

**THE GÜLEN HİZMET
MOVEMENT AND ITS
TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

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Case Studies of Altruistic Activism
in Contemporary Islam

Edited by

Sophia Pandya & Nancy Gallagher



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*The Gülen Hizmet Movement and its Transnational Activities:
Case Studies of Altruistic Activism in Contemporary Islam*

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Introduction: The Hizmet Movement Abroad

SOPHIA PANDYA

This volume of essays on the Gülen, or Hizmet (service) movement, a Turkish, Sufi Muslim, and humanitarian civil society group, analyzes the recent activities of its participants to practice their form of Islam and carry out their collective projects at the international level. It adds to the newly burgeoning discourse by focusing on the ways in which members challenge ideological and sectarian boundaries. The Gülen movement is the largest and most powerful religious movement in Turkey. The last few years, Hizmet participants, outside of Turkey, have sponsored at least five hundred (I have been told the number has now reached one thousand) schools, organized Gülen-inspired institutes that host lectures, cooking classes, Turkish language classes, art programs, interfaith activities, charitable events, lecture series, and women's "coffee nights." They have organized business groups, student associations, and trips to Turkey for academics, journalist, businesspeople, leaders in law enforcement, and other prominent persons. For the past three years (2009, 2010, and 2011) in Southern California, Hizmet participants have put on a large and popular cultural festival, the "Anatolian Cultures and Food Festival." The Gülen movement may well be the largest and the most successful transnational Muslim outreach movement of the contemporary age. Given that in recent years, Islamic movements have been commonly (and unfairly) associated with public spectacles of violence, the activities of this increasingly prominent group should be better known in the West. Turkey is poised to join the European Union, a move the group supports, and in many ways it is a western country, although the West does not often embrace it as such. Turkey's dominance in the Middle East is on also the rise—it is a stable country with a democratic form of government—especially today when many Middle Eastern autocrats are being foisted from office through grassroots protests. Turkey's prominence as a regional power is illustrated by the role it played in 2011 during the uprising in Syria, calling for extensive reforms in Syria, and hosting refugee camps in Turkey for those Syrians fleeing from Bashar al-Assad's repressive

government and the heavy handed violence of his military. Shedding light on the international activities of this significant Turkish movement offers new ways to understand a facet of Turkey's global influence, and new ways to understand Muslim activism.

While much previous scholarly attention has focused on the theological and philosophical ideas of Fethullah Gülen (b. 1938), the movement's inspirational figure, more attention should be paid to the ways in which participants have interpreted and carried out Gülen's messages, in particular his ideas regarding service, education, and interfaith activities at the global level. Here I turn to discuss terminology, historically contextualize the movement, consider the objectives and results of some of the endeavors of those involved at the international level, and present an overview of the chapters in this book.¹

Definitions

While all terms are reductive, it is worth considering some of those commonly used to label this group, even though I have already used some of the adjectives I am about to problematize. Here I offer a word of caution for those using the terms "religious," "Muslim," "political," and "Islamist," when referring to the movement, although followers are certainly religious, Muslim, and although some critics have argued that the movement ultimately has political goals. The group does not proselytize Islam, and while it certainly promotes specific Islamic principles, members are trying to achieve positive social change by furthering universal values of tolerance, dialogue, and peace through their educational and other secular "service" activities. They are not attempting to spread Islam to non-Muslims, and other than interfaith dialogue, the activities they carry out abroad are social, cultural, or educational in nature. Of course, the very *hizmet*, or service, that they are carrying out through these activities is part of their religious practice, but the activities themselves are not religious. As for the political nature of the movement, Graham E. Fuller notes that it is the most wealthy movement in Turkey possessing powerful institutions; yet he argues that it can only be considered to have political goals if "we consider any attempt to transform society to be a political project," otherwise the movement is more correctly described as a "social or moral project" (Fuller 2008, 56, 59). While there is a political dimension to *all* religious movements, because the group promotes a secular form of government, it cannot be called Islamist.

The Movement's Name

Gülen has said he does not like the term “the Gülen movement,” because of the emphasis on his person, preferring “the Hizmet movement,” because this stresses the service of those involved (Ebaugh 2010, 124). Gülen has spoken of the importance of individual service, in the form of helping other people, as a key component of Muslim life. This helping of others is thought to be personally purifying and a tool to avoid sin, since the individual will be engaged in altruistic activities and have little time left to commit egotistical deeds. Working hard in this way is also believed to help with one’s fate on judgment day (Agai 2003, 60). Known to be restless himself, Gülen encourages participants to accomplish as much as they can so that they can contribute in every way to the goals of the movement (Agai 2003, 60). Indeed, scholars, such as Fuller, have compared the participants’ work ethic to that of early Calvinists (2008, 57), and it is hard not to agree that some parallels exist, although there are limits to the resemblance. Offering high quality, scientifically focused education for youth is one of the movement’s key objectives, and indeed service, work, and education have become imbued with religious meaning (Agai 2003, 58-60). Nonetheless, the term “the Gülen movement” is currently widely used in the extant academic literature, for greater recognition. The contributors to this volume have used both “the Hizmet movement,” and “the Gülen movement,” in light of these perspectives.

Personal History with the Group

My own experiences with the movement have taken place over the last decade. In 1999, I met several Turkish women who were graduate students in Santa Barbara, CA, when I was also in graduate school, and because of my interest in mystical Islam, they invited me to their homes for weekly readings (in English) of the works of Said Nursi (1877-1961). A Sufi, philosopher and religiously inspirational figure, Nursi argued that there was no contradiction between science and religion, and that there was no need to consider Eastern civilization at odds with Western civilization (Aras and Caha 2003, 142). For several years, we would drink strong Turkish tea, nibble on cookies, and discuss a passage selected for that week. I later found out that thousands of people in Turkey were also meeting in small groups (*dershanes*) to read Nursi. His work, *Risale-i Nur* (Letters of Light), became quite popular in the 1950s onward in Turkey. The

Nur movement, inspired by Said Nursi, led in part to the development of the Gülen movement. However, it is important not to consider Gülen's Hizmet movement as an "extension" or "branch" of the former; there is no institutional relationship. Participants see the Hizmet movement as unique, and Nursi as only one of the figures out of many that helped to shape Gülen's thought. The Gülen movement is now quite independent, and classical Nur-inspired movements are still in practice.

Involved in dissertation writing, I did not become aware of the Gülen movement until 2004, when some of these same friends began to speak of a Gülen-inspired institute in Southern California they were attending, founded in 2003.² One reason that I had not been exposed to Gülen's work through my reading group is that while Nursi's work has been well known and long translated into English, the bulk of Gülen's work has only been translated into English in the last decade. One had moved to a group home in my neighborhood with other participants. These group homes, I discovered, are known as *işık evler*, literally "houses of light," or Gülen-inspired student dormitories.³ My friend told me that living there helped her to remain pious while living abroad. Participants seemed a little overworked as they balanced their many activities at the institute with full-time work and personal lives. At the time, it seemed as a friendly outsider, the focus had suddenly changed, and I began to be occasionally invited to small events held at the institute that my friends frequented. From my perspective, in recent years the California-based group has become even more organized and ambitious, holding larger events, such as the Anatolian Cultures and Food Festival, and Friendship Dinners held at elegant hotels. They also began sending scholars, businesspeople and media personnel on paid trips to Turkey.

The Movement in History

Various scholars have written about the historical stages of this movement (Lorasđı 2007, 155-157 and Yavuz 2003b, 30-47). M. Hakan Yavuz, a prominent political scientist, observed that it "evolved from building a religious community to creating a global, faith-inspired educational system" (2003b, 30-31). Berrin Koyuncu Lorasđı, also a political scientist and an authority on political thought in Turkey, described three periods: 1966-1980, its emergence in Turkey; 1980-1999, its expansion; and 1999-2002, its retreat (Lorasđı 2007, 155).⁴ Its inspirational figure, Fethullah Gülen,

known to his supporters as *Hocaefendi* (respected religious leader), was born in Eastern Anatolia in 1938. A preacher since 1953, he gave speeches in coffee houses, taught at the Kestanepazart Quranic School, encouraged the founding of schools, held educational summer camps for students, and established reading groups and “house of light” dormitories (*dershanes* and *isik evler*). From the outset, Gülen, like Nursi, was also concerned with reconciling religion and science, and believed educating Turkish youth in both subjects would create a “modern Muslim” who would be spiritual and moral, and also capable of participating in the modern, globalizing world (Lorasdg̃t 2007, 156).⁵ During these early years the movement was cautious in its relationship to the State, and promoted state security in defense against the rise of leftist groups (Yavuz 2003b, 31).

The second stage witnessed the expansion of the movement in Turkey and abroad, with Gülen bringing together people from a variety of backgrounds, rich, poor, Turks, Kurds, and even non-Muslims (Aras and Caha 2003, 141). In Turkey, the movement established several institutions such as *Zaman* newspaper in 1986, a Radio channel, Burç FM, and a plethora of other financial, and high quality educational institutions including several universities (Lorasdg̃t 2007, 156). The interfaith movement began in the 1990s as well, during a decade that witnessed widespread corruption, an economic meltdown, and heightened public insecurity. Gülen’s answer to these crises was to advocate all forms of dialogue. In this spirit, he met with the Pope, the Greek Patriarch, and other religious leaders (Fuller 2008, 58). As a member explained, “the point of interfaith dialogue is to find the cures for society’s ills. We want to be able to engage the heart and the mind. We can only fly with two wings, heart and mind.”⁶ By 1997, *The Fountain* magazine, published in English, was also founded. The Gülen movement had become large, influential, and powerful, and had begun to establish a network of Gülen-inspired schools in Turkey and abroad (including Ethiopia, Yemen, the US, and many other locations; those abroad have been called “Peace Islands,” (Lorasdg̃t 2007, 158). These schools, which focus on science and technology and are often taught in English, have attracted the children of elites of those countries, turning out promising graduates (Aras and Caha 2003, 146). Those students of Gülen-inspired high schools in Turkey have consistently outperformed their peers (Yavuz 2003b, 39). Until this period, the Hizmet movement remained largely apolitical. However, the secularist Kemalists remained suspicious of Gülen’s motives,

regardless of his attempts to convey his support for the State and the military. In fact, critical of “extremist” Islamic governments such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, Gülen’s policy was to remain as neutral as possible politically (Aras and Caha 2003, 143).

Nevertheless, the third stage began around 1999 when Gülen began to face intense legal confrontations and a critical military. Some Kemalists were deeply uncomfortable with the movement’s strong external connections, fearing a threat to a secular Turkey (Yavuz 2003b, 44). After leaving to the United States where he currently resides, he stopped speaking of his loyalty to the State, and changed his focus to the promotion of human rights and democracy (Lorasdđt 2007, 158-9). Lorasdđt characterizes this period as a “retreat” because of Gülen’s relocation abroad and new focus. Yet, since the movement has continued to expand during this period, in Turkey, and particularly at the global level, this term is inadequate. Indeed, the movement’s external prominence increases every year, and thus a better descriptive name for this period would be “the *Hizmet* movement abroad,” the title of this introduction.

Hizmet Organization and Funding

Gülen-inspired projects abroad, such as the wide-reaching network of educational institutes, Turkey trips for scholars and other prominent public figures, interfaith events, friendship dinners, and charitable activities, require substantial financial resources. The Turkish value of hospitality and generosity explains part of the movement’s ability to raise funds (Ebaugh and Baskal 2010, 65-80). These projects are dependent on fundraising carried out in circles of Turkish businessmen, professionals, and other working peoples participating in the movement, and on average 10 percent of one’s yearly income is donated, with a smaller group able to donate over 20 percent (Ebaugh 2010, 54). There is no fixed rule; people give what they can. One friend in California told me that if she or her husband receive a phone call from another follower asking for funds for a project, if they have any means of giving it at all, they simply give it—even if it means accruing credit card debt. Those that give and are able to be otherwise active are admired by others, and indeed frivolous spending on flashy cars, etc. is not generally approved of in the movement. Participation does seem to involve a degree of Weberian asceticism; however, another member laughed when I spoke of the lack of Mercedes Benz and BMWs at events, and said that he would, in fact, purchase a BMW, because of its safety record

and utilitarian form, when he could afford to. After chuckling about his desire for that luxury car, he acknowledged that the movement does espouse the idea of living a reserved, simple, life. Clearly, each participant is a distinct individual, and diversity exists within the community. No formal membership to the group exists but rather informal networks (circles) of those who are willing to donate. Ebaugh notes that the circles are structured around physical location and careers, and that those who donate also engage in mutually beneficial networking (Ebaugh 2010, 48-9).

Goals of Hizmet while on Hicret (*hijrah* or migration)

What are the goals of these international outreach activities, and what is achieved? This is a matter of some dispute, and certainly a few Turkish secularists fear that Gülen and Hizmet participants ultimately aim (through all of their projects) to create an Islamic state like Iran in Turkey, endangering the very character of the modern republic.⁷ This fear is wildly unfounded and smacks of paranoia: Gülen himself is highly critical of revivalist Islamic regimes (Yavuz 2003b, 24), and participants have repeatedly stated that they have no plan to create a Turkish theocracy. The group has no history of militancy or the use of any form of jihadist rhetoric; Gülen himself disapproves of violence used towards any political goal (Ebaugh 2010, 127). The ongoing annual roundtable Abant Platforms (1998-present), organized by Hizmet participants, bringing together various Turkish intellectuals of diverse backgrounds, have resulted in a series of declarations that promote the compatibility of Islam with a secular, democratic state, and support human rights and pluralism (Akyol 2008, 68-69 and Yavuz 2003b, 45). Suspicious of religious groups, Turkish Kemalists, inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), founder of modern Turkey, believe the State should be uncompromisingly secular.⁸ This secularism was and is understood as “modern,” in the sense that Talal Asad, an influential anthropologist who writes on the concepts of secularism and modernity, offers when he notes that the term “modernity” is commonly associated with contemporary developments in the Western world and (so-called) Western undertakings such as secularism, capitalism, democracy, human rights. He argues that it is something that “certain people in power seek to achieve,” something that often devalues local culture and values (Asad 2003, 12-15). The practice of Islam, then, has been seen as detracting from “modern” (i.e. Western) projects both by Orientalist scholars and by those in power

at the governmental level promoting a secularist view (Yavuz and Esposito 2003, xvi-xvii). In Turkey, secularism, as a national undertaking, has been used to justify the marginalization and oppression of those practicing Islam in the public realm. The well known theory of “contesting modernities,” put forth by the late sociologist Schmucl N. Eisenstadt, applies well to the Gülen project. Participants alternatively seek to create a society that values religion and indigenous Anatolian culture, but which can participate fully in the globalizing world and in many of the same facets of modernity that Asad describes, including the pursuit of democracy, capitalism, and human rights (Eisenstadt 2000, 175). This movement, thus, offers and promotes a different form of modernity, both in Turkey and abroad, in which the West is not “The Great Satan,” and spirituality is not marginalized.

According to Lorasdgı, the movement has two primary goals. The first is to create a new generation of moderate, spiritual Muslims able to engage with democracy and the contemporary world. The second is to expand the influence of Turkish culture at the global level, to create allies abroad, and even to make Turkish a world language (2007, 157-8). She notes that Gülen wants Turkey to once again become a “global power as it had been during the Ottoman period” (160). These latter comments seem to contrast with other types of discourse presented by followers and by much of Gülen’s message of interfaith dialogue, tolerance, and global peace, although a form of Turkish-Ottoman nationalism undoubtedly does play a role in this picture, as other scholars have noted (Yavuz 2003b, 21). One participant, responding to this line of thought, noted that she does not believe Gülen wants to spread “Turkishness” just for the sake of gaining power for Turkey, but rather in order to promote Sufi Islam as found during the Ottoman times as a model for other communities, because of its mystical emphasis, focus on love and piety, promotion of dialogue and tolerance, and ability to synthesize with modernity, all of which Gülen believes would be of benefit to Muslims and all of humanity.⁹ Thus the Ottoman past is not trumpeted as uniquely glorious in a nationalistic way, but used as an example from which Gülen drew since he and other Turks were familiar with it, and because Ottoman Sufism reflects values he wished to highlight as truly Islamic and humanitarian. Another follower added that since Atatürk’s era, the Ottoman past has been ignored, despite its positive contribution as a model of peaceful coexistence between groups. Graham E. Fuller calls this a “cultural lobotomy” aimed at

erasing Ottoman history from Turkish memory (Fuller 2008, 17). He also describes the Ottoman Empire as “one of the most successful and stable models of a multiethnic and multicultural empire of its time” (4). Sociologist Helen Rose Ebaugh notes that Gülen believes that “just as Turks played a pivotal and religious and cultural role under the Ottomans for centuries, Turkey is now poised to lead the Muslim world into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with emphasis on dialogue, science and education” (Ebaugh 20101, 33). Gülen, then, idealizes the Ottomans not for their muscle but because “they lived in accordance with Islam” (Yavuz 2003b, 31). This Islam is pious, intellectual, mystical, engaged in every area of life, and extraordinarily focused on activity in the public realm: charity, interfaith work, networking, and politics. The participant went on to mention that he believes Gülen emphasizes Ottoman pride to instill confidence in the Turkish community, so that members can feel more self-assured when they go abroad. He also pointed out that he sees change occurring in the discourse on the importance of “Turkishness,” or the “great Ottoman past,” in the movement, amongst those participants like himself that have gone abroad.¹⁰ Clearly, as the group gains global prominence, its message will have to become more universal if it wants to attract peoples from other areas of the world, and members are likely quite aware of this issue, and indeed I have noticed a greater emphasis on universality in recent years.

Several other goals may also be identified. Many Hizmet participants that I have met speak of wanting to have Muslims and Islam accepted by non-Muslims abroad, especially in the post-September 11th environment in which Islamophobia has become well-rooted. Some also wish to promote positive images of Turkey and the greater Anatolian region, as well as enhance the tarnished image of Islam. They speak of building bridges between communities through intercultural/interreligious dialogue, in order to promote peace and understanding, and to counter stereotypical images of Muslims and Middle Easterners. Indeed, education, interfaith dialogue, and charitable activities are emphasized by Gülen as forming part of the individual Muslim duty of *hizmet*, or service. Gülen encourages participants to take part in *hijret*, (hijrah or migration) in order to reach others more effectively, as the Prophet Muhammad did when he left Mecca for Medina, and as the earliest Muslims did when they went abroad to spread Islam. This *hijret* entails living abroad and being active promoting the movement’s goals, and indeed those participants that I have met in the US have

spoken of carrying out *hizmet* while on *hicret*. Yet, other outcomes of these international activities, intentional or not, are to favorably position the Turkish immigrant communities abroad, and to create a network of allies through its events, trips, and dinners, which of course generate social capital that can be used to support the movement's humanitarian goals. These events also enhance the visibility of their activities, and clearly, the group would like to be known. For those that will not be returning to Turkey because of religious persecution (women are not allowed to wear headscarves at Turkish universities and many Turkish secularists consider the movement to be a "cult" or worse), creating and maintaining a friendly relationship with communities in the new host country is an understandable priority.

Issues of Gender

A few comments on gender roles are merited here. The movement has been accused of being "male oriented" (Lorasdğı 2007, 168). When in Turkey, I did notice some truth to that claim: some of the Gülen-inspired schools I visited had many more male pupils than females, and few females are in high ranking leadership positions in the movement. While Gülen has promoted women's education and participation in the public realm, he has also often emphasized the importance of their domestic roles as "socializing agents" of children (Ebaugh 2010, 121). However, a point in the Abant Platform Declarations states that "women should not be restricted by traditions that are presented as religiously based" (Fuller 2008, 65). While gender relations in this community certainly reflect the patriarchal culture of Turkey and a socially conservative, "family-values" type of worldview, my concern is that to characterize the movement in this way serves to devalue and make invisible the enormous and active contribution of women followers, many of whom are utterly "knocking themselves out" to build bridges between communities, carry out charitable work, and to create a more peaceful world in Gülen's vision. Indeed, many of the women Hizmet participants that I have met or interviewed in California have or are working toward degrees in science, computer science, or engineering, which are male-dominated fields. In fact, some women have chosen to work outside of Turkey in these fields, in part, because they would not be able to work in Turkey while wearing a headscarf. Others are working in a variety of sectors or taking a temporary break from their careers to raise small children. Often

Gülen-inspired institutes where followers meet have a women's wing, where women meet comfortably—in a women-centered space—to discuss their own projects, organize events, or make items to sell for fundraising purposes. One woman follower, familiar with criticism regarding the lack of women's leadership, said that in fact she had been invited by local Gülen leaders to participate at a higher level, but that because of her commitments to career and family she did not feel comfortable taking on further responsibilities, although she might in the future. As the movement itself is relatively young, those participants I have come across are under forty, many raising very young children without extended family to help, which makes life quite busy for both men and women. Those I interviewed in California told me that gender roles are changing as the group settles and adapts to the greater U.S. culture. Men help out their wives more at home than they did in Turkey and events are often not gender segregated. As the Hizmet communities settle in a variety of international locations, local culture will doubtless influence and shape them in differing ways, especially for the subsequent generations.

Review of Chapters

This volume contains eleven chapters, which are organized into three sections, titled “Interfaith Dialogues,” “Hizmet, Women and Gender,” and “Schools around the World.” In the first section, the first chapter is about the international appeal of the movement. Michael J. Fontenot and Karen A. Fontenot discuss the ways in which the movement offers a form of revitalized Islam that is attuned with developed industrial societies. As noted by Fontenot and Fontenot, despite its origins, the movement has attracted extensive support outside of Turkey: in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Here, the authors shed light on the criticism of this phenomenon. The second, by Pim Valkenberg, looks at the interfaith activities of this movement, and describes how followers understand their roles as “bridge builders” between Muslim communities and other religious communities in the West. Valkenberg also looks at points of comparison between the movement and certain Catholic religious communities. The third, by Heon C. Kim, analyzes Gülen's humanism in dialogue with East Asian cultures, and suggests that Gülen's dialogic vision of humanism may create an alternative path for humanity in the globalized age. The fourth, by Nancy Gallagher,

discusses the impact of the Hizmet-sponsored trips to Turkey. To date, more than 6000 Americans have traveled to Turkey at the invitation of Hizmet institutes and have returned to support the activities of the Turkish immigrant circles. While appreciative of their carefully organized tours, trip participants have also offered forthright criticisms of aspects of the movement.

In the second section, titled “Hizmet, Women, and Gender,” the fifth chapter, by Sophia Pandya, focuses on female followers of the movement in the United States. She looks at the ways in which women understand their contributions and involvement in the movement, and also at ways in which carrying out their *hizmet* in the U.S. has reshaped communal gender norms for both men and women. Her informants told of the freedom from tensions in Turkey they felt in the U.S., and about exploring new ways to be Muslim women. The sixth, by Fran Hassencahl, analyzes the depiction of women in the English-language *Fountain* magazine, which is aimed at international readers. Circulating in the U.S., Europe, and other regions, this magazine is run by the Hizmet community. The seventh chapter, by Margaret Rausch, examines women’s roles in Hizmet activities in the U.S. She looks at the way in which leadership is understood in the movement to be connected to *hizmet*, or service, and that this form of service-oriented leadership furthers spiritual understanding. Both women and men take part in role-modeling as a means of demonstrating their commitment to the Hizmet community and to help lead others. April Najjaj writes the eighth chapter, in which she discusses ways Western scholars can “talk about” women in Islam through a case study of movement. She discovers commonalities in the ways in which men and women transnationally navigate gender norms, as they renegotiate roles and priorities to meet the transforming demands.

The third section is titled “Schools around the World.” Here, the ninth chapter examines the funding and organization of Hizmet schools in Australia. Çeman Polat explores the reasons behind the opening of sixteen private Turkish schools in Australia. She examines issues of funding and curriculum, and argues that the schools in Australia are excelling in the arts and social sciences and offer universal humanistic values. Despite suspicions that Gülen-inspired schools have often attracted, Australia’s system of public-private funding for schools has resulted in a successful neoliberal economic collaboration. The tenth focuses on schools in Nigeria. Hasan Aydin and Stephen K. Lafer note the ways in which the Gülen-inspired

Nigerian Turkish International Colleges (NTIC) have become central educational institutions in Nigeria. Here they discuss the roles these schools play in issues of sectarianism, class, and ethnic rivalries in Nigeria. The eleventh, by Jeton Mehmeti, treats the role of education in Kosovo. Mehmeti considers the phenomenon of student dormitories in Gülen-inspired schools in Kosovo, where the movement has offered tutorial assistance, and organized interfaith and intercultural dialogues that are popular with parents and students of diverse background.

Conclusion

Taken together, these essays explain how the international movement is organized, structured, and institutionalized in many parts of the world. Several of the essays address criticisms and evaluations of the movement and suggest new directions for further research. The Hizmet movement's scope, methodology, and goals differ significantly from those of other Islamic revival movements, and indeed, the contributions of its participants have created networks of interfaith groups, first-rate educational institutions, and spaces for intercultural dialogue, as well as the celebration of many aspects of Turkish culture abroad. The impact of these activities is only now being assessed. Jacob K. Olupona, distinguished scholar of indigenous African religions, writes about the connections between globalization and transnational immigrant communities, has noted that immigrants can transform "the local into a new cohesion that retains a non-Western memory within a Western environment (Oluponu 2002, 85). Wherever immigrant groups of Hizmet participants travel to perform their service abroad, be it in the U.S., the Balkans, Yemen, or Africa, they will both shape their new "local" and be shaped by it. The following chapters shed light on these transformations.

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Notes

¹ Many thanks to Dr. Nancy Gallagher for her assistance with this project.

² The Pacifica Institute has several branches in California. I am most familiar with the Irvine branch. To see a list of branches and activities taking place, see www.pacificainstitute.org.

³ M. Hakan Yavuz notes the transformation from Nursi’s reading groups, or *dershanes*, to Gülen’s “house of light” student dormitories, *ışık evler* (Yavuz 2003b, 19, 32-35).

⁴ Yavuz’s historical stages are similar: his first stage he places between 1970-1983, the second from 1983-1997, and the third from 1997 until the present (Yavuz 2003b, 30-43).

⁵ For more on the Gülen, see Helen Rose Ebaugh, “Fethullah Gülen: His Life, Beliefs and the Movement that he Inspires,” in *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2000).

⁶ Conversation, January 28, 2011, Southern California. Informants will remain anonymous for their own privacy.

⁷ For more on the history of the emergence of revivalist groups, see Nilufer Narlı, “The Rise of Islamist Movement in Turkey,” in *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East*, edited by Barry Rubin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003). He writes: “Islamism in Turkey has grown as a response to social, economic, and political discontent, the causes of which include foreign influences, urbanization, modernization, and secularization (133). I prefer the term “Revivalism” to “Islamism” to refer to the Gülen movement because the latter commonly refers to an ideology promoting a Muslim state which this group does not promote.

⁸ For a longer discussion of secularism in the Turkish context, see Yavuz, M. Hakan and John L. Esposito, “Introduction, Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path? In *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), xv-xxiii.

⁹ Conversation, Dec. 16, 2010, Southern California. Informants will remain anonymous for their own privacy.

¹⁰ Conversation, January 28, 2011, Southern California. Informants will remain anonymous for their own privacy.

SECTION I

INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

The Characteristics and Appeal of the *Hizmet* Movement

MICHAEL J. FONTENOT & KAREN A. FONTENOT

The *Hizmet* (service) movement associated with the Turkish theologian M. Fethullah Gülen is probably the most powerful Islamic reform movement operating in the world today. Inspired by the example of an earlier Muslim reformer, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1874–1960), and both generalized and further developed by Gülen’s own activities, it aims to align Islamic thought with the requirements of advanced industrial societies. Promoting religiously inspired modernization, it offers a revitalized form of mysticism that is wedded simultaneously to traditional Muslim practice and to the scientific and technical methods that have so clearly lifted the material level of Western society.

While business people and students form the core of the movement,¹ Gülen also appeals to a much wider audience within Turkey. He promotes a particularly sophisticated view of Turkish identity, claiming that it was forged in pre-Anatolian times, then shaped and honed by the Ottomans into a multinational, multicultural civilization of extraordinary cosmopolitanism. That interpretation, which satisfies ethnic pride while avoiding a narrow nationalistic definition, resonates with many Turks. Furthermore, he has taken a very strong stand against the use of terror (see Gülen 2004a); moderate Turks who are unsympathetic to Islamic extremism and secular republicanism find Gülen’s positions very attractive.

The *Hizmet* movement has also attracted numerous non-Muslim supporters. It is difficult to estimate how many people are involved, but supporters are active in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

As a revisionist religious movement, it has faced opposition within Turkey from secularists and literalist Muslims since its very beginnings in the 1960s. But because of its rising influence outside of as well as within Turkey, it has come under increased scrutiny and has been subjected to increasing criticism by an array of new opponents. Some see it as an imminent pan-Turanian and pan-Islamic threat to the Turkish secular state, Israeli security and US interests;²