



MOTIVATING MINORITY INTEGRATION IN WESTERN CONTEXT: THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

FATİH TEDİK³⁶⁴

Abstract

This paper endeavours to analyse the potential contributions of the Gülen Movement to the integration process of Turkish community in the UK in the medium-run and the whole Muslim community in the long-run and the feasibility of this process with references to the existing restrictions in the composition of aforementioned communities. The Gülen movement has an interesting potential in the UK since 7/7 and its aftermath have urged the state to co-opt a suitable Muslimhood in the UK's multicultural context. This does not mean that the government and policymakers would invent or evolve a new religion but, indeed, it denotes that the existing system should cooperate with an existing Muslim establishment, movement or approach in order to endorse integration process for a peaceful coexistence. Many Muslim organisations and movements exist as the possible candidates particularly with their improving dialogue activities in the post 7/7 atmosphere. However, I suggest that, in this context, the Gülen movement offers a new partnership with the surrounding society with its characteristics, such as built-in dialogue notion, un-denominational schools and new understanding of the West and Western. Yet, this mostly positive outlook contains undeniable shortcomings that constraint the movement's capacity at this new home, e.g. severe sectarian and ethnic cleavages, disadvantageous status of Turkish community and the movement's financial constraints. To articulate this probable function of the Movement, the paper first gives a succinct summary of the theoretical incentives of the Gülen movement for integration. Then it depicts the social conditions in which the Turkish community live followed by the Gülen movement's history in the United Kingdom. Thirdly, the paper endeavour to analyse the Movement's integration philosophy, its impacts on Turkish community in the Western Europe and the problems that the Movement and Turkish community experience. Finally, possible collaboration options for the UK government and the Gülen movement to improve the integration of Turkish community in the medium-run and the greater Muslim community in the long-run are discussed.

1. Introduction: Theoretical Incentives of the Gülen Movement for Integration

Initially –and perhaps the most importantly– Gülen's redefinition of West, Western civilisation and Western context in religious terms is an attempt to replace the conventional dichotomy of *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (abode of war). He does not only attempts to alter the Muslims' assessment of West as a natural enemy and their land as the natural places of destruction;

³⁶⁴ Preparing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Birmingham on 'Stimulating the Potential: the Role of Religious Movements in the Integration Process of the Turkish Community in Holland and the United Kingdom'. (BA in political science and public administration, Bilkent University; MA in public administration, Ankara University; MSc in politics, SOAS, University of London.) Research interests: Turkish religious movements, integration, the Turkish diaspora in western Europe, the Gülen Movement and the Muslim community in the UK.



he also seeks to substitute the classifications, which give temporal reconciliation, with an unconditional idea of concord. For instance, besides the dar al-Islam and dar al-harb dichotomy, Islamic jurisprudence has utilised different concepts –such as *ikrah* (duress), *darura* (necessity), and *maslaha* (public welfare)– and produce some concepts –such as *dar al-ahd* (country of treaty, covenant), *dar al-aman* (country of security), *dar as-sulh* (country of peace), and *dar al-darura* (country of necessity) which denotes that “Muslims can live according to their religion in non-Muslim lands perhaps with difficulty but peacefully.”³⁶⁵ Quite the reverse, Gülen’s term of *dar el-hizmet* (abode of service) requires Muslims to *ad infinitum* perform peaceful manners in their societies to demonstrate Islam’s ‘true façade’.

The term charges new duty to the believer to portray good example in their everyday lives (*temsil*) without any reservation. It stresses not only necessity but also the obligation of a Muslim to obey legal settings of the new country, not only receiving benefits of the political setting (e.g. pensions, but also perform civic duties (e.g. tax), recognition of other’s rights and being fair. Gülen stresses that:

“wherever a Muslim is, even outside a Muslim polity; he or she has to obey the *lex loci*, to respect others’ rights and to be just, In Gülen’s understanding, *umma* is more of a transnational socio-cultural entity, not a politico-legal one. He hopes that this socio-cultural entity will be instrumental in bringing general universal peace.”³⁶⁶

Thus, by these words, he nullifies the conventional evaluation of the western context, even those giving a conditional status of peace but which are prone-to-change according to conditions. And quite strikingly, he also changes the magnitude of the aforementioned peaceful manner in terms of Islamic theology. Though in the classical dichotomies, the terms do not belong to the essence of the faith; Gülen repositioned the peaceful method and obedience to the host country to the centre of a Muslim’s personal and religious life and requires him/her to re-designate the complete way of life similar to the commands of the religion. Hence, for his integration becomes intrinsic or integral part of the religion.

Secondly, and parallel to the first set of logic, values of Western civilisation such as democracy and modernity, and re-evaluation of the West’s development occupy a one of the focal points in his logic. He does not observe the West and its civilisation from ‘our eternal enemy’ perspective, and thus, denies the rejection of its values just because ‘they are Western’. He sees Western dominance as the result of their obedience to the Divine laws valid in the nature by pursuing scientific knowledge and by developing well-structured methodology. Gülen emphasizes his concern for the basic, tenets of Islam, but he also professes the backwardness of today’s Islamic interpretation and livelihood vis-à-vis the requirements of the era. To him, that’s why West dominates the Muslim World, while latter fails to understand and perform Islam properly, and disregards the scientific investigation as done by the former.³⁶⁷ He promotes this notion with his understanding of *takwah* which mostly understood as the preservation from sins. He sees *takwah* as a systematic rapprochement to the creation, fulfillment all the requirements of this world (e.g. from science to economics) which concomitant with having a pious and otherworldly character. It seems that this is not a mere justification of modernity and a pursuit of a ‘middle way’ between being Muslim and being modern; because he accepts Islam itself as

³⁶⁵ Yilmaz, I, *Ijtihad and Tajdid by Conduct: The Gülen Movement*, in M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, p. 234

³⁶⁶ Yilmaz, I, *Ijtihad and Tajdid by Conduct: The Gülen Movement*, in M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, p. 234

³⁶⁷ Gülen, MF, *Essentials of the Islamic*, The Light, New Jersey, 2005, p. 251



the middle way. In this regard, Gülen is searching for an interpretation of Islam that is compatible with and at the same time critical of modernity and tradition. In other words, it is not an effort for grafting Islam with modernity and obtaining a hybrid identity. "What he does is reveal a dynamic interpretation of Islam that is both compatible with and critical of modernity and Muslim tradition."³⁶⁸

Thirdly, with his re-reading of dialogue in which dialogue is the natural result of the practice of Islamic ethics falls apart from most of the Islamic scholars. For him, Islam does not reject interaction with diverse cultures and on condition that it does not challenge with the essence of Islam. For all other conditions, dialogue is not a superfluous endeavour, but an imperative which is inherent to the faith. For him "love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom are all values exalted by religion... [and are the parts of] the messages brought by Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, upon them be peace, as well as in the messages of Buddha and even Zarathustra, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and the Hindu prophets."³⁶⁹ On the contrary, opposition to the diversity or attempts to take measures against the emergence of diverse ideas are, indeed, against God's creation and historical fact.

2. Turks in the United Kingdom

The terms Turks in the United Kingdom or Turkish Community in Britain, at least in this article, refer to the ethnically, politically and religiously fragmented community that comprises three main groups: Cypriot Turks, mainland Turks and Kurdish refugees. Most of the members of this Turkish speaking community have settled mainly in London, particularly the boroughs of Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark, Croydon in the south, Haringey, Enfield, Islington and Hackney in the north, and in other major cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Leicester.

Today, it's quite common to feel Turkish presence in some parts of these places. For instance, in Harringay of London Borough of Haringey or Kingsland Road (which situated between Dalston and Stoke Newington) of London Borough of Hackney, a large amount of Turkish coffee and kebab shops, restaurants, markets, social clubs and other Turkish businesses with their Turkish names, Turkish outlook and Turkish style of merchandising serve their surrounding society. As one of the kebab shop clerks in Harringay states that probably the number of kebab shops on Harringay or Kingland Road is more than anywhere in Turkey.

This picture, of course, started emerging after a series of political and social events in mainland Turkey and Cyprus. These events such as wars, coup d'état of 1980, economic conditions and social trends have encouraged, if not obliged, to immigrate for safer and better places to live. As a result, since the first wave of Turkish Cypriots fled their increasingly unstable and divided island to seek refuge in the UK in between the first half of 50s and the end of 60s, the number of Turkish people has steadily increased over time.³⁷⁰ Particularly, with a tide of immigrants in the 80s that seek to build more economically and politically foreseeable future for themselves and their household and with

³⁶⁸ Kuru, Ahmet T. Fethullah Gülen's Search for a Middle Way Between Modernity and Muslim Tradition, in M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003, p. 130

³⁶⁹ Ünal, Ali and Alphonse Williams, *Fethullah Gülen: Advocate of Dialogue*, Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000, p.43

³⁷⁰ <http://www.gazetem.net/bellekyazi.asp?yaziid=67>



another great wave in the 90s mainly consists of people with Kurdish origin who left their homelands due to Gulf War, this Turkish population has been calculated as nearly a quarter-million immigrants. Even for some representatives of the respective communities, this number could have soared to 300.000 or even 350.000. Although most of related literature insists that small proportion of mainland Turkish minority and vast majority of Kurds have resided the UK as safe haven where is far from political turbulence of their hometowns, as consequence of my interviews, I believe that almost all of the former group and the vast majority of the latter came to the UK due to economical reasons. By economical reasons, I mean the availability of more prosperous life in the UK than in Turkey.

Now, third generation is in education and preparing to enter the life but In terms of integration, although each new generation performs better than previous one the picture is not so bright. After the formal immigration era started the first generation were hardly educated population who had rural background of Eastern and Central Anatolia. When they experienced a shock following residence in the Western countries, with the instinct of protection they began gathering in the Turkish ghettos.³⁷¹ They had no intention to stay permanently, thus, they didn't feel the necessity to integrate into the society. This pattern of 'ethnic enclaves' has continued and even increased each year. In fact, the Turkish-speaking community is probably one of the most self-sufficient communities in London with half a dozen local community-based newspapers, together with Turkish television channels and countless digital radio channels. Community members can provide any service within the community ranging from mortgages to a quit-smoking helpline and from driving instructions to massage parlours. As BBC correspondent reported it could be christened "Little Turkey".

At the beginning, religion had not any role in the Turkish community. Especially before the 1980s, parallel to the Turkish politics, the greater part of Turkish associations could be categorised according to their position on the continuum of the extreme poles of Turkish society. Turkish political competition, both official and underground, became reflected among the Turks in Diaspora. But transition from temporary migration to permanent settlement, family reunification and Turkish political developments increased the significance of religion in the Turkish community.³⁷²

However, religion of Turkish community is neither strong enough to mobilise people nor monolithic entity. Turkish community divided into many parts due to sectarian and ethnic disparities. In terms of sectarian variations, Turkish population is mostly Sunni with 88% and Alevi with 11%, which have no large exchanges between them. No Alevi live in Sunni-dominated areas and as was shown earlier, the distinctions are repeated in the composition of the unions. The Alevi and the laicists are unlikely candidates for Islamic movements.

Turks are mostly cultural Muslims who adjust their religious practices towards 'folk Islam'. This Islamic way of life is a mixture of "popular religiosity, national customs, Islamic rules of conduct, mysticism, folk knowledge, folklore and magic with Islamic elements".³⁷³ Especially members of the first generation define themselves as Muslims but this is not because of their firm adherence to an Islamic faith but they merge the notion of nationality and the Islam. In other words, they are Muslims because Islam was taken granted with 'Turkishness' and it is far from their central identities. For example, as Joseph Rowntree Foundation research suggests that less than 5 per cent chose religion as

³⁷¹ <http://www.gazetem.net/bellekyazi.asp?yaziid=68>

³⁷² <http://www.flwi.ugent.be/cie/umanco>

³⁷³ Thomä-Venske, Hans (1988) *The Religious Life of Muslims in Berlin*, in T. Gerholm and Yngve George Lithman, eds., London and New York: Mansell, p. 78



their only identity. Sixty-eight per cent did not subscribe to a religious identity at all. This low use of a Muslim identity is completely distinct from the findings of the Fourth Survey, in which, for instance, an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis said their religion was an important feature of their self-description and the way they lived their lives (Modood et al, 1997). While for some respondents being Turk implies being Muslim at the same time, this Muslimness is again a cultural identity rather than a religious one.³⁷⁴

On the other hand, the members of Turkish community do not feel British either. As figures in the same research illustrates that only 3 out of 250 Turkish respondents identified themselves as British only. Not having British as a self-identity does not mean that the young people chose only Turkish as an identity. Indeed, nearly 60 per cent of the young people chose multiple identities for themselves. In fact, only 22 per cent of the males and 15 per cent of the females chose only Turkish as a self-description.³⁷⁵ While this is partly because of many Kurdish people's alienation from a Turkish identity, it is still the case that the majority of the young people picked more than one identity. In other words, in ethno-national sense, the chief split occurs mainly among people with Turkish and Kurdish origins.³⁷⁶ Three different historical and social backgrounds of these three migrants groups inevitably have affected relations between the communities and generated a heterogeneous community in Britain. Nowadays, the tension between Turkish State vs. PKK and Turkish State vs. Kurdish Administration in Northern Iraq highlighted the ethnic division between Turks and Kurds in Britain. For instance, during the pro-PKK demonstration on 28th October 2007 the Metropolitan Police did show great effort to prevent a bloody encounter between the two sides.³⁷⁷

For social indices, today, the Turkish community suffers from very serious deficiencies which not only obstruct a healthy integration but also threaten Turkish community itself. Lack of formal and vocational education, critical deficiencies in communication in native language, social isolation, animosity and anxiety towards the societal environment, and involvement to crime³⁷⁸ have reached very critical level already. Again findings from the same research indicate that many of the 16–23 year olds who filled in our questionnaire did not have many qualifications. This outcome is also likely to be shaped by their socioeconomic background and, in the case of some, their recent arrival under difficult circumstances in Britain. Nearly half of the males and 37 per cent of the females in our survey did not have a single good GCSE result. In terms of the 2002 GCSE results, only 13 per cent of 99 Kurdish candidates achieved five or more C and above grades (the standard measure of good educational achievement). For Turkish Cypriots, it was 14 per cent of 36 and, for Turkish students, 21 per cent of 94. The average for Haringey is 35 per cent (Haringey Local Education Authority website, <http://www.haringey.gov.uk/education/>). If we add the whole Turkish community, this figure becomes much more severe: 40% of Turks and 60% of Kurds in Britain have no formal educations³⁷⁹.

In terms of unemployment and home ownership the Turkish-speaking families are worse off than the Haringey average. Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement for pupils in English schools is an indicator

³⁷⁴ The complete report entitled "Young Turks and Kurds: A Set of 'Invisible' Disadvantaged Groups" could be seen and download from <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/185935274X.pdf>

³⁷⁵ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/185935274X.pdf>

³⁷⁶ Başyurt, Erhan. "Gerçekleşmesi Zor Bir Hayal: Euro-İslam." *Aksiyon* 09/2004

³⁷⁷ www.toplumpostasi.net

³⁷⁸ Only in German prisons are 25000 Turks and more than this number involved to the street mobs.

³⁷⁹ Bradley, Harriet (2005) *İlgisizlik ve Dışlanma*, *Londra Gazete*, February 17, 2005



for measuring poverty. In 2002, four out of ten Haringey GCSE cohort students required a free meal, while nearly eight out of ten Kurdish students, 65 per cent of Turkish students and half of the Turkish Cypriot students did so.³⁸⁰ Moreover, the percentage of unemployment in Haringey is 5.8 per cent, compared to the England and Wales average of 3.4 per cent. In addition, three in every ten households in Haringey live in rented social housing (renting from the council, a housing association or a registered social landlord), while less than half of the households own their homes. The remainder of the households rent privately or live rent free.³⁸¹

This underprivileged status undoubtedly increases the numbers of illegal organisations within the Turkish community itself. The members of socially un-integrated and economically underdeveloped families choose to join crime organisations in order to complete –according to themselves– what is missing in their life. For instance, The National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS)³⁸² states that 70% of the heroin coming into the UK is brought in by ethnic Turkish gangs based in Britain.

In fact, the situation is not so desperate since fairly small percentage of the second generation and almost total entity of the third generation of the Turkish community are now struggling to diminish this disadvantaged status. Nowadays, for instance, even it is likely to observe “shining examples” of the Turkish youth in Western context who have achieved academic or professional excellence in nationwide examinations.³⁸³

3. Gülen Movement's Initiatives in Britain

The history of the Gülen Movement in the United Kingdom is fairly short compared to other Turkish faith-based communities or movements, such as Suleymanci, Sheikh Nazim and other Naqshibendiyya communities. Indeed, this fact could be deduced when the facilities and other services of respective communities are observed. For instance, each of the aforementioned community has its own an *opus magnum* in terms of religious architecture, such as Suleymaniye and Aziziye Mosques that both situated in Hackney. To meet religious necessities of the Turkish community during Ramadan, Gülen movement, however, hire small community centres for Ramadan activities.

The most established institution of the Movement is Axis Educational Trust which was established in 1994 as a charitable trust. Its founders and first trustees were Turkish-speaking businessmen and academics resident in the UK. The objective of Axis is three-fold, advancement of the educational attainment of the Turkish-speaking (Turkish, Kurdish, Turkish-Cypriot) youth in the UK, encouragement of their social integration and inclusion within the wider society and support and

³⁸⁰ Haringey Local Education Authority website, <http://www.haringey.gov.uk/education>

³⁸¹ Neighbourhood Statistics website, <http://www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk/areaProfile>

³⁸² Now, the responsibilities of NCIS are resumed by The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by, but operationally independent from, the Home Office. The Agency has been formed from the amalgamation of the National Crime Squad (NCS), National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), that part of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) dealing with drug trafficking and associated criminal finance and a part of UK Immigration dealing with organised immigration crime (UKIS). (<http://www.soca.gov.uk/index.html>)

³⁸³ This sort of news has become very common particularly for Europe edition of Turkish newspapers such as Zaman and Hurriyet, or local Turkish newspapers such as London based Haber and Olay newspapers. For examples, please visit www.eurozaman.com/euro, www.habernewspaper.com or www.olaygazete.co.uk.



guidance for the rest of the Turkish-speaking community in social, welfare and educational matters that is of concern to them.

Although it has a history of slightly more than a decade, except a brief mainstream school experience, Axis have mainly operated supplementary weekend schools until the opening of Wisdom Primary and Secondary School in Tottenham, Haringey. In the supplementary schools whose number has fluctuated over years, as other weekend schools of Turkish community, main emphasis has been on the teaching of Turkish. Maths, science and English are among other important fields that taught each year. As stated above, two years ago, the Trust managed to open Turkish community's first private mainstream school. The school, as its counterparts in different countries over the world, is an un-denominational school which follow national curriculum. As second year running, it has nearly 70 students all of which from Turkish background. As the additional facilities, last year, it rented an old school building in Bradford for thirty years as a consequence of an agreement with Pakistani community that vacated the building due to inadequacy of students. Axis is planning to open this building as a boarding secondary school by the spring term. Finally, following a mortgage agreement with the building society the Trust started refurbishing an old building near Edmonton, an Enfield town with a high density of Turkish and Kurdish population. This building will be opened next year as primary and secondary school since Wisdom becomes small for future expansions in educational field.³⁸⁴

Another organisation funded by the Movement is the Dialogue Society (DS). The Dialogue Society was established in 1999 by a group of Turkish-Muslim intellectuals, academics and volunteers as a not-for-profit charitable organisation. In its charter, the objective of DS is declared as "to promote tolerance, understanding, mutual respect and acceptance of people as they are, between people from all walks of life." To achieve this goal, DS routinely organizes 5 different events throughout each year. These events are Whirling Dervishes event (or the Whispers of Love), commemoration of Prophet Muhammed's birth (Mawlid an-Nabi), celebration of Kurbanı festival (eid al-fitr) and commemoration of Jesus' birth which generally held on following days of Christmas and finally fast-breaking Ifthar dinners in the holy month of Ramadan. In all programs, the preferred method by the members of the Movement is not to explain or demonstrate solely the Islamic perception and understanding of this event but allow other faiths to express themselves in the events. For instance, in a Whirling Dervishes event which was held two years ago at Hackney Empire Theatre, the believers of almost all faiths explain their perspectives on the general theme, which was love for that year, and prayed for the good of all Londoners and humanity at the end of the event. There are several sister organizations of DS all over Britain which are also established by the members of the movement inhabited in that region.

Although the movement has other organizations founded for different aims, i.e. Koza Women Association or Anatolian Muslim Society, either their scope or their activities are limited compared to Axis and Dialogue Society; thus they are omitted in this paper.

The Gülen movement in the Turkey, and in the United Kingdom as its reflection, is a fairly controversial formation with its philosophies and institutions run by its sympathisers all over the world. They are severely criticized by two groups, hard-line laicists who mainly constitute the

³⁸⁴ Lighthouse Educational Foundation is another charity that is as the South London counterpart of the Axis Educational Trust but neither its activities nor its facilities has developed like Axis. As new institutions are being opened via Axis, it seems that the dual system of weekend school system will fade out and the main focus will only be the Axis.



dominant state-elite and a minor radical group of Islamists whose support are mostly external and politically oriented. Whilst the former group suspect of organising to takeover the state when the conditions met, the latter group are not keen on their tolerant approach to the non-Muslims. For example, during the latest international academic conference in London in which the Gülen movement's influence in the Muslim World was analysed, all of the Kemalist organisations and some of the secular organisations launched a campaign to prevent the conference by pressuring the venues, the editors and some of the organisers by insisting that the conference would undermine the secular structure of the Turkish political system.

However, as Kömeçoğlu argues, the community is not a response of dissidents Muslims of a 'social breakdown' or group of people with lower class background in order to protest social tension in Turkey or in the world.³⁸⁵ Contrary, the members of the community are mostly university student and large group of small and big businessmen, professionals from all sectors in the country, especially from academics, media, music and the specialized strata that compose the elite as well as middle layers of the society. Altunoğlu determined seven characteristics of the members of the movement; individually pious, culturally ascetic, politically conservative, idealist in the mission of converting souls, disengaged in active politics, success-oriented 'Otherization' and adversary component is weak.³⁸⁶ Yavuz adds four additional attributes to the followers' profile: they are "more predisposed to tolerance, electoral politics, moderation, and a market economy than are other Islamic groups in Turkey."

Even though the devotees are enthusiastic believers of their faith, they formulise their mission with humanitarian parameters and believe that salvation "is not only to be 'saved from' sinful activities, but also to be engaged actively in the improvement of the world." They think that serving the society in the narrow sense and the humanity in the wide sense is the most crucial activity to gain God's favour and consent. They do not try to challenge the modernity but demonstrate how to be both good Muslims and modern. They are willing to live in a secular democratic atmosphere rather than rejecting it when they are trying to live their faith.

Following this concise information about the characteristics of the movement and its members, I'll endeavour to articulate its current and potential contributions to the integration process with references to the Gülen's ideas, and finally I'll portray major constraints that define the movement's efficacy in the British context.

4. Concluding Remarks: Gülen Movement in Practice

The Gülen movement proved itself successful while we particularly take its educational and dialogue activities around the world. But it is noteworthy that the rest of the world is not Europe vis-à-vis political, social, financial and cultural characteristics. Until recently, with some exceptions, the countries where the Movement opened educational or social institutions have been relatively underdeveloped to Turkey. Beginning with the 1990, the members of the movement opened have erected many facilities such as colleges, universities and dormitories from Turkic Republics in the

³⁸⁵ Kömeçoğlu, Uğur (1997) *A Sociologically Interpretative Approach to the Fethullah Gülen Community Movement*, Istanbul, Boğaziçi University, p. 46

³⁸⁶ Altunoğlu, Ebru (1999) *Fethullah Gülen's Perception of State and Society*, Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, p. 86



former Soviet Union, African countries, to Indo-China. Opening institutions were financially and politically tough, but to be recognised by the host countries were not so testing especially with their successful educational background in Turkey.

In my opinion, the real challenge is to prove the merit of the movement in the UK with a success in education and with a representation of their commitment to the Western values. This is crucial because in the UK neither the state nor society are expected to be more reluctant to welcome it. Not only they have history between the sides or they experience Islamophobia, but also they would fear due to past experiences with Turkish minorities in the West (as happened in Germany) or they simply would not feel the necessity to accept assistance from a new actor. So the movement would not be appealing for them.

Secondly, the movement heavily relies on donations and other financial assistance of the Turkish community. As Ebaugh indicates movement's all activities are performed with these donations of local businessmen. However in UK context this could cause a financial trouble in the future as Turkish minority's economically underprivileged condition is pretty vulnerable. Also ethno-religious differences within these communities fairly narrow the financial support base of the movements. Apart from hardliner laicists, since most Alevi and some Kurdish minority members have opposed the Gülen movement's activities and Turkish Cypriot community has mostly remained indifferent, only Sunni mainland Turkish community continues to be the main supporting group. Later group consists of generally small businessmen, self-employed or students whose income is generally fluctuating throughout the year and this makes the movement's activities vulnerable.

Thirdly, the movement is voluntarily represented by young professionals who just moved in to the UK and some Turkish graduates who either go to language courses or graduate schools. However, along with their psychological conditions as newcomers, their lack of competence in some issues such as native language does inevitably damage their roles as the guides for their surrounding Turkish community. This problem also obstructs their efforts to present Gülen and his movement to the mainstream British public. Even some newcomers find hard to communicate with third generation of the Turkish community whose Turkish skills are fairly limited relative to their predecessors or understand new generations' lifestyles or thinking as it's quite distinct from their counterparts in Turkey. The members of the movement are trying to solve this problem by using young members who were born in Britain as intermediary.

In the short run, Turkish minority's social, economic and intellectually disadvantaged position would cause unwillingness to assist or participate, or their shortcomings (such as incompetence in native language) would prevent the members of the Movement from an efficient participation. However, at this point, it should be noted that, although the history of the movement in Europe is quite short, as a beginning, they have a good start in the Netherlands with almost all sorts of institutions and activities, and in the United States with a striking raise in the number of intercultural dialogue institutions and some schools.

Similarly, despite having unpleasant experiences with the Muslim minority presence, Danish society has witnessed a profound change among Turkish population. With the intense exertion of the movement, the politically isolated Turkish minority was convinced participating elections. Now,



Turks have an MP in the Danish parliament even though they constitute only 0.7% of the population with scattered residential patterns.³⁸⁷

With their moderate message which contains tolerant and friendly messages for the Western world, it can lessen the radical messages of radical ideologies coming from Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the larger context, they can also weaken the impact of Islamism in the Muslim world. This process at one hand, contributes the democratisation of Turkey and Islamic World, respectively via Muslim citizens within European states. And in a possible accession of Turkey to the EU, aforementioned community can significantly facilitate Turkey's adaptation process. The democratisation process of whole Muslim world will undeniably take pretty long time, but even in this situation Turkey can function as a buffer between liberal and democratic Europe and the Middle East. A buffer which absorbs the shock coming from the both sides of the alignment and, hence, would lessen the political and cultural resentment for both sides.

The movement's educational principle that favours the integration into the modern world, can assist the second and third generations of Muslim minorities who undergo severe educational, vocational and language problems. In the Netherlands, for example, one of the countries where the movement well established, are tens of civil society institutions founded by Turks whose cooperation definitely affects the integration process. The positive outcome of the movement's course of action contributes also the Turkish participation to the national politics. In Dutch parliament are five MPs with Turkish origin. Additionally two candidates with Turkish origin succeeded to be elected for the European Parliament. Additionally, with their emphasis of education, it is (hopefully) expected that by 2015, the educational level of Turkish minority will be equalise with the native student's level.³⁸⁸ Therefore, at one side, with their specialisation in education, they can improve the educational level of Turkish children by paying special care to their specific problems; at the other side since they do not refer any religious and ideological orientation in the education progress, the young generations would not be constrained in terms of interaction to the mainstream society.

In the UK context, it appears that, with the theological incentives, physical and intellectual potential, the Gülen movement has the ability to promote integration process of the Turkish people, in the medium-run, and the majority of the Muslim community, in the long-run even this requires a re-identification phase for the minorities. As the religion is the principal identifier for most Muslims, Gülen's re-aligning of individual's role and the re-positioning of host countries in religious context would gradually benefit them to have civic values compatible with the prerequisites of modern states. Since they can diffuse to all levels of everyday life, from schools to magazines, they can influence the population more effectively and efficient. Especially when the movement's success in Turkey, where the operation grounds is so limited due to a fierce rivalry by the Kemalist state elite, is taken into consideration, it can be claimed that the movement is fairly promising in Western context that is characterised by democracy and freedom.

³⁸⁷ <http://www.turkembassy.dk/mkt2.htm>

³⁸⁸ Başyurt, Erhan. "Gerçekleşmesi Zor Bir Hayal: Euro-İslam." *Aksiyon* 09/2004