



RESEMBLANCE OF FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S IDEAS AND CURRENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper reflects on Turkish influence and specifically the ideas of Fethullah Gülen and his community on formation of identity and values in Central Asia. After the collapse of the Soviet Ideology new independent states in Central Asia started to look for a new value system. The beginning of the 1990s was a time of great enthusiasm among researches and scholars, who tried to revive Islamic values and cultural traditions in the region. Many of them looked to Turkey as a moderate Muslim state with a democratic form of government. It was the time when Fethullah Gülen's ideas began to be introduced to a wider Central Asian audience. Uzbeks and other Central Asians could appreciate Gülen's approach to Islam, and his two keys to peace in society – tolerance and dialogue – because they were very much in tune with the modernist ideas of the Jadidis of the 1920s and very close to the temperament of the local people. The teaching of Gülen, with his state-oriented philosophy and ideas about market and neo-liberal economic policies, was very much in tune with the state ideology. One of the most crucial phenomena in post-Soviet Central Asia was the establishment of a wide network of Fethullah Gülen community schools in Central Asia. These schools provided the best standards of education, excellent teaching materials and IT equipment and emphasized respect between teachers and students. But in 2000 in Uzbekistan these schools were closed down due to the deterioration of relationships with Turkey. Some state officials were looking for an aggressively visible 'Islamic factor' and Gülen become undesirable, since they wanted to see a backward, radical Islam, in order to justify authoritarian measures in the country. However, Gülen's ideas and writings surely will be used by Central Asian nations for further development in the region in order to create a better society based on religious tolerance and modern values, and alert to the importance of education and the pursuit of knowledge, and to the positive role of religion and spiritual life in forming a peaceful and harmonious social order.

1. Introduction

This paper analyzes the Turkish influence and specifically ideas of Fethullah Gülen and his movement on the formation of identity and values in Central Asia.

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Gülen has published more than 30 books, the majority deal with explicitly Islamic topics. They range from studies of the biography of Prophet Muhammad, to a basic induction to Sufism and elaborations of essential themes of Islamic faith. These studies are directed not toward specialists but at a more general audience of educated Muslims and adherents of other religious systems or beliefs. Fethullah Gülen's educational vision is 'profundity of ideas, clarity of thought, and depth of feeling, cultural appreciation and spiritual values'. At the same time he has very deep ideas regarding improving quality of education by harmonizing modern secular education, with its orientation on material values and traditional religious education, oriented on spiritual values. These ideas are realized by Gülen's "missionary" schools in Central Asia and throughout the world.

Unfortunately, these days Gülen schools were closed down in Uzbekistan, the most populous country of Central Asia, because of the misunderstanding by the government of this country the goals and missions of these schools. But, in a long run, educational approaches suggested by Gülen and his followers and educational standards accomplished by his schools will be valued much higher by people in Central Asia.

2. Islam in Central Asia

Islam arrived in Central Asia (CA) with Arab armies at the dawn of the eighth century. By the ninth century, Muslim geographers considered Transoxiana ("as the land beyond the Amy Darya river" or Central Asia) to be an integral part of the Muslim world. Indeed, some of the most important figures in Islamic civilization came from this region. Sunni Muslims hold six compilations of hadith to be authoritative. Two of the six compilers, Abu Ismail al-Bukhari (810-70) and Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmudhi (825-92) were from Central Asia.; the great scientist Abu Nasr al-Muhammad al-Faraby (950), known as "the second teacher" (after Aristotle); and the rationalist philosopher Abu Ali ibn Sina (980-1037, known in the West as Avicenna) - figures of absolutely central importance in the Islamic civilization were all born in this region.

Although it was Arab invaders who took Islam to the region, the conversion patterns and sociocultural structure created a vernacular Turkic-Islam. One of the commonly disseminating myths was that of Baba Tukles or Saman one of the Muslim saints, (although Islam does not have officially canonized saints), who converted Uzbek Khan, the Genghizid ruler of the Golden Horde, to Islam by beating the khan's court shaman in a religious contest. Saman and Kam, as legendary religious and charismatic leaders, known as *baba* and *ata*⁴⁵², personified the old religion and become the agents of Islamization in Central Asia.

By thirteenth century Sufism also had become a dominant part of religious and cultural life of the Turkic world. Sufism represents a complex of diverse religious trends and includes mystical philosophy, a cult of saintly figures and distinctive liturgical practices. In Central Asia three Sufi orders: Yessavie, Kubreviyye and Naksibendiyye were very powerful.

Russian conquest of Central Asia brought this region into the modern world via colonialism. Educated people in Turkistan (they've been called *Jadids* in Russia and in Turkic world) thought

⁴⁵² De Weese, D. (2000) Sacred History for a Central Asian Towns: Saints, Shrines, and Legends of Origin. London, 89-90; Ibid. (1994) Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: BabaTukles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition., University Park, Penn, 541-43



that Muslim society of Central Asia is in a serious crises. According to Jadidish, social reforms have to be based on the traditional identity of the people and acknowledged by the Koran. Everything was in need of change, with traditional education at central stage. The course of action was clear: enlightenment and modern education would solve all the problems of the society. Many of them opened private schools, where they tried to combine religious with secular education. Much more attention was devoted to secular (hard and economic) sciences as an alternative to the educational standards providing by old madreses.

The Jaddids⁴⁵³ emphasized the idea of progress and incorporating the elements of modern scientific education into traditional religious Islamic education and also importance to educate girls along with boys. In 1906 in Urgench one of them – Khusan Dushaev open the first school for girls. In other cities of Turkistan girl-schools were also opened, where mostly secular sciences were thought. Such outstanding jaddid scholars as Avlony, Rasuly, Fitrit, Bekhbudy and others worked as schoolteachers. They wrote and published the textbooks for their schools and promoted equality between men and women.

These ideas if Jadids were very much in tune with Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of a holistic education system, which promotes spiritual enrichment and critical thinking for man and women. He sees the economic and moral decline in the Muslim world as a result of spiritual and intellectual decline, and aims to renew the Muslim tradition. The main strategy for achieving this aim is education. For Gülen, serving Allah means "raising 'perfect youth' who combine spirituality with intellectual training, reason with revelation, and mind with heart".⁴⁵⁴

The call of reform was made from a self-consciously Islamic position. The acquisition of modern knowledge, the Jadids argued, was mandated by Islam itself. In common with other modernists of the period, the Jadids ascribed the "decline" and "degeneration" of their community to its departure from true path of Islam. When Muslims followed true Islam they were leaders of the world in knowledge, and Muslim empire were mighty. Corruption of the faith led them to ignorance and political and military weakness. The solution was a return to 'true Islam'. The main idea that united the most outstanding thinkers in Turkestan was oriented towards spiritual freedom and human dignity. Rather then oppose one class or group against another; they believed that all human beings are equal irrespective of their religion, social origins and so on.

The overwhelming population of the region is Sunni and belongs to the Hanafi school of law (one of four interpretation of Islam), which was founded by Abu Hanifa an-Numon ibn Sobit in the 8 century. Hanafi is considered to be the most liberal, modest, and convenient as far as rituals are concerned, among other interpretations of Islam.

The Jadid movement played a key role in articulation of national identities. Turkic and Islamic identity were used interchangeably which, in turn, played a constitutive role in forming national identities of the new Central Asian states. Therefore, religious network played an important role in Central Asian relations with Turkey.

⁴⁵³ Khalid, A. (1998) *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia.*, Berkley, University of California Press, 75-124

⁴⁵⁴ Gülen, F (2005) *An analyses of the Prophet's life (The Messenger of God Muhammad)*, (Rutherford N.J., The Light), 257-261



3. Islam after the Independence. (1990s). “Turkish-Islam”

After obtaining of the independence, Central Asian republics started the process of reviving of Islam. Interest in religion soared throughout the Soviet Union on the Gorbachev years. Glasnost led to quest for moral and spiritual values that were now seen to have been corroded by Communism. Islam becomes to be used as a leading source for constructing of national identity and selfhood. Many people, who never prayed before began to pray regularly and to observe other Islamic injunctions. It become possible again travel to Mecca, new mosques began to build, some old ones were put back to service and religious education began. A number of madrassas were opened in the first years of independence to provide higher Islamic education.

Of course, this revival was not a simple return to the past. The legacy of the Soviet era did not evaporate. The governments of Central Asian republics have tried a dual strategy to cooperate with Islam while controlling it.

In the beginning of the era of independence (1991-1995), Turkey was the main model of development for Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics. Democratic Islamic state with a strong economy and pro-Western orientation and at the same time a very close to all five Central Asian republics in language, traditions and customs was the ideal model from the point of view of Central Asian policy-makers. Turkey also has been trying to use commonly shared ethnoreligious culture to create a number of institutions that will develop cooperation.

Turkey has been very active in Central Asia in exporting “soft and nationalized Turkish Islam” to this region. The nature of Islam in Central Asia was the same as it is in Turkey: modern and moderate; not at all hostile to secular power. Sufi-oriented and softer Turkish-Islam has been more appealing to the younger people of Central Asia as they reconstruct their faith rather than Saudi-based Wahhabism or the Iranian version of the rigid Islam. This time ideas of Fethullah Gülen become known and popular in Central Asia and especially in Uzbekistan, country with the most populace Muslim community. Being Hanafi Muslims, Uzbeks could appreciate Gülen’s approach to Islam, because they were very much in tune with modernists ideas of Jadids of 1920s and very close to the national mentality of the local people.

With strong ethical sense at the heart of his understanding of Islam, Gülen’s many writings of the life of Muhammad affirm his role as Prophet who brought the Qur’anic revelation but emphasize even more strongly the figure of Muhammad as moral exemplar for Muslims, Muhammad as the first hearer of the Qur’an whose life was preeminently shaped by its message. Gülen’s central concern could seem to be Muhammad as role-model for the Muslim of today. This leads him to concentrate on the moral qualities of Muhammad manifested in personal relationships with his companions, wives and enemies, and the qualities of leadership shown in being Commander of the Faithful. What Gülen seems to find a special importance of the life of Muhammad are personal qualities such as piety, sincerity generosity, modesty, determination, truthfulness, compassion, patience, and tolerance. And also his leadership characteristics, such as realism, courage, a sense of responsibility and farsightedness, and a readiness to consult, delegate and forgive.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁵ Gülen, F. (1998) Prophet Muhammad as Commander, Konak-Iznir (Kaynak) 122-123



Gülen does not favor to the state applying Islamic law, the Shari'a. He points out that most Islamic regulations concern private life and only a small portion of them concern state and government.⁴⁵⁶

These latter needs to be enforced because religion is a private matter and its requirements should not to be imposed on anyone. He looks at the Islamic regulation bearing directly on government (such as taxation and warfare) in light of contemporary realities. This leads him to the conclusion, for example, that the democratic form of government is the best choice, an outlook that causes Gülen to oppose strongly the regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁵⁷

After seventy years of domination of planned economy and communist ideology, Central Asian states has become free-market oriented and started to seek for new neo-liberal values. Doctrine of Gülen, with his state-oriented philosophy and ideas about market and neo-liberal economic policies, was very much in spirit of the state ideology.

According to Gülen, in order to preserve their uniqueness and respect uniqueness of others as well. Muslims need to share a new legal code, and to have a free-market economy, private education and free thinking. Being a Muslim in a modern world necessary to support and consolidate modern institutions of democracy, the rule of law, a free-market economy, and so forth⁴⁵⁸.

On the question of women, Gülen also has progressive views. The veiling of women is a detail in Islam and 'no one can suppress the progress of women through the clothes they have to wear'⁴⁵⁹. Furthermore he said that Muslim women can be administrator and guide men, if it is necessary.

Gülen holds that the Anatolian people's interpretation and experiences of Islam are different from those of others, especially the Arabs. He frequently emphasizes that there should be freedom of worship and thinking among Muslims. He writes of an "Anatolian Islam" based on tolerance and excluding harsh restrictions or fanaticism. He proposes two keys to provide peace in society: tolerance and dialog. In the philosophical dilemma: "What should we do: to modernize Islam or Islamize modernity?" Gülen choose to modernize Islam. These ideas were widely discussed on some scientific conferences, such as "Tolerance and Islam" (1999), "Islam and Modernity" (2000) and many others.

Therefore, ideas of Fethullah Gülen have no difficulties in adapting to this region. Some of his works (for example, "The essentials of Islamic Faith", "Religious Education of the Child", "An analysis of the Prophet Life") been translated to Russian and Central Asian languages. These books were easy to find near mosques and in some private book shops.

The most popular become ideas of interfaith dialog between adherents of Islam and other religions. In his view, "no one should condemn the other for being a member of a religion or scold him for being an atheist"⁴⁶⁰. Gülen believes that interfaith cooperation is imperative today and should be compulsory for Muslim to support peace and harmony. Referencing the Medina Constitution, Gülen stressed that the Prophet himself practiced such cooperation. For some reason Muslim neglected this tradition for a certain period of time, yet its roots are well grounded in core teaching of Islam.⁴⁶¹ Because of it,

⁴⁵⁶ Gülen, F (1996) Understanding and Belief, (Rutherford N.J., The Light), 45

⁴⁵⁷ Gülen, F. (2002) Essays, Perspectives, Opinions (Rutherford N.J., The Light), 67-69

⁴⁵⁸ Gülen, F. (2002) Essays, Perspectives, Opinions (Rutherford N.J., The Light), 97-103

⁴⁵⁹ Gülen, F. (2002) Essays, Perspectives, Opinions (Rutherford N.J., The Light). 25-28

⁴⁶⁰ Gülen, F. (2004) Towards to Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance, (Rutherford N.J., The Light)

⁴⁶¹ Gülen, F. (2005) An analyses of the Prophet's life (The Messenger of God Muhammad), (Rutherford N.J., The Light)



Gülen has become a symbol of interfaith cooperation among many Muslim intellectuals in Central Asia.

4. Educational Vision of Fethullah Gülen and Establishment of the Network of his Schools in Central Asia

Gülen believes that the main problem in the world is lack of knowledge, which involves related problems concerning the production and control of knowledge. He thinks it can only be done through education. Education is very important if one wants to become a better Muslim. Not religious education: he is talking about secular education, science and humanities – and of course religion as well. Gülen believes that those three forms of education should enhance and compliment each other rather than compete with each other. The Kyrgyzstan Spirituality Foundation in 2004, for example, awarded him an honor for his contribution for the world peace through his educational efforts.

Analyzing an educational system in Turkey in 20th century, Fethullah Gülen brought to light a problem of lack of coordination among the various types and systems of education. He regards the development of education in Turkey as an unhealthy competition among mutually exclusive systems of education, which has produced graduates who lack an integrated perspective towards the future of society. “At a time when modern schools concentrated on ideological dogmas, institutions of religious education (madrasas) broke with life, institutions of spiritual training (takyas) were immersed in sheer metaphysics, and the army restricted itself to sheer force, this coordination was essentially not possible”.⁴⁶² Challenge of the modern time, according to Gülen, is to find a way in which these traditional pedagogical systems can move beyond regarding each other as rivals so that they can learn from each other. This principle he implemented in schools, which been associated with his name. He tried ‘to marry’ modern secular education and traditional values. “Cut off from traditional values, young people are in danger of being educated with no values at all beyond those of material success. Non-material values such as profundity of ideas, clarity of thought, depth of feeling, cultural appreciation, or interest in spirituality tend to be ignored in the modern educational ventures which are largely aimed at mass –producing functionaries of a global market system”.⁴⁶³ School’s educational goal has to be the integration of the study of science with character development. Calling for a type of education that seeks to develop both the material and spiritual needs of the students, Gülen sees educational reform as the key to positive societal change. He said: “The permanence of the nation depends upon the education of its people, upon their lives being guided to spiritual perfection. If nation have not be able to bring up well-rounded generation to whom they can entrust their future, when their future will be dark”.⁴⁶⁴

Like other former Soviet republics, Central Asian states have been struggling to maintain high educational standards since they gained independence. Yet, economic depletion has forced them to reduce their educational budgets, leading to a significant decrease in teaching standards. In addition, unattractive salaries have drained the profession of many of its most competent teachers and university professors.

⁴⁶² Gülen, F. (1996), *Towards the Lost Paradise*, London: Truostar, , 11

⁴⁶³ Gülen, F. (1996) *Towards the Lost Paradise*, London, Truostar, 16

⁴⁶⁴ Gülen, F. (1996) *Towards the Lost Paradise*, London, Truostar, 55-56



The Gülen schools arrived to Central Asia as early as 1992, in the wake of considerable Turkish investment, which helped to local governments to overcome this situation. They have had the tactic support of Turkish government, which sees in them a Turkish presence in the region. The schools have quickly covered a niche for themselves everywhere in Central Asia. The schools are private, and initially had been free-based institutions are thus accessible for elites, which whom they were popular because they offered a rigorous, world-class education and impart skills in the contemporary world. Leading businessmen and bureaucrats send their children to these schools because of the high probability that they will pass their university entrance examinations. The language of instruction in these schools is English, though some subjects are taught in language of the host country; the curriculum also includes Turkish and Russian. The schools possess excellent teaching materials and computer equipment and emphasize such traditional themes as respect to teachers and students, hygiene, personal appearance and discipline. They also provided scholarship to poor but brilliant students.

Although Gülen's teachers are devoted Muslim believers, they do not teach religion at school and strictly observe Turkey's state-sponsored secular curriculum. As in Turkey, a strong emphasis on sciences, ethics, and self-discipline is what characterizes these schools. They are also open to non-Muslim students, including representatives of ethnic Slav minorities.

Rather, the Gülen community seeks to win hearts and minds by setting an example of excellence. There is nothing traditional, and then about the Gülen schools, which has little precedent in the Muslim tradition, either in Turkey and Central Asia. In their enthusiasm in education, the followers of Gülen are heirs to the Jadids, but as Bayram Balci argues, they are best understood as Muslim Jesuits in that they seek to transform society through educating of elites⁴⁶⁵. They provide a good image of Islam, not so much through introduction, but to teach Islam through its members setting a good example by becoming good specialists in different areas of specialization.

Rather than teaching religion, the Gülen schools stress the transmitting of ethical and moral values (*ahlak*). The two key notions in the Gülen movement's understanding of Islam are morality and identity. The Gülen schools see themselves as working for Islam because they provide guidance and moral example for students. Another key notion is *tamsil*, meaning representation. Rather than preaching Islam, the teachers are expected to be good role models for the students, and personify the values of Islam through their good deeds and moral conduct.

Teachers in Gülen schools tried to establish excellent relationships with parents. It was very important because it helped to defend these schools. After the first crises in Uzbekistan the intervention of some important parents dissuaded the authorities from expelling schools from the country altogether. Of course these groups were not strong enough ultimately to save schools, as it was shown in September 2000, when all of them finally been closed down in this country.

⁴⁶⁵ Balchy, B. (2003) *Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools*, New York.



5. Worsening of the Relationships between Turkey and Uzbekistan and Its Negative Effect on Dissemination of Gülen's Ideas

Paradoxically, while Gülen's schools served the interests of official Ankara by paving the ground for extensive business cooperation between Turkey and Central Asia, many state officials in Turkey view the Gülen community with suspicion.

That is true that in the early 1990s a crises between the schools and Uzbek government was provoked by a report produced by the Turkish embassy about the nature of Gülen's movement. The report warned the Uzbek government about danger of this movement, which according to the embassy's research had proved to be fundamentalist and Islamist.

In reality in order to guarantee its presence in each country, these educational establishments offered their support for the governmental policy and post soviet ideology. In the schools Gülen's followers teach the students to love the new independent state, the president, the flag, the new institutions, and the new heroes, who have been chosen by the new regimes and so on. For the same purpose, the General Directorate of the high schools will have translated some of the president's works into Turkish and distributed in Turkey. The schools become ambassadors to Turkey for these CA regimes, promoting their culture and history and also contributing to the formation of new local elites.⁴⁶⁶

After the crises with the Uzbek government in 1993 the General Directorate of the schools and the director of each high school decided to forbid Islamic practice in the schools as dangerous for the future of the movement in Central Asia. Of course there are numerous differences amongst Central Asian republics. In Uzbekistan the Gülen movement has engaged in no proselytizing since the very beginning, in 1992-93. President Karimov's anger against Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) limited religious education and Islamization of society. In Kazakhstan until recently it used to be easier to teach Islam at schools, but not any more. In Kyrgyzstan everything is possible. In Turkmenistan under Turkmenbashy, state control was even stricter then in Uzbekistan, but the situation is slowly changing in that country after his death and at this point there is no clarity which way it will take.

Since September, 2000 Gülen schools were forbidden in the most populous country of Central Asia, in Uzbekistan. For various reasons Tashkent has always tried to limit their presence from the first years of independence. The Uzbek government in fact has been trying to place limits on any kind of Turkish presence in the country. Crises are chronic between Tashkent and Ankara. The first crises arose because Uzbek opposition leaders – Muhammad Solih, chairman of Erk and Abdurahhman Polat, chairman of Birlilik, fled as refugees to Turkey, when they were threatened by the Uzbek government. Uzbek president demanded that the Turkish authorities expel them, fearing that they would influence Uzbek students in Turkey, but met with a refusal. Karimov is also hostile of the strong Turkish foreign policy in Uzbekistan (and indeed in Central Asia as a whole). He blamed Turkey for the aspiration to be a new 'big brother' in the region. The official reason for shutting down all Gülen schools in Uzbekistan was the open teaching of namaz and recommendation to girls to wear headscarves.⁴⁶⁷ However, Ecevit urged calm: "The Uzbek President has several unjust concerns about Turkey...Turkey does not intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries. I attribute great importance to relations

⁴⁶⁶ Khalid, A.(2007) *Islam after Communism*, Berkley: University of California Press, 124-125

⁴⁶⁷ *Sobranie Zakonodotalstv Respubliki Uzbekistan*, N 37-38, September, 2000.



with Uzbekistan. We cannot allow that these relations have been damaged by unnecessary touchiness⁴⁶⁸.

Another reason for closing down Gülen's schools in Uzbekistan was the differences in educational philosophy between the state and the Gülen schools. According to Anne Solberg⁴⁶⁹ there are four key categories in traditional educational approaches:

1. *Non-denominationalism*, school system which do not include any form of structures religious education.
2. *Single- denominationalism*, school system which include the teaching of one particular religion using methods which protects, and operate from the tradition of that religion.
3. *Multi- denominationalism*, school system which include the teaching of many religions. However, each religion is taught separately, with students electing for classes in their religion.
4. *Inter- denominationalism*, school system which include the teaching of all religion to all students regardless of their particular religion of any group of students. The teaching methods based on respect and understanding each religion. (Fethullah Gülen's approach to education).

Educational system in Uzbekistan is strictly non- denominationalists and does not allow any other types of education to be presented in the country.

In 2000 it became clear that Uzbek model of economic reforms is not effective. Uzbekistan always followed the path of gradual economic transition to a market-based economy. The Government has tried to balance the transition to a market economy by retaining aspects of a command economy. The rate and depth of Uzbekistan's economic and political liberalization have been modest and tightly controlled by Government sought to move cautiously to establish a market economy, while at the same time maintaining social expenditures. Privatization has been very slow and prices more strictly controlled than in other Central Asian republics.

In general, the transition has resulted in a significant fall in living standards for most of the population. It has been accompanied by decline in production, an increase in unemployment, high inflation, decreasing standards of living, and finally increasing income differentiation and inequality. Of course, all of these negative factors challenged the respect to the government among population. In order to justify poor economic course of action and reinforce their positions, Uzbek government called for an ostensible 'Islamic factor'. They started to present contemporary Islam as innately political, intolerant, oppressive for women and inimical to the secular state and its values, democracy and modernity. Gülen has become unlikable for these people, because they want to see a backward, radical Islam, in order to justify authoritarianism.

Officially Islam nowadays is recognized only as a cultural and traditional heritage of people, modern Islam considered being aggressive and dangerous, contemporary thinkers, who are presenting an alternative view on Islam, are not encouraged to disseminate their ideas in the country.

⁴⁶⁸ Middle East review of International Affairs, (December, 2000), Vol. 4, No 4. 6.

⁴⁶⁹ Solberg, A. The Gülen schools: A perfect compromise or compromising perfectly?, Internet article.



6. Fethullah Gülen's Community and Development of Civil Society in Central Asia

Previously we already described the most important activity of Fethullah Gülen's community through establishing of a wider network of Gülen schools in Central Asia. But this movement is also important as the model of Turkish civil society organization. Formation of the strong civil society, which can be an equal player along with states on the political stage, is a very important and timely goal for all Central Asian republics.

The contemporary theoretical literature on civil society tends to divide civil society groups into 'ideal types' to help the observer understand their empiric manifestation in various context, and to appreciate the different roles they can play in effecting change. These 'ideal types' suggest ways that civil society has developed as system of values, political projects and organizational form. Many of contributions here with have sought to engage with unfolding debate about the possibility of categorizing models of civil society by testing their applicability in Central Asia. The two such types of civil society that are the most relevant in the region can be termed 'neo-liberal' and 'communal'⁴⁷⁰.

During the late 1980s, as massive social and political upheavals transformed the nature of the state in East and Central Europe, civil society was (re)defined as primarily a neo-liberal concept. At that time civil society's emergence was linked to the empowerment of dissident opposition movements who launched a liberal political project to terminate their region's communist experiment. Civil society groups clamoured for the protection of the value of freedom, justice, human rights and democracy. As changes swept the region, citizens in independent organizations were empowered to open the dialogue with government to protect their interests. Neo-liberal civil society was the primarily conceived of as a political project, where activists were engaged in lobbying and advocacy. According to the neo-liberal definition, civil society can best be associated with the values of 18 century Western Europe 'modernity' during the time of nation-states' creation. Based on this understanding 'to be a member of a civil society was to be a citizen- a member of the state'⁴⁷¹. Members of such a society had the right to vote and serve in public office; participation in public affairs was institutionalized. It was also voluntary. Citizens were engaged in civil society independent of state, family and community bonds.

As an organizational form most often neo-liberal civil society has been described as 'the realm of autonomous voluntary organization, acting in the public sphere as an intermediary between the state and private life'⁴⁷². It is best represented by non-government organizations (NGOs) and the voluntary sector made up of organizations that are private, non-profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary⁴⁷³.

Yet it is possible to argue that a second form of civil society much more powerful in Central Asia. Civil society as a communal concept can be considered as having roots in centuries of community

⁴⁷⁰ Sabine Freizer, (2004) 'Central Asian fragmented civil society: communal and neo-liberal forms in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan', in Marlies Glasius, David Lewis and Hakan Sekinelgin, eds., *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts* (London, Routledge) 130-141

⁴⁷¹ Joan Keane, (1988) 'Civil Society and the State' (London, Verso) 36

⁴⁷² Larry Diamond and Mark F. Plattner, eds., (1996) *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, Baltimore, MD, John Hopkins University Press

⁴⁷³ Leslie Salamon and Helmut Anheier, (1996) 'Social origins of civil society: explaining in the non for profit sector cross nationally', *Voluntas*, Vol.9, # 3, 213-148



organizing, with the development of mutual aid and localized forms of decision making. This argument is substantiated by a second wave of theorizing on civil society, which began through the expansion of the civil society debate to non-Western contexts on mid-late 1990s. Scholars from the Islamic world were frequently in the forefront of this re-conceptualization of a civil society as a communal concept. Here civil society was not viewed as a neo-liberal construct but as a communal one. Communal civil society was less concerned with state-society relations, and the ability of citizens to resist amoral and power hungry political elites, then with relationship within society, with community solidarity, self-help and trust. The main aim of this civil society is to insure that members of the group had the necessary means for survival. Based on family ties, friendship or good neighborliness – it organized to offer services, community infrastructure and other essentials. Religious and ethnically based organizations also fit a communal definition of civil society.

Communal civil society could be defined as sphere of social interaction where people come together on a voluntary basis along interest lines, to exchange information, deliberate about collective action and define public opinion. It is a space made up of organization as well as highly informal model of interaction. Communal, civil society could be located in ‘families, communities, friendship network, solidaristic workplace ties, spontaneous groups and movements’.⁴⁷⁴ It is most often bound by a set territory and focused on a local community, the site of face-to-face encounters. The values that this civil society espouses aim first and foremost to maintain community stability and security; they tend to be conservative and patriarchal. Community meetings generally seek consensus; shared ideas and values tend to be more appreciated than divisive and innovative ones. Commitment to civil society is not necessary based on the assertion of an individual’s will, but often on group and community expression of solidarity. The ensuing environment can be oppressive to those who did not wish conform to the majority. This civil society contains repression as well as democracy, vice as well as virtue⁴⁷⁵.

Various organizational representations of communal civil society involved in Central Asia, often adopted new functions, and forms of interaction with the state, in changing political environment. They include Kazakh and Kyrgyz nomadic hordes (*zhuz*), which were based on extended clan networks through which economic, political and social issues were addressed. Amongst urbanized and sedentary populations – especially Tajiks and Uzbeks- kinship ties were strengthened by links on proximity in *mahallas*. These were geographic neighborhoods but also the site of intensive contacts, information exchange, opinion formation and decision making. In the post-Soviet period mahallas survived in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan but often with new occupations and levels of accountability. Throughout Central Asian traditions forms of community self-help termed *hashar* still have empirical meaning today.

Development of civil society in a neo-liberal sense in Central Asia and in Uzbekistan particularly is still in rudimentary stage. There are a lot of debates in academic sphere that some communal institutions of civil society, such as *Mahalla* have a long history and still very powerful in the region.

Fethullah Gülen’s movement is included as neo-liberal as well as communal aspects of civil society. It is voluntary organization which trying to harmonize traditions with modernity and brings together Islamic intellectuals (journalists, teachers and students) and businessmen. Gülen’s community is

⁴⁷⁴ Dekker, P. and Van den Broek, A. (1998) Civil society in contemporary perspective” involvement in voluntary associations in North America and Western Europe’, *Voluntas*, Vol 9, #1, 13

⁴⁷⁵ Van Rooy, A. (2000) *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*, London, Earthscan.



based on complex of business networks and controls a large media empire. In addition it controls one of the fastest growing financial institutions, Asya Finance.

The main principles, which underlie their activity, are taken from Fethullah Gülen doctrine. They are included following list of elements:

1. the first principle is belief;
2. self-sacrifice – with resources and self and altruism;
3. dialog/tolerance;
4. avoidance of political and ideological conflict;
5. taken action on a positive and harmonious way;
6. taking responsibility;
7. to give with no expectation of praise or reward;
8. humbleness.

There is no official way for joining Gülen's community. Members encounter the movement through context such as secondary or university educational setting or perhaps through personal contacts. Community becomes a family for a new adherent. Like in any family, it has a father-founder, older sisters and older brothers. *Mahalla* communities in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also have a very similar structure. At the end necessary to mark that Gülen's community has a very broad support at all levels of Turkish society and can be used as a valuable source for civil society development in Central Asia.

7. Concluding Remarks

The formation of the modern nation is not a smooth or straightforward process. Obstacles and drawbacks are common. There is no doubt that relationships between Turkey and Central Asia are very important for both regions and have a very bright future despite of present divisions in a political sphere. Gülen's ideas and writings can be used for further development in our region in order to create a better society, based on religious tolerance, modernity, value and the importance of education and the pursuit of knowledge, and the formative role which played by religion and spiritual life. His quest to establish an accommodation between Islam and modernity, its resonance with the contemporary concern with civil society, and its possible contribution towards more harmonious relationship between East and West at a time when many are unfortunately using the language of clash of civilization is one of the most valuable resources, which have to be applied in a modern society because the two key words are dominated the Gülen philosophy: tolerance and dialog. Fethullah Gülen sees Medina at the time of Prophet as proof that there is room for other religions and even non-believers to coexist with Islam.

Although many Islamic leaders may talk of tolerance in Islam, it may be problematic to put in into practice. Gülen himself has shown that he has no fears of meeting leaders of other religions, including the Pope and the representatives of Jewish community in Istanbul. He also crossed the borders of Islamic discourse to meet with important people in Turkish society who are atheists.



His educational approach, which is integrated traditional religious education, with its emphasis on spiritual values with modern secular scientific education, and technologies of the twenty first century is very important especially in Central Asian countries. Because from one hand overwhelming majority of people living in these countries are Muslim and they are one of the most educated people in Islamic world. But the most important thing that the new world requires top professionals in any area of human activity and at the same time people who have high moral principles, enable them to co-exist in peace.