

Fethullah Gülen, Turkey and the European Union
Paul Weller
University of Derby
at the
Second Annual Conference on
“Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice”
held at
The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, USA
3rd-5th November 2006

[* Please Note: This paper is not for quotation without permission from the author, p.g.weller@derby.ac.uk since it is subject to checking and finalisation before publication]

Abstract

This paper highlights some of the key issues cited in debates over Turkey’s full membership of the European Union, and considers the positions on this taken by the Turkish Muslim, Fethullah Gülen. It also considers the bearing upon these issues that Gülen’s more general teaching and perspectives, as well as the existence and work of the community that is based upon these, might have. It argues that Gülen’s teaching can help effect a positive shift in some of the debate’s preconceived frameworks, while suggesting that the community that has formed around his teaching may be able to play a helpful role in the internal and external civil society dialogue that is a necessary part of any enlargement to include Turkey.

Fethullah Gülen, Turkey and the European Union

The relationship between Turkey and the European Union has become a key one for the future of the Union itself, while being hotly debated in a number of current member states and societies. While the goal of membership is a key aim of the current Turkish Government and is supported by the current Parliamentary opposition in Turkey, the issues around membership of and/or exclusion from the Union are also matters that are the subject of considerable debate within Turkish society.

The issues involved have, in recent times, attained a new intensity of public debate. But the relationship between Turkey and the European Union and its institutional predecessors has been a much more longstanding one reaching back into the middle of the last century. At the same time, the relationship between Turkey and western outcrop of the Eurasian landmass is one that, of course, also reaches back into history in terms of actual historical conflicts.

But, even more significantly, through the representation of these conflicts in the popular religious, cultural and political imagination (see Wheatcroft, 2004) powerful perceptual effects have been created that inform mutual distrust in relation to the interface between the

territories and peoples of the predominantly Muslim former Ottoman Empire and those of the historical religio-political configuration historically characterized as Christendom.

This paper highlights some of the key issues cited in current debates over Turkey's full membership of the European Union, and considers the positions on this taken by the Turkish Muslim, Fethullah Gülen. It also examines aspects of the role that might be played in these debates by the community that has formed around his teachings.

The EEC, EC, EU and the Republic of Turkey

The modern history of the relationship between Turkey and what is now the European Union has tracked the evolution of the Union itself that, of course, was originally founded by the Treaty of Paris in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and involved the post-Second World War countries of France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

On 20th September 1959, the Republic of Turkey applied, to what by then (from 1957) had become the European Economic Community (EEC), in order to become an associate member. This came about in September 12th 1963 through the so-called Ankara Agreement. When it was signed, Walter Hallstein (quoted in Lord Patten, 2005: 70), the then President of the European Commission, stated that,

Turkey is part of Europe. This is the deepest possible meaning of this operation which brings, in the most appropriate way conceivable in our time, the confirmation of a geographical reality as well as a historical truism that has been valid for several centuries.

The Ankara Agreement still provides the legal basis for relations between Turkey and what is now (through the Maastricht Treaty of 1992) the European Union (EU). But since then the issues and debates around Turkey's possible membership of the EU have gone through a number of highs and lows in matters that have often served as microcosms for what are now seen, both within Turkey and beyond, as the key issues for a possible future enlargement of the European Union that would include Turkey as a full member.

The Ankara Agreement was added to, in 1995, by a Customs Union between Turkey and the EU. Then, in 1999, the European Council accorded Turkey candidate status. At their summit in December 2002, the leaders of the European Union agreed that, if by the end of 2004 Turkish political reforms met the political part of the so-called "Copenhagen criteria", then negotiations for full membership could start "without delay". The Copenhagen political criteria stated that a prospective member must be, "a stable democracy, respecting human rights, the rule of law, and the protection of minorities".

As a result of these developments, although economics remains a key component of the relationship between Turkey and the EU, matters have now moved on from a framework in which economics was the main focus to one in which politics and culture has also come into the foreground. For existing member states and many in their societies, as well as for some in Turkey, this has complicated the relationship. During this period, the European Union has itself changed, with its size having expanded substantially since the original 6 member states, through the 12, to a currently "enlarged" post-Communist Europe of 25 Member states, with the admission of a further two candidate states - Bulgaria and Romania - set to raise the total number to 27.

Turkey has also changed during this period. While throughout these decades it shared with many of the current member states of the EU in the military and political alliance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), it has also gone through a series of domestic political, social and economic challenges and upheavals. These have included three coups (1960, 1971 and 1980) in which the armed forces intervened to remove the civilian government on the grounds of seeking to restore order and stability in the context of serious social conflicts, political and ethnic violence.

Then, in 1997, the Refah (Welfare) Party was manoeuvred out of office following its achievement of a main share of the vote in Turkey's 1995 Parliamentary elections. This was on the grounds that the party's perceived Islamic radicalism was about to cause a civil uprising, in relation to which the armed forces' constitutional role as guarantor of Turkey's secular, Kemalist heritage, obliged it to intervene. Most recently of all, however, was the election into Government, in 2002, of the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, in Turkish, or Justice and Development Party in English), itself often described as an Islamist party. Yet this has, so far at least, not resulted in a military intervention of the kinds that were previously experienced. Indeed, in many ways Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Government have used the goal of EU membership – which is also supported by the only Parliamentary opposition party, the Republic People's Party (CHP) – to take the lead in initiating difficult internal reforms in Turkey.

It is against such a general contextual background that this paper now turns to consider the specific positions of Fethullah Gülen in relation to Turkish membership of the EU. It also looks at the bearing that his general teaching, and the existence and work of the community that has formed around this, might have upon the issues surrounding Turkish EU membership as seen from both inside and outside Turkey.¹

Gülen and Turkey-EU Issues as Seen From Inside Turkey

In relation to the Turkish public, a recent report on Turkey and the EU produced for the European organisation, the Friends of Europe, states that:

There is widespread support in Turkey both for the political reforms and for the goal of EU membership – with opinion polls showing 75% support for joining the Union. However, there is opposition including among nationalists of both the right and the left, and some sections of the military and establishment. (Hughes, 2004: 4).

Reflecting on the debate as it has taken shape in Turkey, an article by Ayhan Şimşek (2005: 21) in the *New Anatolian*, and entitled "Debating Turkey's EU membership: Realists vs. Romantics", argues that:

Discussions about the EU have become one of the main dividing lines in Turkey's domestic politics, since after Turkey was accepted as a candidate country at the 1999 Helsinki European Council...One group strongly favors Turkey's EU membership perspective, and sees it as a 'magic wand' that may solve all the

¹ The present writer makes no claim to being expert on matters to do with Turkey, and therefore the following discussion of matters to do with the internal Turkish discussion are more dependent upon existing sources than those pertaining to the question of full Turkish membership of the European Union as seen from the perspective of existing EU member states and societies.

nation's problems. The other group, on the contrary, portrays the EU as a 'great devil' which is believed to have a hidden agenda to divide the country behind its human face.

In contrast to both of these positions, which he calls 'romantic', Şimşek notes that: "The romantic EU supporters are losing almost all their credibility, while the romantic opposition is going down a dangerous path, and including even some racist and xenophobic elements in its rhetoric". Instead of romanticism, Şimşek argues instead for what he calls a 'realist' position. It is the argument of this paper that such a description also summarises the specific stance that Fethullah Gülen has taken in relation to EU membership.

Despite opposition from some Islamists Gülen has, in recent years, been clear in his support of full EU membership for Turkey. In a recent piece entitled "With Accession, Europe Would Know us Better" Gülen (2006: 40) says, "I have been in favour of EU membership for a long time" and that, "In my opinion, the EU is something that the Turkish people long for." In his capacity as Honorary President of the Journalist and Writers Foundation, Gülen (2004a) sent a message to the Abant Platform meeting held on December 3rd -4th 2004 at the European Parliament in Brussels.

In his message, Gülen made three key points about the developing relationships between Turkey and the EU. These included that the idea that Turkish entry into the EU would be a fulfilment of the so-called "contemporary civilisation" objective of Atatürk; that the historic role of the Turkish armed forces in this should not be forgotten, despite the fact that this is sometimes referred to as one of the biggest obstacles for Turkey's full membership in the EU; and that Turkish membership of the EU would "reinforce its role as the island of peace in the heart of the Eurasia" since "A Turkey in the EU will more successfully realize its function to establish a bridge between the Islamic world and the West."

Gülen's now clear position in favour of EU membership is especially significant given the more traditionalist historical background out of which he comes. This is because, following the Kemalist revolution, Turkish society was broadly split between those who understood themselves as Westernizers, and traditionalists who opposed this, seeing the decline of Turkey's role in the world as being linked with a failure of religiosity and the importation of alien cultural and religious values.

Bekim Agai (2003: 63) argues that, Gülen "used to see the solution to Turkey's problems as raising Muslims' consciousness in order to overcome the dominance of Westernized cognitive patterns and to restructure a shared grammar in Turkey based on Islam."² But Agai also argues that, in the 1990s, the emphases within this perspective changed and Gülen began to identify that a lot of Turkey's problems were to be found in Turkey itself.

Today, while giving appropriate recognition to the achievements of the Ottoman past, Gülen (1996: 53) has argued strongly that Muslims should not retreat from modernity into past glories since:

...no success or victory from the past can come to help us in our current struggle. Today our duty is to offer humanity a new message composed of vivid scenes from the past together with understanding of the needs of the present.

As Hakan Yakuz (2003: 29) summarises it, "Gülen's views on the precepts of Islam are pragmatic and contemporary without being liberal". Thus, in many ways, Gülen's teaching has particular implications for the traditionalists within Turkish society, drawing as it does upon a strong commitment to Islamic sources and Ottoman history. At the same time, its contextual focus contributes to the conditions that facilitate the possibility of dialogue between such traditionalists and those of a more contemporary and secular outlook.

Instead of identifying 'enemy images', Gülen increasingly began to argue that the problems of Turkish society were rooted in an internal societal ignorance that he compared to a blood cancer, and the cure for which he identified as education. Interestingly, in this he was also creating common ground against obscurantist traditionalism with secularists who have always been strong advocates of science, technology and education while building this stance upon a positivistic form of secularism that stands over and against religion.

In fact, Gülen's perspectives and the movement and educational institutions that have formed on the basis of the inspiration of his teaching strongly affirm that Islam and education, science and technology should not be seen as being in conflict. Rather Gülen (in Ünal & Williams, 2000: 316) argues that "In its true meaning, religion does not oppose or limit science and scientific work." In other words, Gülen sees religion and science as "different worlds' ways of expressing the same meaning, content and truth." This is because of a theological view held by Gülen (in Ünal & Williams, 2000: 316-317) that sees "the universe as a mighty Qur'an deriving from God's attributes of Power and Will. In other words, if the term is proper, the universe is a large, created Qur'an. In return, being an expression of the universe's laws in different form, the Qur'an is a universe that has been coded and put on paper."

Because of this, Gülen's general orientation in support of education and scientific enquiry is something that has a substantial bearing on issues relating to EU membership. This is because the EU has a declared aim to become a so-called 'Knowledge Society'. Thus the March 2000 Lisbon European Council set a strategic goal (see European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities: 2006) for Europe, by 2010, "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." Because of this, Gülen's teaching, and the development by the community around it of an extensive educational provision, plays an important role in the orientation of the whole of Turkish society, including its more traditionalist elements, towards some of the implications of European Union membership.

Another of the main concerns to be found among the traditionalists is that, when it comes down to it, the EU is really a "Christian Club". The fear is expressed that full membership of the Union will inevitably lead to continued and probably accelerated erosion of Islamic belief and practice in Turkey that was seen as already having been set in motion by the secularizing Kemalists. Such perceptions are reinforced when leading European politicians and personalities, as in the recent debates on the European Constitutional Treaty, argued for a special recognition of Christianity as a basis for the values espoused by the Union. Of the Islamist concerns of this kind leading to opposition to EU membership Gülen (in Gundem, 2005) says, "Some Muslims have recently published and distributed books on such grounds: 'if they (Europeans) come, they will influence us and steal our youth from us, with the way they look, their mentality, their conception of religion, their notion of God.'"

As has been pointed out, Gülen was himself at one time not a stranger to such perceptions. However, in a 2000 interview with Hakan Yakuz (2003: 45), Gülen said:

We all change, don't we?By visiting the States and many other European countries, I realized the virtues and the role of religion in these societies. Islam flourishes in Europe and America much better than in many Muslim countries. This means freedom and the rule of law are necessary for personal Islam.

In a piece on "Tolerance in the Life of the Individual and Society", Gülen (2004b: 43) points out with regard to the already very large Turkish Muslim presence in the current member states of the EU that, "...our citizens in European countries can only live in harmony in those countries by means of a vast atmosphere of tolerance." He also critiques the superficial reading of religion in European and Western societies that can be found among many traditionalists, by making the following empirical observations:

Some people might be tempted to say that religion has no place in the life of society in developed countries such as America and those of Western Europe. We must immediately point out that such a statement is in no way correct and that these countries have and are attached to their religions. Just as we have expressed earlier, although religious values may have been weakened over the last two centuries throughout the world, humanity today is again searching for religion, and is once again inclining toward it. Even though the population may be indifferent to religion, to a certain extent in Western Europe, those in the administration seem to be, on the whole, rather religious. Among these, there have always been religious people at the highest levels of administration, and there still are today. Moreover, though secularism is the rule in all these countries, there has never been a mentality dictating that the guidance of religion should be abandoned in social or even in the political life of a country.

In making these observations, Gülen is contrasting a civil society understanding of the 'secular' that is concerned with the participation of citizens of all religions and none in the public life of a society as compared with an ideological form of secularism that is concerned to promote positivist philosophical positions.³ It is such an approach which enables Gülen to take the position, as reported by Yakuz (2003: 45) that "...Islam does not need the state to survive, but rather needs educated and financially rich communities to flourish. In a way, not the state but rather community is needed under a full democratic system."

Therefore, to the argument that Europe is "a Christian club" that is therefore alien to Turks and to Islam, Gülen (2006: 40) speaks of "some who have doubts about their own religiosity" whereas, for himself, he says "I could be on familiar terms with Europe. Through membership I could perhaps better explain my culture and myself to them. Perhaps they would be touched and would know us better."

Gülen and Turkey-EU Issues as Seen From Outside Turkey

From the perspective of some existing EU states and - perhaps even more significantly in view of the gap between ordinary citizens and the social, political and business elites that surfaced in the recent debates around the European Constitutional Treaty - from the perspective of

² For an exploration of the various and contested meanings of 'secular' in different social contexts, see P. Weller. (2006). 'Human Rights', 'Religion' and the 'Secular': Variant Configurations of Religion(s), State(s) and Society(ies). *Religion and Human Rights: An International Journal*. 1, 1, 17-39.

many of the EU member state populations - the question of Turkey's possible membership is by no means straightforward.

Reflecting the concerns that exist, the latest Eurobarometer (2006) survey shows that 52% of EU citizens are against Turkey's membership, although interestingly citizens from the new member states were more in favour of Turkey joining (48%) than citizens of the EU-15 (32% in favour). However, statistics such as these inevitably give only a broad 'feel' for general positions. And as the European Muslim reformer, Tariq Ramadan⁴ (2006: 35) argues, "What is absolutely urgent today is to clearly distinguish different stakes, different questions raised by this membership, and the different levels of analysis."

In reflecting on what he calls "the main themes of the fundamental questions aroused by Turkey's EU membership," Ramadan (2006: 35) identifies "three main themes", in the following way:

1. Is Turkey really part of the European continent?
2. Does the predominantly Islamic Turkish society really participate in the European identity?
3. Are fundamental human rights and principles of democracy suitably respected?

To the predominantly cultural and political concerns highlighted by Ramadan should also be added concerns about the potential economic impact of migration from the relatively poor and young population of Turkey in relation to the settled and historic populations of the EU member states.

The geographical, cultural and religious concerns, are most often (but not exclusively) expressed by Governments, political parties, movements, associations of a more socially and religiously conservative and nationalist complexion. Those to do with democracy, the role of the military, and human rights are most often (but, again, not exclusively) expressed by groups with a more socialist and internationalist orientation. Those to do with migration are increasingly to be found among groups of most political and social complexions.

In relation to the geographical question, there are those especially, but not only, among German and Austrian Christian Democrats (see Gow, 2006) who, in the recent debates around the accession to the EU of Bulgaria and Romania, have argued for a clearer sense of the geographical boundaries of Europe to be established. In a way this is ironic given Czar Nicholas I's 19th century description of the Ottoman Empire as the "sick man of Europe", a negative evaluation of capacity and vitality that, however, precisely identified Turkey as part of European reality!

In relation to such views, the EU's Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, who has warned of a pending "train wreck" in accession talks with Turkey, has responded to these German and Austrian Christian Democratic Party calls for a new definition of Europe's borders by insisting that any European country respecting democratic values and the rule of law may apply. In clarifying this, Rehn (in Gow, 2006) said that:

This does not mean that all European countries must apply or that the EU must accept all applications....But it means we should not draw in Indian ink some thick

⁴ For a broader understanding of Tariq Ramadan's approach, see Tariq Ramadan (2004), *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

“faultline” according to some notional historical borders between civilisations and thus construct a kind of velvet curtain only a few years after we got rid of the iron curtain.

In relation to the issues to do with culture and religion, given Turkey’s predominantly Muslim inheritance, its Ottoman history in relation to Europe, and the current global and conflictual issues to do with ‘jihadist’ Muslims and terrorism, such concerns are almost inevitable and very challenging to overcome. From the clear positions that he has taken against the confusion of Islam and political ideology, and Islam and terrorism, it is clear that Gülen understands the fears and concerns of non-Muslims about Islam as a political ideology. As Gülen (in Ünal & Williams, Eds., 2000: 248) explains it, “The present, distorted image of Islam that has resulted from its misuse, by both Muslims and non-Muslims for their own goals, scares both Muslims and non-Muslims.”

As summarised by Sahin Alpay (1995), “Hodjaefendi opposes the use of Islam as a political ideology and a party philosophy, as well as polarizing society into believers and nonbelievers.” In this perspective, then, in relation to cultural factors, there is no inevitable civilizational gulf between people in Turkey and people in the historic lands of Christendom, while there are also anyway many millions of Muslims of Turkish and other ethnic and national descent, who are already citizens and/or settled members of current member states and societies of the European Union.

In connection with human rights concerns identified by Ramadan, in view of Turkey’s history of military coups and interventions, there remain concerns about the stability of Turkish democracy. These concerns need to be taken seriously, since periods military rule generally give rise to more extensive human rights abuses, with less effective constraint from the rule of law. At the same time, it should be noted that it is possible for societies with a history of military rule to change. In this connection it should not be forgotten that both Spain and Portugal emerged into EU membership from fascist and military dictatorships.

In the case of Portugal, this took place through revolutionary change and in connection with the end of the colonial era; while in the case of Spain, the change was more evolutionary following the death of General Franco. However, in neither case did the wider Europe always have full confidence that these polities could maintain their fledgling democracies. Indeed, in the case of Spain, sections of the military did make attempts against the democratic order, but these attempts did not succeed due to a change in the overall popular and business orientations and expectations following integration into the EU.

In relation to issues to do with military rule and human rights in Turkey, some of positions taken by Gülen in the past might at least appear to have been problematic. For example, in a number of statements Gülen made clear his support for the Turkish military as a bulwark either against what was perceived as a threat of chaos from internal radical leftists and/or during the Cold War period, externally from the Soviet Union. Thus Gülen (in Yakuz, 2003: 27) can be found as being quoted to the effect that, “I am on always on the side of the state and the military. Without the state, there is anarchy and chaos.” However, such general statements do need to be understood in relation to the kind of approach that, from an Islamic perspective, is expected of the state and the military, in terms of the requirements of just behaviour. And also, as Hakan Yakuz (2003: 30) argues, apparently generic statements of these kinds need to be understood in the context of three different “sociohistorical stages” in Turkey.

As Yakuz (2003: 31) says, "Each period was shaped by structural processes that reproduced a more contextual framing process." The first period was one in which the emphasis was "to preserve his religioconservative community from active involvement in Islamic political movements," although as a result of the polarization of Turkish society during the Cold War, the movement eventually "embraced an anticommunist rhetoric and adopted a conservative nationalist position".

This initial period was then followed by the period of what Yakuz (2003: 35) calls "the education movement" in which there was an opening to the wider civil society as well as to the Turkic world beyond the borders of Turkey itself. This era of growing influence in Turkish society and beyond then led into the current period of reaction from elements in the secular state establishment, and which resulted in charges⁵ being brought against Gülen of which he was later acquitted. This was a period in which he also departed to live in the United States, and during which his teachings and the activities of his movement became marked by the concomitant development and dissemination of perspective that were much more global in their perspectives.

In relation to the issues to do with the Kurdish minority and the extensive death and destruction that took place during the period of the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state, Gülen maintained a general public silence on the substantive issues at stake, while condemning the violence of the PKK in particular. By contrast, in relation to another minority group in Turkish society, the Alevis, Gülen (in Ünal & Williams, 2000: 67-70) has spoken positively of the need for better Sunni-Alevi relations, affirming that the Alevis (in Ünal & Williams, 2000: 67) "definitely enrich Turkish culture" and that (in Ünal & Williams, 2000: 69), "Alawi meeting or prayer houses should be supported."

Therefore it is clear that achieving an appropriate balance between national unity and diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups remains challenging - for a state that was founded on centralist principles; for the dominant Sunni Muslim tradition; and for Gülen and the movement associated with his teaching. Because of these deep-rooted difficulties, although Tariq Ramadan attacked as fallacies the geographical and cultural/religious arguments against Turkey's full membership of the EU, he (Ramadan, 2006: 37) argued that on human rights grounds that there remains a need for "firmly and clearly" asking questions about matters on which "there remains serious work to be done and fundamental reforms to be undertaken in Turkish society".

But Ramadan sees this ongoing human rights challenge as something in relation to which "Turkish citizens should grasp the opportunity". (Ramadan, 2006: 38). Thus, for example, as Mihail Vasiliadis (2006: 47), the editor of *Apoyevmatini*, a Greek minority newspaper in Turkey, expresses it:

it is difficult for me as a member of the Greek community to say that all our problems have been solved. Decisions made by the government and even laws passed by Parliament cannot easily be implemented, the bureaucratic hindrances seem insurmountable.

⁵ Controversy erupted around Gülen in 2000 when some videotapes were broadcast in which Gülen was apparently seen to be preaching struggle against the secular republic and for the need to overthrow and to replace it with an Islamic state, making his return to Turkey impossible during that period. However, in 2003, his trial in Turkey was postponed, although this was initially subject to it being reactivated if he were to be indicted with a similar crime in the following five years. Nevertheless, in 2006 Gülen was acquitted of all charges bringing this episode to a close.

In expressing the issues in this way, Vasiliades highlights the difficulty that there can be a difference between the passing of legal reforms and their consistent implementation at all levels throughout a country. And indeed, it is likely that it is precisely this issue which may – as it has for more recently for both Romania and Bulgaria – prove more difficult for Turkey to deal with than enacting the original constitutional and legal changes.

The challenge of translating legal reform into social practice also has a bearing on human rights issues in relation to gender-related issues. Thus it is well known that in Turkey, there has been a widespread issue (Amnesty International, 2004) with regard to so-called “honour killings” of women. This is a matter on which the EU would expect to see considerable progress before any enlargement could include Turkey as a full member. While Turkey has made some significant legal changes in this regard, a recent University survey (2005) from inside Turkey shows how deep-rooted and widespread remain the kind of underlying attitudes that can give at least tacit popular support for such practices, and which therefore also give cause for concern in relation to the wider gender dimension of the equalities strands within EU social policy.

In relation to gender and equal opportunities, Gülen and his movement are certainly not feminists in the western tradition. Within the movement, women do not occupy high positions in its network groups or media organizations. At the same time, Gülen has made clear that he regards the divisive issue in Turkish society of female headcovering in the public sphere as a matter that is not an ‘essential’ but a ‘detail’ (in Arabic, *furat*) of Islam, which differs in form in relation to its appropriate implementation according to the cultural context in which it is found. None of this should be misunderstood as meaning the headcovering is viewed by Gülen as unimportant or as anything other than a religious obligation for Muslim women. But what it does indicate is that Gülen employs a hermeneutic which is more in line with the classical traditions of the interpretation of Islam, and quite different from the ‘flat’ approach of modern Islamists. Because of this, with regard to gender-related issues, as Bekim Agai (2003: 50) notes in relation to Gülen, it is “possible to buy books from Islamic groups in Istanbul that denounce him as a non-believer (*kafir*) because he had said that he did not consider a female prime minister as being contrary to Islam.”

There are, of course, a range of other issues that have an impact upon the current debates around Turkey’s possible membership of the EU, including that of Turkish government recognition of the Nicosia government in Cyprus, and economic issues related to potential mass migration from Turkey into EU member states. There is not time or space to explore all these issues in detail here. All of these matters, and those which Ramadan highlighted above and to which it has been possible to give some attention in this chapter, remain critical for future developments. And it is important that the Government and civil society groups in Turkey tackle them. But at the same time, towards the existing member states of the European Union and their societies, Gülen (quoted in Gundem, 2005) offers the challenging perspective that:

To date, how Turkey will benefit from this process has been discussed, generally speaking. I am not sure whether European countries are aware, but what Turkey will bring in is much more important. If they are aware of this and still resist, that means their obstinacy has dominated over sound thinking. As a matter of fact, there are many benefits out of this relationship for the reputation and future of Europe.

Summary Reflections

In addressing some of the specific issues in Turkish-EU relations, Gülen also contextualises these in a wider civilizational and global context. Thus, in contrast to the 'clash of civilisations' espoused by either secular advocates of an ongoing and global 'war against terrorism'; by Christian apocalypticists; or by contemporary Islamists and jihadists, Gülen (in Gündem, 2005) argues the positive case that: "Turkey can be a bridge across the Middle East and the Far East. Europe is in need of Turkey's profound and rich heritage of insight into the Middle East."

Particularly in the current state of global affairs, this is an inspired and inspiring vision. But in evaluating all of this, it should be recognised that there are those who argue that support for the involvement of Turkey in the European Union is part of an agenda to bring about the Islamicisation of Europe. Thus, for example, the Princeton Middle Eastern historian, Bernard Lewis (2004) has commented to the conservative daily newspaper *Die Welt* that Europe would be Islamic by the end of this century "at the very latest". In response to this, it could be asked as to why, at least if it is meant in a truly religious sense of individuals and groups freely embracing Islam as a way of life, the Islamization of Europe should not legitimately be a goal of Muslims any more than the Christian evangelisation of Europe should not be a legitimate goal of Christians? At least for believing people in both religions, the issue at stake in such aspirations is not such goal in itself, but the meaning of such a goal and the means by which the believers try to achieve this - in terms of whether these meanings and means are, or are not, theologically, ethically and socially respectful of the freedom of 'the other'.

As Gülen (2006: 40) has put it - in a way that can have relevance both to majority Christians in the current member states of the EU and to Muslims in Turkey - "There are those who are uncomfortable with other people's freedom of conscience and religion. While saying 'freedom of conscience and religion,' there are people who perceive it as only their own freedom. There are such fanatics and bigots."

While traditionalist Muslims invariably highlight a tension, if not an outright incompatibility, between what is identified as *dar al-harb* (referring to territory that lays outside the sway of Islam) and what is called *dar al-Islam* (referring to those lands in which Islam has taken root), others - of which Ihsan Yilmaz (2002) sees the community associated with Gülen's teaching as an example - are more concerned with what Yilmaz identifies as *dar ul-hizmet*. This reflects a movement away from an instrumentalisation of religion in politics to an understanding of the contribution to public life of service based on religious motivations, but contributing to civil society as one contribution alongside others. As Bulent Aras and Omer Caha summarise it (2000: 30):

Gülen's movement seems to have no aspiration to evolve into a political party or seek political power. On the contrary, Gülen continues a long Sufi tradition of seeking to address the spiritual needs of people, to educate the masses, and to provide some stability in times of turmoil. Like many previous Sufi figures (including the towering thirteenth-century figure, Jalal al-Din Rumi), he is wrongly suspected of seeking political power. However, any change from this apolitical stance would very much harm the reputation of his community.

Since Gülen is not a politician or an economist, it is not surprising that there is not a large body of work in which he directly and explicitly addresses questions and issues relating to Turkish membership of the European Union. However, when he does explicitly address this, his positions are fairly clear. But perhaps even more importantly for the process of

enlargement than his specific statements, it is the contention of this paper that, on balance, Gülen's general thought and teaching contributes positively to a social, cultural and religious climate in civil society, both among Turks and in the existing European Union, in which Turkish membership of the EU becomes more thinkable, and thus ultimately more capable of practical implementation. Gülen's commitment to, and involvement in, inter-religious dialogue is an important part of the necessary confidence-building process leading to membership of the European Union. As Agai (2003: 65) points out that:

Although many Islamic leaders may talk of tolerance in Islam, it may be problematic to put it into practice. Gülen himself has shown that he has no fears of meeting leaders of other religions, including the Pope and the representative of the Jewish community in Istanbul. He also crossed the borders of Islamic discourse to meet with important people in Turkish society who are atheists. These activities were not easy from a religious perspective because Islamic discourse in Turkey has definite boundaries that do not appreciate close ties to the leaders of other religions and nonreligious persons. Also, his support for the Alevi was not very popular among most Sunni-Islamic groups.

One of the so-called "chapters" in the confidence-building process for any candidate state of the EU is concerned with civil society exchanges. Groups with religious inspiration are increasingly recognised to be an important part of civil society, contributing in a positive way to the development of 'social capital' (see Weller, 2005). Thus Gülen and his followers' readiness actually to engage in dialogue on terms both set by themselves (through initiatives such as the Interfaith Dialog Institute) and set up by others can play a significant role in taking matters forward.

The potential importance of this active involvement in inter-religious dialogue for the future of Turkey's application for full membership of the EU can be seen in the positions taken up on this question by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger before he was elected Pope Benedict XVI. That these find some reflection in the present position of Christian Democrats in Germany and Austria should not be surprising, given the Christian Democratic parties' predominantly Catholic Christian roots. According to Ratzinger (2004) as Cardinal, writing to European bishops explaining the reasons for his stand against full Turkish membership of the EU, he stated that:

The roots that have formed Europe, that have permitted the formation of this continent, are those of Christianity. Turkey has always represented another continent, in permanent contrast with Europe. There were the [old Ottoman Empire] wars against the Byzantine Empire, the fall of Constantinople, the Balkan wars, and the threat against Vienna and Austria. It would be an error to equate the two continents...Turkey is founded upon Islam...Thus the entry of Turkey into the EU would be anti-historical.

More recently, of course, and with wider pertinence to Islam and Muslims throughout the world, found himself at the centre of a storm of controversy following a lecture that he made on the topic of "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections" to the University of Regensburg in Austria, on 12th September 2006. In that lecture, the former Cardinal Ratzinger and now Pope Benedict XVI, invoked as illustrative of issues to be considered in the relationship between faith, violence, reason and dialogue – but without critical comment upon it at the time – a 1391 statement recorded as being made by the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus.

Pope Benedict (2006) stated that as part of a dialogue between Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of the truth in Christianity and Islam, the emperor, "...addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general" by making the challenge, "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." In response to the reaction that quickly developed in the Muslim world as a result of the onward quotation of this in the global media, the Pope quickly sought to express regret for the way in which his quotation of this statement may have been heard by Muslims. Thus he issued a statement (quoted by BBC News on-line, 16.9.2006) in which he explained that:

I am deeply sorry for the reactions in some countries to a few passages of my address at the University of Regensburg, which were considered offensive to the sensibility of Muslims. These in fact were a quotation from a medieval text, which do not in any way express my personal thought.

Rather, the Pope underlined that he wanted to, "...clarify the true meaning of my address, which in its totality was and is an invitation to frank and sincere dialogue, with mutual respect".

In the light of his overall position on Turkey in relation to Europe and his approach to the use of these 14th century statements as well as the Muslim and other reactions to them, engagement in robust, but also constructive, inter-faith dialogue including Catholic Christians from current EU member states and Muslim Turks, could certainly be of great practical importance in relation to the issues surrounding the possible entry of Turkey as a full member into the European Union.

Such dialogue is unlikely to be comfortable. Both the positions taken up by various parties to the debate as well as the overall tone of the debate itself precisely underline just how important it is that such dialogue is engaged in. In conclusion, the sombrely challenging words of Tariq Ramadan (2006: 38) underscore the importance of the issues with which this paper has been concerned:

With all the Europeans – among whom the Europeans of Muslim denomination rank first – conscious of the stakes, the Turks have in the end this triple shared responsibility to remind and to prove that Europe is not a stifled and shrivelled geographical reality, that it cannot be drained of a falsely imagined "religious and cultural homogeneity", and that it cannot base the self-confidence of its identity on the opposition and dangerous rejection of the "identity of the other". It is also a heaven-sent opportunity for Europe to reconcile itself to its ideals of pluralism, equality and constant renewal: Turkey is paradoxically its greatest chance.

Neither Gülen nor the movement associated with him should be romanticised or idealized. As with all human beings and human organisations, they have failings and ambiguities, some of which have been touched upon in this paper in relation to the role of the military and issues associated with some aspects of human rights. But, on balance, it is the argument of this paper that in our present historical social, political and religious circumstances, engagement with Gülen's perspectives, and with the movement associated with his teaching, can make a positive contribution to the ongoing evolution of growing and positive relationships between the state of Turkey and the present member states of the European Union.

As underlined by the recent experiences of some EU member states in debates around the European Constitution, in order that European level developments are not seen as the preserve of social, political and business elites disconnected from the concerns and perspectives of ordinary citizens, then appropriate and full engagement of civil society within these debates is of crucial importance. Given the very powerful role played by 'enemy images' in the history of relations between Turkey and the western outcrop of the Eurasian landmass, and the ease with which these 'enemy images' can all too easily be mobilised as part of contemporary political, cultural and religious debates, the positive and full engagement of civil society groups is likely to be of critical importance to the possibility of full Turkish membership of the European Union.

As part of this, the movement formed around Gülen's teaching has the potential to make a contribution as a social actor in robust, open and self-critical forms of civil society dialogue that must accompany inter-Governmental negotiations. It is in such a way that all peoples of the existing EU member states and Turkey - whether Christian, Muslim, secular or of other religious and philosophical traditions - can feel that they might have a positive stake in the possible future entry of Turkey into full membership of the European Union. The teachings of Gülen, and the activities of the movement related to these teachings could yet make a significant contribution to such developments.

References

Agai, B. (2003). The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education. In H. Yakuz. & J. Esposito (Eds.), *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (pp. 48-68). Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Amnesty International. (2004). Turkey: Women Confronting Family Violence. <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur440132004>, retrieved, 24.8.2006.

Alpay, S. (1995). Respect for Hodjaefendi. *Milliyet*, 29th July.

BBC News On-Line (2006). Text of Pope's Statement [on his remarks in Regensburg], 16.9.2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5353774.stm>, retrieved 19.10.2006.

Benedict XVI, Pope. (2006), lecture on Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections, Regensburg: Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg, Tuesday, 12th September.

Bilici, A. (Ed.). (2006). *Neden Türkiye? Why Turkey*. Istanbul: Zaman Books.

Aras, B. & Caha, C. Fethullah Gülen and his Liberal 'Turkish Islam' Movement. *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 4, 4, 30-42.

Eurobarometer Survey. (2006).

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/governance/eurobarometer-half-eu-citizens-turkey-accession/article-142697>, retrieved, 24.8.2006.

European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (2006)

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/knowledge_society/index_en.htm, retrieved on 24.8.2006.

Gow, David (2006). Germany May Block New EU Members. Guardian Unlimited. 23.8.2006.
<http://www.friendsofeurope.org/pdfs/search='Friends%20of%20Europe%20%20%20Turkey%20%20%20European%20Union>, retrieved on 24.8.2006.

Gül, A. (2006). Muslim Identity of Turks Did not Prevent them Interacting with the West. In A. Bilici. (Ed.). Neden Türkiye? Why Turkey. (pp. 30- 33). Istanbul: Zaman Books.

Gülen, F. (1994). Gülen's Message to the European Union. Huseyn Gulerce. 17th December, 2004.

Gülen, F. (1996). Towards the Lost Paradise. London: Truestar.

Gülen, F. (2004a). In. Ataturk's Contemporary Civilization Aim Reaches a new Horizon with EU. Zaman, 12th April.

Gülen, F. (2004b). Towards a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance. New Jersey: The Light.

Gülen, F. (2006). With Accession, Europe Would Know us Better. In A. Bilici. (Ed.). Neden Türkiye? Why Turkey. (pp. 39-40). Istanbul: Zaman Books.

Gundem, M. (2005). European Union Favors Turkish Muslims. Milliyet. 1st August
<http://www.fethullahGülen.org/a.page/press/interview/interview.with.mehmet.gundem.of.milliyet.daily/a1908.html>, retrieved 22.8.2006.

Hughes, K. (2004). Turkey and the European Union: Just Another Enlargement? Exploring the Implications of Turkish Accession. A Friends of Europe Working Paper on the Occasion of the "Turkey's EU end-game?" European Policy Summit of 17th June 2004.
<http://www.friendsofeurope.org/pdfs/search='Friends%20of%20Europe%20%20%20Turkey%20%20%20European%20Union>, retrieved on 24.8.2006.

Lewis, B. (2004). "Europa wird am Ende des Jahrhunderts islamisch sein" Die Welt.de. July 28th. <http://www.welt.de/data/2004/07/28/310913.html>, retrieved on 24.8.2006.

Patten, Lord, of Barnes. (2005). Europe in the Wider World. In Murphy- O'Connor, C., Geldof, B., McAleese, M., Patten, C., Radcliffe, T. & Vanier, J. Faith in Europe?: The Cardinal's Lectures. A Series of Six Public Lectures at Westminster Cathedral. London: Darton and Longman Todd.

Rainsford, S. (2005). 'Honour' Crime Defiance in Turkey. BBC.co.uk.19.10.2005.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4357158.stm>, retrieved, 24.8.2006.

Ramadan, T (2004), Western Muslims and the Future of Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ramadan, T. (2006). Incompatibility of European and Islamic Values is a Delusion. In A. Bilici. (Ed.). Neden Türkiye? Why Turkey. (pp. 34-38). Istanbul: Zaman Books.

Ratzinger, J. Le Figaro, August 13th 2004. Reported in English in The Christian Science Monitor, April 22nd 2005. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0422/dailyUpdate.html>, retrieved 24.8.2006.

Şimşek, A. (2005). Debating Turkey's EU membership: Realists vs. Romantics. New Anatolian. October 3rd, 21.

Vasiliadis, M (2006). In A. Bilici. (Ed.). *Neden Türkiye? Why Turkey.* (pp. 47-48). Istanbul: Zaman Books.

Weller, P. (2006). 'Human Rights', 'Religion' and the 'Secular': Variant Configurations of Religion(s), State(s) and Society(ies). *Religion and Human Rights: An International Journal.* 1, 1, 17-39.

Weller, P. (2005). *Religions and Social Capital. Theses on Religion(s), State(s) and Society(ies): with Particular Reference to the United Kingdom and the European Union.* *Journal of International Migration and Integration.* 6, 2, 271-289.

Wheatcroft, A. (2004). *Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam.* London: Penguin.

Yakuz, H. *The Gülen Movement. Turkey's Puritans.* In H. Yakuz. & J. Esposito (Eds.), *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (pp. 19-47). Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Yilmaz, I. (2002). The challenge of post-modern legality and Muslim legal pluralism in England. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.* 28, 2, 343-354.