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## JOURNAL

## Understanding the Gülen Movement

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Jeff Jager

#### Introduction

*Foreign Policy* and *Prospect* magazines named Fethullah Gülen the world's top living intellectual in a 2008 poll. In announcing the poll results, *Foreign Policy* described Gülen as “an inspirational leader to millions of followers around the world and persona non grata to many in his native Turkey, where some consider him a threat to the country's secular order.”<sup>[1]</sup> The works and statements of Gülen inspire these suspicions about him and the movement he represents. For example, in a rare interview granted to *Foreign Policy* related to the 2008 poll, Gülen explained that Islam lacked a fundamental political orientation, but that “[i]nstead, Islam establishes fundamental principles that orient a government's general character.”<sup>[2]</sup> Statements like these may be devoid of political orientation, but in Turkey they represent a threat to the traditions of secularism that underpin the modern Turkish state. Furthermore, Gülen's seven-month stint in prison in the early 1970s and his indictment in 2000 for activities against secularism lend support to such suspicions.<sup>[3]</sup>

What exactly do Gülen and the movement he inspires represent? A plethora of authors have produced a tome of literature attempting to provide a definitive answer to this basic research question. From this academic work, one can choose from several possible descriptions of the Gülen movement. It is either:

- a “global, faith-based social movement;”<sup>[4]</sup>
- a “market friendly religious education movement;”<sup>[5]</sup>
- a “neo-Sufi non-aggressive sect of a rival elite;”<sup>[6]</sup>
- a “shadowy Islamic sect led by the mysterious hocaefendi Fethullah Gülen” that “bills itself as a proponent of tolerance and dialogue but works towards opposite purposes;”<sup>[7]</sup>
- a “modern manifestation of Islam which builds bridges not only among religions but also between democracy and Islam;”<sup>[8]</sup>
- a “non-political movement not outside of politics;”<sup>[9]</sup>
- an “Islamic-based movement which has sought to combine a modern interpretation of Islam with Turkish nationalism and statism;”<sup>[10]</sup>

-a movement for “state-centric Turkish nationalism, the free market, and education;”[11]  
-“global collective action embedded in spiritual Sufi Islam;”[12]  
-a “market-friendly religious-education movement;”[13]  
-“one strong example of moderate Islam in the contemporary world;”[14]  
-a “thriving, moderate Turko-Islamic movement;”[15]  
-or, per the Government of Turkey, a terrorist organization known as “FETO” for “Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization.”

Detractors of Gülen have argued that he and his movement are a secret society or sect[16] acting as agents of the US government[17] involved in the “brainwashing of poor illiterate people”[18] and taking “Turkey backwards in its move towards modernization.”[19]

Bill Park explains the varied interpretations of the Gülen movement:

“[t]he more one perceives the movement as a more-or-less hierarchical, disciplined, and ‘conspirational’ organization that seeks to penetrate and undermine the Turkish state and society from within, the more one is inclined to adopt an essentially political interpretation of the movement’s activities. . . .On the other hand, although the movement’s lack of transparency and the weakness of its internal democracy and capacity for self-criticism are unsettling, this does not necessarily render it an extremist phenomenon. Neither Gülen or the movement that takes his name is overtly politicized, and in the absence of hard evidence to the contrary, the movement will seem benign to many—unless of course one is ideologically opposed to challenges to Turkey’s existing order, as many in Turkey are, or inherently uneasy about any faith-inspired movement.”[20]

Gülen’s own guidance to his followers likely limits final definition of the movement’s goals and objectives. For example, he explains that

“[i]f a state cannot protect its secrets from its enemies, it cannot develop. If an army reveals its strategies to its antagonists, it cannot attain victory. If key workers are won over by the competitors, their employers cannot succeed. . . .Explain what you must, but never give away all of your secrets. Those who freely publicize the secrets of their hearts drag themselves and their nation toward an inevitable downfall.”[21]

Based on this sort of suggestion, it is hard to detect or know the true motivations of Gülen and his followers, while the ideology underlining the related academic literature makes the interpretations explicated above quite suspect. Taking Gülen at his own word offers a characterization of the Gülen movement as “the movement of humans united around high human values.”[22]

This essay takes all of the above interpretations of Gülen and the Gülen movement into consideration, but attempts to remain above the ideological stances taken by Gülen supporters and detractors. Determining

whether Gülen represents a nefarious movement intent on overthrowing the secular regime in Turkey or whether it stands for transnational religious dialogue and peace is not the point of this essay. Rather, using the framework for understanding social movements explicated by Charles Tilly and Lesley Wood in *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, this essay argues that the Gülen movement—regardless of one’s ideological interpretation—represents a phenomenon similar to the type of social movement Tilly explicated. While Tilly’s conception of a social movement largely provides an analytical understanding of the followers of Fethullah Gülen as a social movement, the movement’s specific characteristics require modification, although not full scale re-articulation, of certain tenets of Tilly’s social movement theory.

The essay first provides a broad outline of Tilly’s theoretical approach to social movement theory, as well as a discussion of framing processes explicated by Robert Benford and David Snow in their *Annual Review of Sociology* article “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.” It then provides a brief overview of the Gülen movement before analyzing it against the theories and social movement theory concepts developed by Tilly and others.

### **Social Movement Theory**

Tilly defined a social movement as a “distinctive way of pursuing public politics”<sup>[23]</sup> and as a way for ordinary people to participate in politics.<sup>[24]</sup> For Tilly, social movements combined campaign and repertoire, along with what he termed WUNC (for displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment).<sup>[25]</sup> Social movements use “campaigns of collective claims on target authorities”<sup>[26]</sup> in an “array of claim-making performances”<sup>[27]</sup> (or repertoire) and “public representations of the cause’s”<sup>[28]</sup> WUNC to pursue their aims. Classic social movement claim-making performances include such things as public meetings and demonstrations.<sup>[29]</sup> Tilly expands WUNC by explaining that social movements demonstrate worthiness through legitimizing attributes such as sober demeanor and neat clothing, unity through standardization, numbers through filling the streets, and commitment through resistance to oppression and widespread participation, among other examples.<sup>[30]</sup> He argues that social movements assert popular sovereignty, address varying claims internally, and are easily adoptable by modeling, communication, and collaboration.<sup>[31]</sup> In Tilly’s understanding, social movements are episodic, meaning that they emerge, manifest themselves, and fade away. Tilly acknowledges the “shifting political conditions that made social movements possible.”<sup>[32]</sup> Other social movement analysts have termed these changes political opportunity<sup>[33]</sup> or opportunity spaces,<sup>[34]</sup> a concept that plays a critical role in understanding the rise of the Gülen movement in Turkey as a function of the more liberal atmosphere that emerged following the end of the military junta in 1983.

Robert Benford and David Snow added nuance to the understanding of social movements with their explanation of the utility of framing processes. They describe how framing provides an analytical structure that helps “to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action,”<sup>[35]</sup> identify key framing tasks and variable framing features, and assert that framing occurs against contextual constraints and facilitation in discursive, strategic, and contested framing processes. Benford and Snow define framing as “action oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization.”<sup>[36]</sup> They assert that “core framing tasks”<sup>[37]</sup> and the “interactive, discursive processes”<sup>[38]</sup> that shape these tasks comprise collective action frames. They identify three core framing tasks (diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing)<sup>[39]</sup> used by social movements to address a variety of conditions.

Diagnostic framing emerges from the fact that “social movements seek to remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue”<sup>[40]</sup> and thus require both the identification of the problem and its causes.<sup>[41]</sup> Benford and Snow describe prognostic framing as “the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem”<sup>[42]</sup> that “addresses the . . . question of what is to be done”<sup>[43]</sup> about the issue described by

diagnostic framing. This second major framing task also covers consensus building and mobilization and thus expands to include two other important factors: the degree of resonance and cultural opportunity and constraints. Benford and Snow argue that resonance represents “the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings”[44] and plays a role in the development of the prognostic frame, while cultural opportunity and constraints, based on the “extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives, and the like,”[45] shape the possible and plausible forms available for the prognostic frame. For Benford and Snow, “the cultural context in which movement activity is embedded”[46] shapes social movement frames and framing activity. The third framing task, motivational framing, establishes “rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive”[47] that compels movement followers and members to initiate and sustain participation.[48] Benford and Snow conceptualize framing processes in a way that helps observers of social movements understand the importance behind events and ideology. In doing so, they identify these three important framing tasks that encompass problem identification, solution development, and participant motivation in the study of social movements.

Tilly provides a recommendation for determining if his conception of a social movement explains a given event or phenomenon. He asks three questions to determine if a movement is a social movement. Does the movement look like a social movement? Does the movement combine WUNC performances like a social movement? Does the movement through its campaign, performance, and WUNC offer wide availability for different issues, claimants, and objects of claims?[49] In his conclusion, Tilly argues that “[t]he social movement, as an invented institution, could disappear or mutate into some quite different form of politics.”[50] The following sections use Tilly’s conception of a social movement in conjunction with Benford and Snow’s discussion on framing to determine how closely the Gülen movement conforms to Tilly’s style of social movement or whether it provides evidence supporting his argument that the social movement could disappear or transform into something completely different.

### **In Brief: Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement**

Fethullah Gülen was born in Erzurum in eastern Turkish Anatolia on April 27, 1941 into a family of devout Muslim belief and scholarship. Allegedly mastering the Koran at age 5, Gülen developed his religious views under the mentorship of his father and local imams and by the age of 15 had begun delivering religious lectures in his home village. In 1959, Gülen was appointed as an imam in Edirne by the Turkish state, a post he held for almost three years. Moving to Izmir in 1966, Gülen continued his religious studies and preaching, and established his first dormitories there in 1969. Arrested in 1971 for his religious activities, Gülen spent seven months in prison, after which he escalated his religious outreach activities.[51] Over the next twenty years, Gülen established himself as the most prestigious and powerful successor to the traditions of Said Nursi, gaining audiences with presidents, prime ministers, and world religious leaders throughout the 1990s.[52] In 1999, Gülen traveled to the United States for medical treatment, shortly after which the Ankara District Attorney issued a warrant for his arrest for alleged actions against secularism.[53] Gülen remained in the United States following these developments and continued his religious and preaching activities. Gülen was finally acquitted of these charges in 2008, and was issued a US permanent resident card in the same year.[54]

Gülen’s first stated objective was to “raise a generation of young people combining intellectual enlightenment with pure spirituality, wisdom, and activism”[55] and his first students, from Izmir in the 1960s and 1970s, “became the vanguard of a revived generation willing to serve his ideals.”[56] Gülen focused on education of young people, believing that

“Until we help our young people through education, they are captives of their environment. They wander about aimlessly, moved by intense passions and far away from knowledge and reason. They can become truly valiant young representatives of the national thought and feeling only if their education integrates them with their past and prepares them intelligently for their future.”[57]

Educating the youth requires financial support, which Gülen derives from integration of free market capitalism in the generation of economic wealth, which is then used to finance the education system aimed at empowering Muslims in Turkey.[58]

The movement that formed around Gülen’s ideas—known variously as the Gülen movement, as Gülenists, as *Fethullahcilar* (Turkish, literally those who work as Fethullah), and *hizmet* (Turkish, meaning service)—exists as an informal, decentralized association that views Gülen as the example[59] but also consists of a network of “loyalty and trust”[60] led by the *büyük abiler* (the Great Elders) who control the movement’s central finance and operations.[61] The functional elements of the Gülen movement, known as *cemaatlar* (communities), consist of “grassroots movements of practicing faithful Turkish people who did not want to abandon their faith tradition while embracing the modern age,”[62] as well as a broad swath of the Turkish population, including small and large businesses, community groups, media conglomerates, and the like. Noted scholar of Turkish affairs Hakan Yavuz suggests the movement consists of

“loose networks under the guidance and leadership of Fethullah Gülen. . . . These networks are not necessarily organized in hierarchical terms. But we see three circles. The first is the core circle around Gülen. The second circle consists of those who give their time and labour in order to achieve the collective goals of the movement. The third circle consists of those who are sympathizers: sometimes they support the movement by writing an article in the media, or they give money, or they support the movement in other ways....”[63]

The decentralized, associational nature of the movement makes estimating total numbers difficult, but recent scholarship suggests that some ten to fifteen percent[64] of the Turkish population of 78.8 million [65] plus an additional eight to ten million people outside of Turkey are active in one way or another in the Gülen movement.[66] “The decentralized authority and administrative structure promotes member involvement and a sense of responsibility”[67] on the part of the 16 to 22 million people involved globally in Gülen-inspired schools, universities, hospitals, aid groups, dormitories, and the like.

### **Political Opportunity**

The modern Republic of Turkey, founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his associates in 1923 after victory in the Turkish War of Independence, rejected centuries-old Ottoman traditions that united religious and political authority in the Sultan-Caliph. Atatürk closed down dervish lodges, Westernized dress codes to remove religious attire from public view, and abolished both the Sultanate and the Caliphate in installing a Western-inspired secular system of government. Instead of abolishing religion outright, the nascent Turkish Republic created a government ministry, the *Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı* (The Ministry of Religious Affairs) through which to control religious education and the practice of religion throughout the country. Atatürk controlled politics until his death in 1938 and his autocratic style of one-man rule lasted until his successor, İsmet İnönü, allowed multi-party democratic elections in 1950. This first step towards

liberal, democratic government opened the way for a re-emergence of opposition parties, one of which won the election. In the decades that followed, the traditions of Kemalism re-asserted themselves through military coups (in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997, with a failed attempt in 2007) against ruling parties—either leftist or Islamist—that purportedly threatened the secular foundations of the Republic of Turkey or challenged general economic and political stability.

The 1980 coup figures prominently in the development of the Gülen movement. The military junta, led by General Kenan Evran, ruled Turkey from 1980 to 1983, at which point in line with Turkish military coup traditions, it transferred power back to a civilian government. Although General Evran retired from the military and assumed the Presidency of Turkey, a liberal-minded politician named Turgut Özal became prime minister. In the decade that followed, first as prime minister and then as president from 1989 until his death in 1993, Özal oversaw extraordinary economic and political liberalization in Turkey. Concomitant with these political and economic developments, important social changes facilitated by the more liberal environment occurred in Turkey.[68] Perhaps paradoxically given the six decades of secular tradition in Turkey, “it seems clear that Turkey’s domestic policies in the 1980s, a time of civil conflict and economic liberalization, encouraged social conservatism and the rise of political Islam.”[69] In this atmosphere, created by the privatization of the economy, education, and telecommunications, “well-organized Muslim groups were empowered to carve new economic and social spaces for themselves.”[70]

Similar changes in religious circles also occurred in the decades preceding the liberal economic and political changes made by Özal in the 1980s. Said Nursi, the prominent religious scholar in Turkey in the first half of the twentieth century in Turkey, led a movement of two to six million Turks[71] interested in raising Muslim consciousness, implementing faith in everyday life, and restoring the Sharia.[72] Nursi died in 1960, and his movement fractured along “ethnic, class, educational, generational, and regional lines.”[73] In the two decades that followed his death, Gülen, a dedicated Nursi follower,[74] emerged as the most prestigious and powerful Nursi protégé.

Nursi’s death provided the opportunity space necessary for Gülen to rise as an influential religious figure. Combined with the “deterioration of Kemalism”[75] represented by Turgut Özal’s liberal economic and political policies of the 1980s, the religious opening created by Nursi’s death and the fracturing of his movement facilitated the emergence of the Gülen movement, which provided an “alternate source of ultimate authority and values in the absence of a hegemonic state ideology”[76] and religious leadership. These developments conform closely to the Tilly-ian explication of the necessity for the existence of political opportunity or political space for social movement emergence. In short, the changing religious, economic, and political environment made the Gülen movement possible.

### **Gülen and Diagnostic Framing**

Fethullah Gülen proffers a diagnostic frame that identifies Turkey’s secular, ideological approach to Islam as a private versus a public religion as the major problematic issue facing the country. As noted above, Atatürk and “Turkey’s founding elite implemented practices to remove religion from the public realm and reduce it to a matter of faith and practice of the individual.”[77] Along with ending the Caliphate, the nascent Turkish state abolished Sufi orders and closed down madrassas[78] in decreasing the public role of Islam in society. Because Gülen believes that politics “seeks the people’s satisfaction and God’s approval,”[79] he sees the separation of politics and religion[80] as a mistake and understands politics not as “political parties, propaganda, elections, and the struggle for power”[81] but rather the glorification of God. Thus, the diagnostic framing of the Gülen movement essentially developed as a reaction to “republican Turkey’s official ideological approach to Islam.”[82]

## Campaigns, Repertoire, and Prognostic Framing

The Gülen movement represents “campaigns of collective claims on target authorities.”<sup>[83]</sup> Clearly articulated against Turkey’s secular elite,<sup>[84]</sup> Gülen argues that

“[t]he vices observed in today’s generation, the incompetence of some administrators, and other social problems are the direct result of the conditions prevailing thirty years ago, and of that time’s ruling elite. Likewise, those entrusted with educating today’s young people are responsible for the vices and virtues that will appear thirty years from now.”<sup>[85]</sup>

He suggests that the secular elites responsible for the shape of the Turkish state and society have followed mistaken paths, which justifies widespread opposition. As Gülen explains, “[o]pposing the majority is a mistake. This is true if the majority represents the truth, otherwise consent is a mistake. It is alright to oppose an engineer in matters of medicine, just as it is alright not to consult with a doctor on a construction project.”<sup>[86]</sup> In Tilly’s terms, the secular elite of Turkey represent the target authorities of the Gülen movement. Gülen holds both the founders of the Republic of Turkey and their contemporary comrades who promote the privatization of Islam in this same light, explaining that

“[a]t the beginning of this century, some short-sighted materialists made science into an idol and sacrificed everything to it, while the most famous scientist of the century was criticizing this tendency in a pleasant way by saying: “Science without religion is blind; religion without science is lame.” What would they have said if they saw those of today who are both blind and lame?”<sup>[87]</sup>

The Gülen movement makes several collective claims on these target authorities. First and foremost, Gülen seeks to restore Islam’s primary place in society.<sup>[88]</sup> In doing so, he intends to “free Islam from the confines of the mosque and the private domain of individuals and to bring it to the public arena,”<sup>[89]</sup> where the Kemalist equation of modernization with Westernization can be rejected.<sup>[90]</sup> Detractors of the Gülen movement interpret these claims as Gülen’s attempts to “govern every aspect of life in the country”<sup>[91]</sup> and to “influence and become government.”<sup>[92]</sup> The statements and writings of Gülen lend credence to this interpretation. For example, Gülen writes that “[p]olitics is the art of managing a nation’s affairs in ways that please God and people. As long as government protects people from evil and defends them from oppression, it can be considered successful in politics and full of promise. If a government does not do so, it can no longer remain in power, leaving behind turmoil amidst the sounds of cursing.”<sup>[93]</sup> Gülen sees the Kemalist traditions in Turkey as mistaken and has urged his followers to “wait for the time when you are complete and the conditions are ripe, until we can shoulder the entire world and carry it. . . . You must wait until such time as you have gotten all the state power, until you have brought to your side all the power of the constitutional institutions in Turkey”<sup>[94]</sup> before moving to complete their ultimate goal. Less nefarious interpretations of the Gülen movement, also supported by Gülen’s statements and writings, simply suggest that Gülen wishes to “shape the future of Turkey”<sup>[95]</sup> towards a more Islamic conception, while emphasizing the “Turkish traditions of Islamic practice”<sup>[96]</sup> and maintaining its nationalistic and market focus. In this view, the Gülen movement seeks the “Islamization of Turkish identity”<sup>[97]</sup> at home and the “Turcification of Islam abroad”<sup>[98]</sup> that would yield “an Islamic world shaped by enlightened Turkish culture.”<sup>[99]</sup> Both of these interpretations—the one suggesting the Gülen movement intends to become the government of Turkey, the other offering a less Islamist goal—support Gülen’s primary claim

of restoring Islam to its proper place in society, which also represents his prognostic frame.

## Repertoire

Tilly argued that social movement repertoire included phenomena such as “creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering,”<sup>[100]</sup> among others. The Gülen repertoire aims to make religion public via education, which in turn allows adherents to become involved in capitalistic economics and government, which in turn yields the power base necessary to further the initial goal. The repertoire of the Gülen movement largely conforms to Tilly type activities, although in its “array of claim-making performances,”<sup>[101]</sup> it expands to include activism through education, politics, service projects, and economic activity as a function of its *cemaat*-based, local circle organizational infrastructure.

The Gülen’s sermons and texts—and the dissemination thereof—comprise the primary repertoire of the Gülen movement. As a young man, Gülen traveled across Anatolia giving sermons and lectures in mosques, town meetings, and coffee houses.<sup>[102]</sup> Later, as a state appointed imam in Edirne and Izmir, he continued such message-spreading activity. These public lectures, recorded and sold by his followers,<sup>[103]</sup> found wide dissemination in Turkey. A prolific writer throughout his career, Gülen has published more than sixty books<sup>[104]</sup> which have been sold widely in Turkey and abroad in translation. In these sermons and texts, Gülen bases his interpretation on the Koran and hadith as authoritative and relevant in the contemporary era,<sup>[105]</sup> arguing that the Koran represents perfection, justice, freedom, and equality<sup>[106]</sup> and that the Prophet Mohammed represents the example of equality, virtue, piety, and morality.<sup>[107]</sup>

While Gülen relies on standard or traditional principles of Islamic scholarship in expressing his world view, he deviates from the traditional, structured language of Islam by using a secular, vernacular language<sup>[108]</sup> easily understandable by the masses. Beyond the original sermons and texts, the message of the Gülen movement permeates the public sphere through media the movement controls. Prior to the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, in addition to publishing houses and printing presses,<sup>[109]</sup> adherents to the Gülen movement control major television stations, radio stations, and newspapers, such as the Turkish daily newspaper *Zaman* and the television station *Samanyolu*;<sup>[110]</sup> most of these institutions and companies were closed by the Turkish Government in the months leading up to the coup attempt or immediately afterward. Furthermore, the Gülen movement incorporates new media effectively into its message dissemination apparatus, with a plethora of platforms on Facebook, Twitter, and Gülen webpages.<sup>[111]</sup> For example, on the webpage “Fethullah Gülen: Understanding and Respect,” one can view 2,662 articles and 268 videos by or about Gülen.<sup>[112]</sup>

Gülen’s sermons and texts inspire activism on the part of his adherents, which represents the second major repertoire of the Gülen movement. This activism-as-repertoire manifests itself in many forms, including education, politics, service projects, and economic activities. In significant ways, activism in these spheres represents the Gülen movement’s *dawah*<sup>[113]</sup> (call or summons). Gülen-inspired activism is pietistic in nature<sup>[114]</sup> and represents a “theology of action that seeks to re-enchant the world with meaning through Islamic service.”<sup>[115]</sup> The Gülen movement views social activity as the means through which to accomplish its basic goals.<sup>[116]</sup>

Gülenist activism is perhaps most visible in the realm of education. With 600 high schools, 7 universities, 26,500 students, and 6,000 teachers abroad and more than 150 high schools and one university in Turkey<sup>[117]</sup> (almost all of the Turkey-based institutions were closed by the Government of Turkey following the 2016 coup attempt), education services address Gülen’s stated objective of creating an inspired generation to lead the future of Turkey. While the schools take into account local cultures and adhere to a secular, modern curriculum, their goal according to Gülen “is to communicate what we receive from You to those



whose hearts are sick and whose minds are barren,”[\[118\]](#) meaning the traditions of Turkish Islam. Gülen references this religious goal numerous times in his work. For example, he states that “[a]lthough education is undeniably important for a country’s development, the expected results will never be achieved if the young people are not educated according to the country’s traditional values”[\[119\]](#) and

“[i]mproving a community is possible only by elevating the young generations to the rank of humanity, not by obliterating the bad ones. Unless a seed composed of religion, tradition, and historical consciousness is germinated throughout the country, new evil elements will appear and grow in the place of each eradicated bad one.”[\[120\]](#)

A close reading of Gülen’s works reveals education as the primary field in which the Gülen movement would manifest itself, given the import Gülen gives to youth enrichment. For example, he explains that “[a] nation’s durability depends on the education of young generations, upon their being awakened to national spirit and consciousness and spiritually perfected. If nations cannot raise perfect generations to whom they can entrust their future, their future is dark indeed.”[\[121\]](#)

This focus on youth education allows the Gülen movement to create the “modern, educated Muslim elite equipped with skills necessary to restore Islam’s place in society.”[\[122\]](#) Arguing that “[i]gnorance is like a veil drawn over the face of things. The unfortunate ones who cannot remove this veil from the face of things, will never be able to penetrate into the truths of creation. The greatest ignorance is unawareness of God and if it is combined with arrogance, it becomes a kind of insanity impossible to cure,”[\[123\]](#) Gülen chastises the traditions of the secular elite, leading some observers to argue that these educational efforts equate to an “education jihad”[\[124\]](#) intended to “create the ruling classes of the future Islamist Turkish state.”[\[125\]](#) Sound logic backs this argument, as educating generations of youth in Gülenists beliefs contributes to those adhering to the Gülen movement’s ideals becoming involved in governance.[\[126\]](#) Thus, the Gülen movement provides scholarships, dormitories, and university preparatory courses to help “upwardly mobile youth obtain education and values necessary to Islamize their secular environments.”[\[127\]](#) At the same time, this focus on education has created a generation of educated Gülen followers active in Turkey’s capitalistic economy and motivated to donate large sums back to the cause.[\[128\]](#)

The Gülen movement demonstrates its strength by undertaking economic activities, with yearly holdings estimated to exceed \$25 billion.[\[129\]](#) Movement participants donate what their income allows, with the capitalist elite donating millions of dollars each per year and blue-collar adherents pooling their meager resources to provide small scholarships or service projects.[\[130\]](#) Beyond individual contributions, prior to the coup attempt in 2016, the Gülen movement controlled a majority of the corporations and holding groups in Turkey, including Asya Finance, one of the largest banks. While Fethullah Gülen may not directly control the assets of such entities, they all share his goals and world views.[\[131\]](#)

As with economics, the Gülen movement is reported to be active in the political sphere in Turkey. Although it “presents itself as a civil society movement and not as an evangelical or political force,”[\[132\]](#) does not advocate for the formation of an Islamic state,[\[133\]](#) and in the past has taken apolitical stances [\[134\]](#) or aligned with the state to avoid repression,[\[135\]](#) at a minimum a temporal correlation exists between the rise of the current ruling party in Turkey and the rise of the Gülen movement.[\[136\]](#) Prior to a break in relations in 2013, links existed between the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Justice and Development Party)[\[137\]](#) that suggested that the AKP represented a social movement organization for the Gülen movement. For example, former AKP member, former Turkish prime minister, and former President Abdullah Gül is a known Gülen sympathizer[\[138\]](#) and current President Erdoğan promotes

multiple policy platforms clearly inspired by Gülen,[139] including a reorientation of the judiciary towards a position more accepting of Islamist/Islamic principles.[140] Gülen links to the security forces, specifically the national police controlled by the Ministry of Interior, supports these claims.[141] Prior to the 2013 split between the AKP and the Gülen movement, the argument existed that the national police represented the military wing of the AKP,[142] in a similar fashion as the secret apparatus of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example. Similarly, through labeling the AKP a social movement organization for the Gülen movement, the understanding that the national police functioned as the military wing of the Gülen movement existed. In spite of the dearth of definitive evidence establishing the AKP as *the* political social movement organization of the Gülen movement,[143] prior to the 2013 split between Erdoğan and Gülen, the suspicion remained daunting, and Gülen's statements and rhetoric supported the movement's involvement in politics. Based on the Turkish Government's accusation that Gülen led the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, even if these suggested links between the AKP and Gülen movement existed previously, they no longer do.

Service projects represent the fourth manifestation of Gülenist activism. Beyond activity in the education, economic, and political sectors, participants in the Gülen movement create businesses, build schools, and publish journals, all in striving to accumulate religious and secular knowledge.[144] Prominent among these activities stands the creation of *i?ik evleri* (houses of light) which hosts meetings of Gülenists, provide dormitory housing, or through various methods approach youth enrichment.[145] Furthermore, the movement has established six hospitals and an international aid agency.[146] The transnational nature of these service projects adds to their meaning as performances of contention in which the movement seeks to reshape Islam into a more contemporary, pluralistic, and cosmopolitan version.[147]

The repertoire discussed above—Gülen's texts and sermons and activism in the educational, political, economic, and service project sectors—occurs inside the *cemaatlar* at the center of the localized organizational movement structure. *Cemaatlar*, small groups of like-minded individuals from similar socio-economic backgrounds, provide the foundation of the movement.[148] At the same time, as a sort of a special purpose organization, the *cemaatlar* also represent a part of the Gülen repertoire in Tilly-ian terms. The "local circles"[149] of *cemaatlar* perform the repertoire of the Gülen movement. In these terms, then, the Gülen movement conforms to the types of performances that Tilly anticipates.

### **Resonance and Cultural Opportunity**

Benford and Snow argue that resonance—the acceptability by the populace of a message—plays an important role in the development of the prognostic frame. Simply stated, Gülen's beliefs resonated in Turkey because of the fact that the "majority of Turks, secular included, are traditional and observant Muslims many of whom define themselves primarily as "Muslims first.""[150] Based on Turkish religious traditions and focused on the Koran and the hadith as legitimating sources,[151] Gülen's diagnostic and prognostic frames that elevated Islam above secular concerns resonated with the Turkish populace, which represents the highest per capita mosques and mosque attendance in the world.[152] Turkey was thus "a sufficiently religious country"[153] for the acceptance of Gülen's ideology. Furthermore, Gülen adheres to traditions of Turkish nationalism, a strong force in the modern Republic, as well as individuality and rationalism, which resonate strongly with both the Anatolian and European and secular and religious masses.[154]

Benford and Snow's concept of cultural opportunity helps explain the development and strength of the Gülen movement in Turkey and abroad. Defined as the "extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives, and the like,"[155] cultural opportunity shapes the possible and plausible forms of the prognostic frame. In this case, cultural forms present in Turkey facilitated the emergence and growth of the Gülen movement. Gülen used these existing structures,[156] including the

fractured Nursi movement, Islamist economic networks, and the Turkish culture of giving, to expand his influence.

Gülen's religious and political beliefs stem from his experience growing up in eastern Anatolia and from Said Nursi, who Gülen began to follow early in his career as a religious figure. Both of these factors provided cultural nuance that simplifies adherence to the Gülen movement for large swathes of the Turkish populace. Gülen's ideology was "culled largely from the religious heritage of the Turkish steppe, where he was educated and trained as a preacher, and from where many of his followers have emerged."<sup>[157]</sup> In addition to this regional cultural aspect, Gülen's beliefs emerged from the teachings of Said Nursi and the Nakşibendi Sufis.<sup>[158]</sup> Nursi, initially a political Islamist, sought to transform society through taking control of the government but later realized the necessity for first developing a cadre of educated, intellectually capable followers to implement his goal of bring religion back to the public space.<sup>[159]</sup> One can easily discern Nursi's beliefs and thoughts in Gülen's ideology. Not limited to his ideological development, Gülen also drew on Nursi's large followership, which reached up to 6 million followers at his death in 1960.<sup>[160]</sup> After Nursi's death, his movement fractured along various lines of division. Gülen's adaptation of Nursi's message and ideology proved critical in motivating former Nursi followers to join the Gülenists.<sup>[161]</sup>

In addition to cooption of the Nursi network for his movement, Gülen also relied on economic networks established by various other Islamic movements in Turkey from 1930 to 1980. These Islamic movements focused on developing market relations that promoted strategies to improve their adherents' economic welfare,<sup>[162]</sup> which positioned them well for the economic liberalization pursued after 1983 by Turgut Özal. By not alienating Islamists from their base of economic power and promoting capitalist principles as a core tenant of pious activism, Gülen appealed to the sources of economic strength needed to grow and sustain his movement.

Finally, the Turkish culture of giving facilitated the development of Gülen's movement of economic activism. As Helen Ebaugh argues, "belief in and practice of virtues like self-sacrifice, charity, and philanthropy are deeply rooted in Turkish-Islamic culture."<sup>[163]</sup> Gülen tapped into "philanthropic urges already present in Turkey"<sup>[164]</sup> in developing the service project-based activism common among the Gülenist *cemaatlar*. As Ebaugh notes, evidence for this Turkish philanthropic culture exists in the lexicon of words related to charitable giving in the Turkish language. For example, *misafirperverlik* (hospitality), *sadaka* (Islamic alms), *zekat* (obligatory alms), and *vakıf* (charitable institution) connote such tendencies and exist as matters of pride for most Turks.<sup>[165]</sup> Building on these tendencies, Gülen "simply provided ways in which they [his followers] could express the generosity and giving that are embedded in their culture and religion."<sup>[166]</sup>

## WUNC

Tilly asserts that a social movement uses public representations to demonstrate its worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. WUNC exists very clearly in the case of the Gülen movement. The Gülen movement demonstrates worthiness, which Tilly defines as the legitimizing attributes of a social movement, in several ways. Chief among these is the broad participation of all socio-economic sectors of the Turkish populace, organized into local circles in which the elites of each profession, location, or sector participate in the movement.<sup>[167]</sup> The widespread participation of the Turkish elite writ-large, who make very public displays of their multi-million dollar contributions, provides further legitimization.<sup>[168]</sup> The transnational nature of the Gülen movement also contributes to the movement's worthiness, as it promotes a universal moderate message of Islam<sup>[169]</sup> while successfully advancing an interfaith dialogue at the grassroots, intellectual, and elite level.<sup>[170]</sup>

The Gülen movement demonstrates unity through the nature of its service project-based activism and standardization of the study of Islamic texts and the works of Gülen. As Ebaugh explains,

“the Gülen movement is a loosely organized network of local organizations whose supporters interact through meeting in local circles. Within these circles, supporters read and discuss ideas gleaned from the Qur’an and Islamic scholars, especially Fethullah Gülen. In addition, the local group supports one another both emotionally and by material assistance when necessary. The group also selects Gülen-inspired projects such as schools, preparatory courses, dormitories, hospitals, and relief efforts which it decides to support through voluntary work and financial contributions. Involvement in the local circles, along with financial donations, generates the type of commitment to the movement that has resulted in its spread to over 100 countries on five continents.”[171]

Thus, unity at the *cemaatlar* level shows the broad unity of purpose and effort of the various movement groups and movement organizations. In this case, the loose organizational hierarchy contributes to overall movement unity.

Tilly considers a demonstration of numbers incredible important, with the street march or rally showing the classic form of numbers demonstration. Again, the *cemaatlar* provide the primary public evidence of the numerical strength of the Gülen movement, although the loose movement hierarchy precludes a definitive statement of the actual number of Gülenists. Estimates range from 400,000 in Turkey[172] to almost 20 million globally.[173] Gülen being chosen as the most influential living intellectual by *Foreign Policy* in 2008, based on open voting, suggests a robust followership, although only 500,000 total votes were cast in the balloting and the Gülenists mounted a campaign to win the voting.[174] Other quantifiable numbers might suggest lower numbers, with Gülen having just 310,647 on Facebook[175] and less than 4,500 total followers on Twitter.[176] Given the text-based nature of the Gülen movement, however, it is perhaps not surprising that new media plays a lesser role in the movement. Indicating this trend, the number of article hits—almost 15 million—on Gülen’s webpage[177] suggests a larger following. Regardless of the actual number, Gülen followers comprise a substantial and significant group in Turkey and abroad. Their activism-as-performance serves to meet Tilly’s WUNC numbers consideration.

Related to numbers, Benford and Snow’s conception of motivational framing plays a role in recruiting new members and sustaining the numerical strength of the movement. As “rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action,”[178] motivational framing establishes a movement’s appeal. Gülen provides motivational framing by explaining that “ideal people are people of service”[179] who wish “to serve humanity and gain God’s pleasure in doing so.”[180] This rhetoric creates the expectation that pious activists can be “confident of the reward of salvation,”[181] to which statements like “[a]fter giving your heart to these charitable activities, God never leaves you in trouble”[182] lend credence. Further motivation for joining the movement comes from the benefits related to the local circles,[183] which provide personal, faith, and business networks among a community of like-minded individuals “dedicated to rigorous study and practice of essential Islamic beliefs based on mutual interests,”[184] both spiritual and material. Thus, Gülen’s followers perceive benefit through activism and adherence to the ideals of the movement, which encourages participation.

Two factors highlight the demonstration of commitment on the part of the Gülenists. First, widespread public participation by the “entrepreneurial urban and provincial middle class and the businessmen and

merchants of Anatolian towns and cities,”[185] as well as bureaucrats, academics, judges, security agencies, business associations, labor unions, teachers, and doctors[186] displays the widespread participation from people of different backgrounds.[187] Secondly, and perhaps more visibly, the Gülen movement incorporates giving as a demonstration of its commitment.[188] As Ebaugh argues, “contributions both demonstrate commitment to movement ideals and simultaneously generate commitment to the movement.”[189] This commitment is evident in funds required to support the hundreds of Gülen schools and service projects around the globe.

## Conclusion

The Gülen movement represents a modern incarnation of a classical Tilly-ian social movement. It is a movement in Turkey with transnational appeal that promotes pious, market-based activism based on traditions of Turkish culture and the unique Turkish approach to Islam and is focused on youth enrichment and education that aims to shape the nature of the Turkish state and society in order to re-assert religion in the public sphere, and possibly gain control of the machinations of government in the process. In answering Tilly’s three questions to determine if a movement conforms to his conception of a social movement, the Gülen movement looks like a social movement; that is, it combines campaign, repertoires of contention, and WUNC in a similar manner as the social movements on which Tilly based his analytical framework. Through its campaign, performance, and WUNC, the Gülen movement offers a wide availability for different issues, claims, and objects of claimants, as evidenced by the transnational nature of the movement making the same claim in Turkey and in more than 100 countries around the world.

Tilly offered additional criteria in addition to these questions for consideration in determining a movement’s conformity to his social movement theory. An analysis of the Gülen movement against these additional criteria support identifying it as the type of social movement Tilly described. First, the Gülen movement asserts popular sovereignty. While estimates show that only between ten to fifteen percent of the Turkish populace is active and participates in the Gülen movement, prior to the 2013 AKP-Gülen split, consideration of the ruling AKP as a social movement organization for the Gülen movement suggested much higher associational support for the Gülenists. The AKP, which rose to power with victory in the 2002 parliamentary elections, renewed its control of politics with resounding victory in the 2007 and 2011 parliamentary elections, gaining almost 50% of the vote each time, and more recently won two elections in the summer and fall of 2015. With this, the AKP has won every national-level election in Turkey since 2002. More tellingly, the CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, Republican People’s Party), which represents the Kemalist secular elite, lost ground to the AKP in 2002 and 2007, although it regained a meager amount of parliamentary seats in 2011 and 2015. The continued poor performance of the CHP in elections suggests not only the popularity and approval of the AKP, but also deeper Turkish beliefs about the righteousness of the public role for religion that the Gülenists promote. Secondly, the Gülen movement addresses varying claims internally. While aligned in unity to the overall goal of a broader role for Islam in society, the transnational aspect of the Gülen nature best illustrate these varying claims, as *cemaatlar* outside of Turkey temper their claims on secular elite based on the prevailing cultural and religious conditions in a given country. This transnational aspect also suggests that easy adoptability of the Gülen movement by modeling, communication, and collaboration, as evidenced by the relatively quick establishment of Gülenists outside of Turkey across the globe. Inside of Turkey, the spread of the Gülen movement across the breadth of the socio-economic scale reflects the ease with which modeling, communication, and collaboration can disseminate the movement and its ideals.

Further supporting the labeling of the Gülen movement as a Tilly-style social movement, and although not suggested by Tilly as a criteria to consider, the framing processes employed by Gülen and his movement

closely conform to the framework established by Benford and Snow. A close reading of Gülen's work and the associated literature reveals a clear process of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing, including a demonstrated understanding of resonance and cultural opportunity. More in step with Tilly's analysis, the Gülen movement also exemplifies the necessity for political opportunity or political space for a social movement, as the period of economic and political liberalization after 1983 allowed the Gülen movement to prosper. Finally, Tilly asks if social movement organizations exist for the movement. In the case of the Gülen movement, from the *cemaatlar* that form the grassroots level of the movement to the businesses, corporations, media groups, and holding groups that provide funding and message dissemination, a wide variety of social movement organizations exist.

Two significant modifications to social movement theory are required to fully consider the Gülen movement to be in conformity with Tilly's theoretical groundwork. First, the concept of repertoires of contention must be expanded to include pious activism and giving. In the Gülen movement, these two concepts occupy central roles, with activism focused on youth education but expanding across economic, political, and social sectors. Giving-as-repertoire also plays an important role, as movement adherents demonstrate their commitment and worthiness by giving what they are able, be it funds, time, or other quantifiable attributes. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, the Gülen movement must be viewed in the long-term to meet Tilly's social movement definition.

Tilly expects social movements to be episodic, meaning that they emerge, manifest themselves, and fade away relatively briefly. Gülen, born in 1941 and active as a religious figure by 1960, has served as the impetus for the movement that takes his name for more than fifty years. It emerged in the 1960s following Said Nursi's death and began to fully manifest itself following the end of the military junta in 1983. In the last three decades, instead of fading away, the Gülen movement has grown and gained power, in Turkey and abroad. In the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Gülen movement has sustained itself for more than half of the existence of the Republic of Turkey, a concept born in 1923. In Tilly's conception of episodic, the Gülen movement is not. Modifying Tilly's conception of episodic to take longer-run historical considerations into account, though, allows one to view the Gülen movement as episodic. Turkey may be a relatively new country, but its history, entwined with that of the Ottoman Empire that preceded it, stretches back almost a thousand years. In the time before the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924, Islam played a very public role in the country and broader region, only subjugated to Atatürk's conception of secularism for the relatively short period since then. Considering the Gülen movement against this millennium of Ottoman Turkish history provides it a more episodic definition. Challenging this adjusted conception of episodic, though, the Gülen movement shows no signs of fading away. One can imagine it fading away or becoming less prominent only once its goal—the reintroduction of Islam into the public sphere—is realized. Following the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016, the AKP taking concrete steps to purge the Gülen movement from public and private life in Turkey could lead to the movement's fading away. Political developments that counter the Gülenist goal and challenge the emergence of Islam as a public religion would sustain the existence of the movement. Should the movement exist for another ten, twenty, or fifty years, making the case for its episodic nature would become much more difficult, and directly militate against considering it a Tilly-style movement. If these sorts of developments obtain in Turkey in the near future, a full re-articulation of Tilly's social movement theory may be required.

*The views and opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the positions of the U.S. Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.*

## **End Notes**

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[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2008/08/03/meet\\_fethullah\\_gulen\\_the\\_worlds\\_top\\_public\\_intellectual](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2008/08/03/meet_fethullah_gulen_the_worlds_top_public_intellectual)

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[4] Erol N. Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon: A Neo-Sufi Challenge to Turkey's Rival Elite?” *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 2007), 43.

[5] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19, 35.

[6] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 57.

[7] Rachel Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition,” *Middle East Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Winter, 2009), 57.

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[12] Sara Schroff, “Muslim Movements Nurturing A Cosmopolitan Muslim Identity: The Ismaili and Gülen Movement” (2009),

<http://0-cdm16261.contentdm.oclc.org.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15036coll3/id/250>, 63.

[13] Schroff, “Muslim Movements,” 80.

[14] Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (Dordrecht [the Netherlands]; London; New York: Springer, 2010), 2.

[15] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 6.

- [16] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 122.
- [17] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 117.
- [18] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 119.
- [19] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 119.
- [20] Bill Park, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," *MERIA Journal* 12, no. 4 (2008).
- [21] Fethullah Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, (Fairfax, Va.: The Fountain, 2000), 69.
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- [23] Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008, 2nd Edition* (Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 7.
- [24] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 3.
- [25] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 4.
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- [29] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 7.
- [30] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 4.
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- [36] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 614.
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- [41] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 616.
- [42] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 616.
- [43] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 616.
- [44] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 619.
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- [48] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 617.
- [49] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 78.
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- [54] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1220.
- [55] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, i.
- [56] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, i
- [57] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 38.

- [58] Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?" 597.
- [59] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 42.
- [60] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 43.
- [61] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 43.
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- [63] M. Hakan Yavuz, as quoted in Jean-Francois Mayer, "Interview with Hakan Yavuz - the Gülen Movement: A Modern Expression of Turkish Islam," [http://religion.info/english/interviews/article\\_74.shtml](http://religion.info/english/interviews/article_74.shtml) (accessed December 11, 2011).
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- [65] Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book: Turkey," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html> (accessed May 1, 2011).
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- [73] Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?" 592.
- [74] Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?" 587-588.
- [75] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 38.
- [76] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 38.
- [77] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1214.
- [78] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 47.

[79] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 73.

[80] Note the difference here between “the separation of politics and religion” and “the separation of state and mosque.” Gülen clearly believes that Islam dictates no set form of government and thus accepts the tenants of a secular state. However, he strongly believes that Islam should influence the politics and nature of such a secular state.

[81] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 73.

[82] Gözaydın, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement,” 1222.

[83] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 7.

[84] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 39.

[85] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 37.

[86] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 85.

[87] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 41.

[88] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 43.

[89] Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 12.

[90] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 59.

[91] Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 12.

[92] Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 2.

[93] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 71.

[94] Gülen, on Turkish channel ATV, June 18, 1999, as quoted in Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 9.

[95] Yavuz, “Towards an Islamic Liberalism?” 593.

[96] Gözaydın, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement,” 1219.

[97] Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 4.

[98] Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 4.

[99] Gözaydın, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement,” 1219.

[100] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2008*, 3-4.

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[102] Schroff, "Muslim Movements," 73.

[103] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1220.

[104] Schroff, "Muslim Movements," 73; Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 47; "Fethullah Gülen: Understanding and Respect."

[105] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 56.

[106] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 1-4.

[107] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 5.

[108] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 46; Gülen explains this simple language in Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 25: "Talking too much is a personality defect stemming from mental and spiritual imbalance. Use precise words that do not confuse the listener's mind, and do not use more words than necessary to convey the intended message. Indeed, using many words may even be harmful, for the more words you use, the greater the chance of contradiction, which will confuse the listener even more. This development will not benefit the listener; on the contrary, it will work to his or her detriment."

[109] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 44.

[110] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1218.

[111] "Fethullah Gülen," <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fethullah-G%C3%BClen/24848813965> (accessed December 11, 2011); "@mfgülen," <http://twitter.com/#!/mfGülen> (accessed December 11, 2011); "Fethullah Gülen: Understanding and Respect."

[112] "Fethullah Gülen: Understanding and Respect."

[113] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 52.

[114] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 49.

[115] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 47.

[116] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 55.

[117] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 43; Schroff, "Muslim Movements," 83, gives slightly different numbers.

- [118] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, vii.
- [119] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 45.
- [120] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 33.
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- [122] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 43.
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- [124] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 3.
- [125] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 3.
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- [130] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 55-57.
- [131] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 44.
- [132] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1220.
- [133] Schroff, "Muslim Movements," 65.
- [134] Balci, "Turkish Islam and the Secular State," 331.
- [135] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 41.
- [136] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1227.
- [137] Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1219-1220; Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 8.
- [138] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 7.
- [139] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 12.

[140] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 12.

[141] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 5.

[142] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 6.

[143] Many, for example, would consider the emergence of the AKP as a populist, mildly Islamist conservative democratic party that emerged following the constitutional ban on its predecessor Islamist party, the *Refah Partisi*, whose success is largely entwined with the massive political ego and personality of its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

[144] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 40.

[145] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 41.

[146] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 4.

[147] John Voll, "Fethullah Gülen: Transcending Modernity in the New Islamic Discourse," in *Turkish Islam and the Secular State*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 247.

[148] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 47.

[149] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 110.

[150] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 12.

[151] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 1-5.

[152] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 2.

[153] Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition," 2.

[154] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 51.

[155] Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 629.

[156] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 47.

[157] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 40.

[158] Gulay, "The Gülen Phenomenon," 47; Gözaydın, "The Fethullah Gülen Movement," 1219; Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?" 587-588.

[159] Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism?" 587-588.

[160] Yavuz, “Towards an Islamic Liberalism?” 590.

[161] Yavuz, “Towards an Islamic Liberalism?” 592.

[162] Gözayd?n, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement,” abstract.

[163] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 66.

[164] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 80.

[165] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 70-75.

[166] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 112.

[167] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 111.

[168] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 56.

[169] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 46.

[170] Gözayd?n, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement,” 1215. It should be noted that Gülen’s reasoning for pursuing such interfaith dialogue, if exposed, might challenge the movement’s worthiness. In Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 73, Gülen states that “[p]eople who don’t think like you might be very sincere and beneficial, so do not oppose every idea that seems contradictory and scare them off. Seek ways to benefit from their opinions and ideas, and strike up a dialogue with them. Otherwise, those who are kept at a distance and led to dissatisfaction because they don’t think like us will form huge masses that confront and smash us. Even if such dissatisfied people have never achieved anything positive, the number of states they’ve destroyed is beyond counting.” By this logic, Gülen’s logic for pursuing interfaith dialogue is to strengthen his own movement versus the potential inherent good such interfaith dialogue could create.

[171] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 113.

[172] Schroff, “Muslim Movements,” 77.

[173] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 4; Gözayd?n, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement,” 1215.

[174] Robert Tait, “Islamic Scholar Voted World’s no. 1 Thinker,” *The Guardian*, June 22, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/23/turkey.islam>.

[175] “Fethullah Gülen,” <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fethullah-G%C3%BClen/24848813965>.

[176] “@mfgülen” has 2,496 followers, while other associated Twitter accounts (@FGülencomTR and @FGülencomEN have 1,667 and 483 followers, respectively).

[177] “Fethullah Gülen: Understanding and Respect,” shows the total number of article hits as 14,778,590.

[178] Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 617.

[179] Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 74.

[180] Gülen, in “Meet Fethullah Gülen, the World’s Top Public Intellectual”.

[181] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 50.

[182] A very successful Gülenist businessman, quoted in Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 55.

[183] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 111.

[184] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 56.

[185] Gulay, “The Gülen Phenomenon,” 39.

[186] Sharon-Krespin, “Fethullah Gülen’s Grand Ambition,” 9.

[187] Schroff, “Muslim Movements,” 63.

[188] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 111-112.

[189] Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, 48.

## About the Author





## **Jeff Jager**

Major Jeff Jager is a U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer with an area of concentration in Europe and Turkish as a control language. He commissioned as an infantry officer from the United States Military Academy in 2000; commanded two infantry companies during “the Surge” in Baghdad in 2007-2008; and was selected as a FAO in 2008. He holds an Associate’s of Arts degree in Turkish from the Defense Language Institute; a certification as an Army Intermediate Linguist in Turkish; a Bachelor’s of Science Degree from West Point; a Master’s Degree in Security Studies from the Turkish Army War College; a Master’s Degree in German and European Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies from Georgetown University; and certification as a Defense Strategist from the U.S. Army War College. As a FAO, he served as the Assistant Army Attaché in Cyprus from 2012-2015 (with six months of service as the acting SDO/DATT) and has served as the Training and Doctrine Command Liaison Officer to Turkey since June 2015. He has served overseas for nearly ten of his sixteen years of service, with assignments in Germany, Turkey (twice), and Cyprus and deployments to Kosovo and Iraq (twice). He speaks excellent Turkish and has basic French and Greek language skills.

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{6} <http://www.Güleninstitute.org/about-Gülen/ideas-and-impact>

{7} <http://en.fGülen.com/fethullah-Gülen-life-chronology/1055-1941-1993>

{8} [http://religion.info/english/interviews/article\\_74.shtml](http://religion.info/english/interviews/article_74.shtml)

{9} <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>

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