities. The reason is that it is society, not the state, which is in the focus of Fethullah Gülen's work. He argues that all Islamic maxims can be achieved within the given framework.

In Gülen's rhetoric, the schoolteacher becomes prophet, fulfilling the mentioned Islamic principles by imparting secular school knowledge. A key point for Gülen is that Islamic principles are unchangeable, but must be given concrete new forms in each era. By creating new Islamic fields of action on the basis of traditional Islamic terminology and conventional definitions, he gains power in conservative Islamic circles. At the same time, however, his actions have extremely innovative implications for the present day. Gülen circumvents critical contradictions between Islamic and secular law as well as Islamic concepts of state by not taking recourse to Turkish, Iranian, or Arab reformist scholars who challenge the Qur'anic text itself. Instead, he simply argues that questions of morality and education are more essential than political issues for today's Islam and mankind in general. Furthermore, he states that present-day Muslims are confronted with entirely different problems than the introduction of the Sharia: e.g. with the problem of good education. Gülen sidesteps critical questions, factually accepting the current context. On this basis, Ihsan Yilmaz calls his approach *ijtihad* (religious reasoning) and *tajdid* (religious reform) by conduct (Yilmaz 2003: 237) as opposed to reform by theory.

The transformation of Islamic terminology into a general discourse on morale is the basis for the movement's international involvement and makes it possible to justify its own Islamic work on the basis of a general morale.

Discursive and organizational strategies

The transformation of the highly Islamic *cemaat*-discourse into a general one is justified by Fethullah Gülen, as are the tactics concerning the approach to others. A look at the means of *tebliğ* (dissemination of Islam) regarding non-believers may illustrate this (Gülen 1998c: 230-239; Gülen 1998d: 236-240). I will summarize some important points relevant for our questions.

1. Personal relations are a precondition for successful work: You can only convince people of your ideas if you are near to them and you have to accept that some people do not want to be convinced.
2. Culture and religion of the other is the frame for one's own message. Some people may have their own ideas and concepts; in order to convince them the believer has to take these into consideration in order to create an atmosphere which allows the promotion of one's own ideas. Humiliating the pride and feelings of the other may turn all efforts into the opposite.
3. Getting to love the other is self-purification and a precondition for being convincing as a partner. To convince others of one's own ideas, one has to be convincing as a model person and represent one's ideal of morale through deeds and conduct. Gülen terms this approach *temsil*, i.e. indirect mission by representing Islam through one's own good example (Can 1995, 53f.).
4. All sayings and all work must be based on knowledge. This may concern religion or the daily work. This can help to avoid mistakes and ensure that a person is perceived as a model in all regards.
5. Religious service (*hizmet*) must be in a constant state of change as well as are content, form and means of it. Organization and administration must be conducted according to the changing general set-up.
7. To achieve the best results, one has to include others into one's activities. One has to leave the borders of the *cemaat* behind.

This does not mean that the *cemaat* should cease to exist. Although Fethullah Gülen and many parts of his network avoid the question of inner organization, in a discourse designed for the *cemaat*, the *cemaat* itself and its institutions are given the highest Islamic virtue.

According to Gülen, the *cemaat* is a unity of individuals, sharing the same feeling, thoughts, ideals, aims and ideas and adjusting their life along this line of unity (Gülen 1997d: 173; 1997e: 252). We have talked about the organizational impact of the *cemaat* before. For Gülen the *cemaat* is very important as it helps the individual to enhance the religious productivity (see next chapter) through joint work. It helps to profit from the good deeds, which are achieved with others and helps to avoid individual mistakes on the worldly path to God. Being very limited in one's possibilities of action as an individual, the *cemaat* helps its followers to overcome these limits and cope with the world outside, which tries to distract the believer from his belief (Gülen 1997e: 174; Gülen 1997f: 77.) For Gülen the *cemaat* creates synergy – in the *cemaat*, 1+1 becomes 11, 1+1+1 becomes 111 (Gülen 1995: 90). Like this it enhances the spiritual and worldly success of its members. The *cemaat* is constituted through joint reading in the so called *ders*, where the ideas of Fethullah Gülen are given meaning in different contexts. This may be done wherever the followers convene. The places where the followers meet regularly are called the "houses of light" (*ışık evleri*). They form the core of the entire network. As the *cemaat* carries a special religious meaning, the *houses of light* do as well.

Gülen calls the *ışık evleri* a tree, the seed of which was planted in the times of the Prophet Muhammad himself (1997e: 12). He sees their roots within the Qur'an (24/36f) itself (Gülen 1997g: 2.), thus giving the

Deleted:

cemaat's own form of organization the highest Islamic virtue. For Gülen the *ışık evleri* are the essence of Islamic education par excellence and are viewed to be the basis for the educational activities (Gülen 1998e: 193). This gives the teachers a high religious prestige.

Deleted:

Islamic work ethic

Organizational matters of the *cemaat* are included into a discourse of an ethic of good deeds, as it was indicated before. This opens up new fields of society for Islamic activities as well as elevating work and efficiency to maxims of life. In this context, work dedicated to reaching an Islamic goal becomes an act in the service of God even if only a portion of the earnings is donated to the cause. In this, Gülen's reasoning resembles the Weberian concept of "Protestant Ethics". Educational work and support of education in particular are endowed with the highest Islamic value (Özdalga 2000; Agai 2002, 39). Gülen propagates his *cemaat* as the most effective way to serve the religious cause (Agai 2005a), ensuring the highest religious reward.

The vision of how to best implement the Islamic maxims organizationally is driven by the attempt to avoid by all means frictional losses or inefficiency. Inefficiency thus takes on a reprehensible flavor within Islam. In addition, strategies are prescribed for how the believer can best fulfill his duties toward God. These strategies revolve around the efficient implementation of Islamic undertakings, concrete projects, and individual piety, as outlined above. The *cemaat* is the organization which can help to tie individual salvation to the concerns and goals of the group and of all of society. Gülen thus "Islamicizes" the organizational forms of his followers and their strategies. Both must be flexible, so that as many people as possible can contribute to realizing the goals of the *cemaat*. It is the Islamization of the whole work within the *cemaat* and the concept of successful religious service as a result of a rational planning process, which helps us to understand the Islamic dimension and the secret of success of the secular educational activities (Agai 2004, 230-46).

In the educational sphere, this means that local traditions and views must be taken into account in order to be accepted in the local field and that the schools must never become object of politics, which would (as being the conviction in Turkey, too) only harm the own mission on the long run (Agai 2005a). In dealing with others, Gülen and his followers see it as more important to convey at least some of their own values while keeping their own Islamic motivation in the background, than to forfeit influence beyond Islamic circles by being too strongly and openly Islamic.

Conclusion:

This paper has shown that the success of the Gülen movement in the field of education has multiple dimensions. The Gülen movement as we see it today has a history which is rooted in that of the Turkish Republic. Organizational structures and the content of discourse developed in close relationship with the political history of Turkey and were shaped by the events in world history after 1990. Fethullah Gülen has managed to lead his followers into the modern world but within their religious framework. This framework has a discursive and organizational side. He was able to lead the very closed *cemaat* to new horizons,

Deleted:

opening it and initiating new forms of Islamic engagement. Decisive for the success of Gülen's ideas is this combination of conventional and conservative arguments couched in new methods of implementation that allow them to reach new target groups and justify the activities of the movement. His concept of *tajdid* by conduct made it possible that the *cemaat* remained its structures and discourse at the core of the network while it expanded at the borders to become a worldwide movement.

Sources:

[Ağai, Bekim 2005a. "The Followers of Fethullah Gülen and their activities in Albania and Germany: The adaptation of a Turkish-Islamic network and its discourse to new contexts". *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*. forthcoming.](#)

--- 2005b. Fethullah Gülen: A Turkish-Islamic Reformer? www.quantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-575/_nr-2/l.html.

--- 2004. *Zwischen Diskurs und Netzwerk – Das Bildungsnetzwerk um Fethullah Gülen (geb. 1938). Die flexible Umsetzung modernen islamischen Gedankenguts*. Hamburg: EB-Verlag.

--- 2002. "The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education." *Critique* 11 (1), pp. 27-47.

Can, Eyüp 1996. *Fethullah Gülen ile Ufuk Turu*. 13th ed., Istanbul: A.D.

Coskun, Hasan; Meier, Max Georg 1999. *Religiöse Erziehung in der Türkei*. St. Augustin: KAS.

Çelik, Tolga 2000, "Bir Zamanlar Nur Talebesiydi". *NTV MAG*, 14, Oktober 2000, p. 59.

Erdoğan, Lâtif 1997. *Fethullah Hocaefendi. "Küçük Dünyam"*. 40. Aufl. Istanbul: AD.

Gülen, Fethullah M. 1998a. *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken*. Izmir: Nil/Zaman.

-- 1998b. *Çağ ve Nesil 1*. 15th ed., Izmir: Nil.

--- 1998c. *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler I*. Izmir: Nil.

--- 1998d. *İrşad Ekseni*. Istanbul: Zaman.

--- 1998e. *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler 4*. 10. Aufl. Izmir: Nil.

--- 1997a. *Fasıldan Fasıla 3*. 3rd ed. Izmir: Nil.

--- 1997b. *Yeşeren Düşünceler (Çağ ve Nesil 6)*. 2nd ed., Izmir: T.Ö.V.

-- 1997c. *Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan (Çağ ve Nesil 2)*. 11th ed., Izmir: T.Ö.V..

--- 1997d. *Fasıldan Fasıla 1*. 7. Aufl. Izmir: Nil.

--- 1997e. *Prizma 2*. Istanbul: Nil.

--- 1997f. *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler 3*. 8. Aufl. Izmir: T.Ö.V.

--- 1997g. *Günler Baharı Soluklarken. (Çağ ve Nesil 5)*. 1997. Izmir: T.Ö.V.

--- 1995. *Fasıldan Fasıla 2*. Izmir: Nil.

Jäschke, Gotthard 1951. "Der Islam in der neuen Türkei." *Welt des Islams*, 1 (1-2), pp. 3-174.

Kaplan, İsmail 1999. *Türkiye’de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi*. İstanbul: İletişim.

Kuru, Ahmet T. 2003. „Searching for a Middle Way between Modernity and Muslim Tradition.” In M. Hakan Yavuz; John L. Esposito eds., 2003, pp.115-130.

Mardin, Şerif 1989. *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey. The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany, 1989.

Nursi, [Bediuzzaman](#) Said [1996](#). *Risale- i Nur Külliyyatı 1*. İstanbul: [Nesil](#).

Deleted: ,

Deleted: , p. 107

Özdalga, Elizabeth 2005, 'Redeemer or Outsider? The Gülen Community in the Civilizing Process'. *The Muslim World*, 95 (3), 2005, 429-446.

--- 2002. "The Gülen Movement’s Islamic Ethic of Education." *Critique* 11 (1), pp. 27-47.

--- [2000](#). "[Worldly Asceticism in Islamic Casting: Fethullah Gülen's Inspired Piety and Activism.](#)" *Critique*, 17 (Fall), pp. 83-104.

--- 1999, 'Education in the Name of "Order and Progress". Reflections on the recent eight year obligatory school reform in Turkey'. *The Muslim World*, 89 (3-4), 1999, S. 414-438.

Deleted: Bediuzzaman

Spuler, C. "Nurculuk. Die Bewegung des "Bediuzzaman" Said Nursi in der modernen Türkei.". In: Otto Spies, *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islam 1*. Bonn, 1973, pp. 100-183.

Turam, Berna 2003. "National Loyalties and International Undertakings." In M. Hakan Yavuz; John L. Esposito eds., 2003, pp. 184-207.

Ünal, İsmail 2001, *Hocaefendi ile bir ay*. İstanbul, 2001

Yavuz, Hakan M.; Esposito, John L. eds., 2003. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State. The Gülen Movement*. Syracuse: Syracuse.

--- 2003. "The Gülen Movement. Turkish Puritans." In M. Hakan Yavuz; John L. Esposito eds., 2003, pp. 19-47.

--- 1999. "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?: The Nurcu Movement and Fethullah Gülen." *MEJ*, 53 (4), pp. 584-605.

Yilmaz, İhsan 2003. *İjtihad and Tajdid by Conduct*. In M. Hakan Yavuz; John L. Esposito eds., 2003, pp. 208-237.