

Fethullah Gulen and the Hizmet Movement: Origins and Organization

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Introduction:

During the twentieth century, Turkey witnessed the emergence of numerous intellectual and social movements of an Islamic character. These movements sought to address the challenges posed by the political and social transformations that accompanied the founding of the modern Turkish state. Among the most significant of these, the Hizmet Movement emerged as a prominent civil movement with an educational and reformist orientation. It was closely linked to the ideas of the Turkish reformer and thinker, Fethullah Gulen, who advocated for societal development through education, the consolidation of moral values, dialogue, and tolerance.

The research aims to study the origins and development of the Hizmet Movement within its Turkish context, examining the religious legacy, the modern state, social transformations, multi-party politics, and military coups. Furthermore, it analyzes the movement's organizational structure and its mechanisms of sustainability, shedding light on its leadership, institutions, and funding, as well as the key factors that contributed to its proliferation and expansion. The study seeks to provide a practical insight that contributes to understanding the nature of the movement and its standing among contemporary social movements in Turkey and globally.

The Hizmet Movement:

The Hizmet Movement, also known as the "Gulen Movement," is a civil-social network with Turkish roots. It utilized social service, education, and civic engagement as a practical entry point for its presence within society, later evolving gradually into a transnational phenomenon. The emergence of the movement cannot be understood in isolation from the political and social environment of the Turkish Republic, where a strict secular-religious dichotomy prevailed, contrasted at times by a socio-religious presence in non-partisan forms (such as Sufi orders, religious communities, and educational networks). Academic studies indicate that the Republic was built on the principles of Western secularism and national modernism, creating a historical tension with religious movements and gatherings, which were perceived as competitors to the state's symbolic and political hegemony¹.

The decades preceding the formation of the Hizmet Movement witnessed social transformations associated with modernization, rural-to-urban migration, the expansion of education, and intermittent political turmoil, including military coups and interventions. This was accompanied by restrictions on organizations of a religious or semi-religious nature, which prompted many social actors to adopt methods of civic and educational work, avoiding direct confrontation with the political establishment². Within this framework, a significant interpretation emerges: networks like "Hizmet" attempted to position themselves socially through values, education, and service, consciously avoiding appearing as a political party or a confrontational movement in their early stages. Instead, they focused on human development as the

¹ Aydin Ozpiek, Cultivating a Cenevation Through Education the Case of the Gulen movement Ma Thesis, cantral Europe University, 2009, P. .7

² Ibid, P. 9.

foundation for any long-term social reform³. The movement was founded on the ideas of Fethullah Gulen in the 1960s. It developed a unique structure, the scale of which is difficult to estimate due to its distinct nature. There are no formal memberships or initiation ceremonies into the movement; rather, it thrives on the collective action of followers and sympathizers. Therefore, a personal interest in the teachings and writings of Fethullah Gulen remains essential⁴. Consequently, the exact number of followers and institutions associated with the Gulen movement is unknown and varies from one country to another, though it is widely agreed to be the largest civil movement in Turkey. Nonetheless, estimates suggest that the number of the movement's members exceeds six million people worldwide⁵. Sociologists debate the cohesion of such a massive movement; it is frequently described as a network rather than a hierarchical organization.

The Gülen movement is characterized not as a tightly controlled, top-down hierarchy, but rather as a loose network of schools, tutoring centers, institutions, businesses, media outlets, hospitals, and the like. Some of these entities are closely linked to Gulen himself, while others view him merely as a source of inspiration⁶.

The community (Jama'ah) holds immense importance for Gulen, as it helps the individual enhance religious productivity through collective action. It also enables individuals to benefit from the righteous deeds accomplished in cooperation with others, and helps them avoid individual errors on the worldly path toward God⁷.

The movement's adherents are divided into two categories: followers and sympathizers. Both groups come from all strata of society; however, the majority of the movement consists either of well-educated individuals holding advanced degrees—such as engineers, teachers, professors, and doctors—or entrepreneurs. While most of the movement's followers are Turkish, it remains open to everyone, and there are other nationalities in various regions who follow and sympathize with the movement⁸.

The idea of volunteering, dedicating time, and fulfillment plays a pivotal role in the group's activities. The movement employs an inclusive discourse toward other religious and ethnic groups and claims to promote the national interest of the host country. This tool has proven vital for capturing broad societal attention and legitimizing the movement's social projects when faced with questions regarding its secular and national commitment⁹.

Some sociologists describe the Gulen movement as akin to the sixteenth-century Protestant movement due to certain shared values. These include disciplined work, efforts driven by religious and national values, a liberal market system, pluralism, and altruism. This is manifested in the movement's activities, such as pioneering quality education, developing Islamic and moral knowledge institutions, and encouraging

³ Jager, Understanding the Gulen movement, small wars journal, CSS. E. THZ file, 2016 ,P. 5.

⁴ Hermansen, Understanding of Community within the Gulen Movement Islam in the Contemporary world: The Fethullah Gulen Movement in the theory and practice, Hanton, Rice University press, 2005, P. 5.

⁵ Findley, Turkey, Islam Nationalism and modernity, London New Haven, Yale University press, 2010, P. 389.

⁶ Sevindi, Turk Okullari, Fethullah Gulen Gold al has New Sohbeti, Istanbul, Times yayinlari, 1997, P. 72.

⁷ Harmansen, Op. cit, P. 8.

Ugun, Religion as a source of Social Capital, The Gulen movement in the Public, London, Leeds Metropolitan University, press, 2003, P. 155.⁸

Ugur, op. cit, P. 156.⁹

personal integrity and philanthropic generosity among entrepreneurs, while simultaneously providing them with a network of mutual encouragement and support¹⁰.

The movement draws primarily on Islamic, Sufi, and Turkish traditions, sourcing its foundations chiefly from the East. Concurrently, it incorporates values from traditional Islamic sources and Western philosophy, integrating elements from other movements of both Western and Eastern thinkers into its unique structure¹¹.

First: The Historical Context of the Movement's Emergence: The "Hizmet" movement in Turkey is understood as the outcome of a complex interaction among three major contexts: an Ottoman and Anatolian legacy that reproduced religiosity in a Sufi, educational, and networked form; profound social transformations that accompanied urbanization, the expansion of education, and the rise of middle classes within a new conservative demographic; and a modern state characterized by institutional secularism and recurrent military tutelage. This environment prompted many religious actors to adopt civic forms of influence that were less costly than direct, partisan political confrontation¹².

Second: The Religious Legacy: The religious legacy in Ottoman Turkey and its aftermath possesses distinct characteristics that differentiate it from other models in the Islamic world. Popular religiosity blended with Sufi orders, scholarly institutions, and the social functions of service, endowments (waqf), and education. Consequently, religion was not merely an individual belief but historically an integral part of the social fabric—organizing, nurturing, and producing meaning for identity. Arab historians of the Kemalist era and its aftermath have demonstrated that the official rupture with traditional structures did not eliminate this phenomenon; rather, it forced it to re-emerge in new forms, including informal educational associations and networks, as well as preaching and teaching groups that reproduced religiosity within society despite institutional constraints¹³.

From a socio-political analytical perspective, certain studies show that this was not a literal return to pre-modern religion, but rather a re-utilization of religion as a social and moral energy to counter the effects of rigid secularization and forced modernization. This was achieved while retaining new forms of organization compatible with the conditions of urban life, education, and the labor market. This shift is significant because Hizmet would later sustain itself from this reservoir—utilizing religiosity as service, education, and solidarity, rather than immediate political mobilization¹⁴.

As an individual, Gulen is rooted in both the Islamic-Ottoman tradition and the positive aspects of modernity. He is a religious modernist and a social innovator who strives to promote the idea that Islam is not inherently contradictory to modernization. Instead, he posits that Islam can utilize education, natural sciences, and technology alongside faith to foster a more moral and just society.

¹⁰ Aras, Caha, Fethullah Gulen and Hisliberal, Turkish Affairs, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2000, Herzliya, P. 40.

¹¹ Hernmnsen, op. cit, P. 3

¹² Mohammad Izza Darwaza, Modern Turkey, Al-Kashaf Press, Beirut, 1946, p. 98.

¹³ Kamal Al-Saeed Habib, Religion and State in Contemporary Turkey, Maktabat Jazirah Al-Ward, Cairo, 2010, p. 77.

¹⁴ Youssef Hussein Omar, Turkey and Modern Contemporary Political History (1923–2018), Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Beirut, 2021, p. 32.

As a result, the movement is considered more modern and influential than any other Islamic movement in Turkey today¹⁵.

The Gulen movement sets a striking example for the Islamic world, not only through its activities but also through how it generates financial support to fund these initiatives, which have spread across all Turkish cities and into several countries worldwide. This position was reinforced by the optimal utilization of core Islamic tenets and models from the lives and biographies of the Prophet's Companions (Sahabah), alongside traditional Turkish values of giving and hospitality. This dual approach enhanced the standing, role, and influence of the Gulen movement in the Islamic world. Although the movement originated in Turkey, it grew rapidly within a very short period, establishing itself in other parts of the world and among non-Turkish populations¹⁶.

Third: The Modern State:
Since its inception, the Turkish Republic has produced a specific model for managing religion. The modern state proclaims secularism, yet it does not entirely separate religion from the public sphere; rather, it seeks to manage and regulate it through official institutions, centralized education, and legislation that defines what constitutes acceptable religion in public spaces. Indeed, many clashes were not over religion itself, but rather over who possesses the authority to define it within the public sphere—the state, society, or religious actors¹⁷.

Highly influenced by Kemalism, the Turkish Parliament between 1925 and 1928 enacted a series of laws aimed at secularizing public life. Atatürk believed that Turkey had to renounce its past and emulate the European model; hence, he sought to overcome all obstacles facing the state in order to create a Westernized, secular nation-state. Following the achievement of national independence, the Turkish Republic enforced its rule through a rigid form of secularism that denied Islam any role in shaping the new order, effectively restricting religion to the private sphere. Secularism was built on the premise of social change enforced by state authority and the exclusion of religion from the public domain. Consequently, any attempt by an individual or a party to employ religious discourse in public debate or within Parliament was met with individual punishment or a ban on the party¹⁸. It is precisely here that a structural condition for the emergence of Hizmet was formed. When partisan religious activity became highly costly—resulting in party dissolutions, crackdowns, and confrontations with state institutions—segments of social religiosity shifted toward "authentic educational" work, viewing it as a less sensitive domain with a greater capacity for stability and expansion. This explains why, alongside Islamic political parties, educational groups and advocacy (dawah) and intellectual networks ascended in Turkey, operating within the permissible legal and social margins instead of engaging in direct competition for governance¹⁹.

¹⁵ Fuller G, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal in the Muslim world*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 2008, P. 121.

¹⁶ Helen, Rosalio, *The Fethullah Gülen Movement*, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁷ Alaa El-Din Abdul-Razzaq Salem Zaki, *Trends of Iraqi-Turkish Digital Journalism Toward the Relations Between the Two Countries*, Master's Thesis, College of Mass Communication, Middle East University, Amman, 2022, p. 74

¹⁸ Yavuz, M. H., *The Gulen Movement: The Turkish Puritanism*, Syracuse University Press, 2003, p. 64.

¹⁹ Nabil Heybi, *Turkey: A Study of Foreign Policy Since 1945*, Dar Sabra, Damascus, 1986, p. 65

Fourth: Social Transformations:

The socioeconomic transformations were no less significant than the political context. Since the mid-twentieth century, internal migration from rural areas to cities accelerated, employment and educational opportunities expanded, and new middle classes emerged in Anatolia. These classes sought upward social mobility through schools, universities, and professional careers. Consequently, these transformations played a pivotal role in reshaping the public identity, reducing the Kemalist elite's monopoly over the city and its institutions, and paving the way for the rise of educated conservatives capable of competing within both the market and the bureaucracy²⁰. Under the weight of these shifts, a dual social need emerged: a need for modern education to facilitate social mobility, and a need for a value-based framework to protect conservative identity from dissolving within the modern city. In this environment, "religious-moral" education and behavioral discipline became integral to family strategies rather than just a product of homiletic discourse. This context tended to generate intermediary institutions—such as student dormitories, associations, tutoring centers, support networks, and community financing. These institutions would later serve as fertile ground for the growth of a broad educational movement, including Hizmet²¹.

Fifth: Multi-Party Politics, Coups, and Tutelage:

Turkey is characterized by multi-party pluralism alongside recurrent military interventions and tutelage over the partisan sphere, making politics an unstable arena. Turkey's transition to a multi-party system occurred in 1946 with the founding of the "Democratic Party", which marked the beginning of pluralistic transformation in Turkish political history, including a shift in the role of Islam within the Turkish state. When the Democratic Party was elected in 1950, it permitted the return of the adhan (call to prayer) in Arabic, removed restrictions barring religious practice and study, and allowed the construction of mosques. Nevertheless, it opposed political Islam and any challenges to the secular nature of the state. The 1960 military coup overthrew the Democratic Party, which was subsequently succeeded by the (Justice Party²³) (). When (Necmettin Erbakan) wished to run for office under the umbrella of the Democratic Party,

²⁰ Reda Helal, *The Sword and the Crescent: Turkey from Atatürk to Erbakan, the Conflict Between the Military Establishment and Political Islam*, Dar Al-Shorouk, Cairo, 1999, p. 55.

²¹ Khaled Al-Senoussi Al-Tewati, "Civil Society in Turkey: A Study in Concept and Effectiveness," *Journal of the Higher Institute for Qualitative Studies*, Giza, Vol. 3, Issue 4, 2023, p. 532.

²² The Democratic Party: The establishment of the Democratic Party came against the backdrop of a dispute among members of the Republican People's Party (CHP). In 1945, four members objected to the budget of the Ministry of Commerce: İsmet İnönü, Adnan Menderes, Refik Koraltan, and Fuad Köprülü. They submitted a report that became known as the "Report of the Four," in which they demanded permission to establish political parties to guarantee the implementation of democracy. The CHP rejected these demands, which led to the expulsion of Adnan Menderes, Refik Koraltan, and Fuad Köprülü, while İsmet İnönü resigned. Following his resignation, İnönü announced the formation of a political party opposing the ruling party, and the establishment of the party was officially announced in 1946 under the name of the Democratic Party. For more, see: Hozair Hassan Shalookh, *Constitutional Developments in Turkey and Their Impact on Internal Politics 1937–1983*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, College of Education - Ibn Rushd, University of Baghdad, 2012, pp. 92–93.

²³ The Justice Party: A center-right political party that emerged as the legal successor and political heir to the banned Democratic Party following the 1960 military coup. The party was led for a long period by Süleyman Demirel. Its program focused on national development, supporting local capital, and the industrial sector, forming the backbone of political life in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s. For more, see: Taghreed Sami Ibrahim Al-Zubaidi, *Parliamentary Life in Turkey (1999–2007)*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Diyala, 2021, p. 76.

the party leader, (Suleyman Demirel²⁴) refused. Erbakan later became a distinct political and intellectual figure in Turkish history upon entering parliament in 1969, and he is often said to have "redefined the role of Islam in Turkish politics," as his objective was to unite Islamic groups under his political leadership²⁵. The Justice Party came to power in the 1965 elections, serving as an extension of the Democratic Party with Demirel as Prime Minister, who was sympathetic toward conservative Muslims. Eight years later, the Justice Party lost to the Republican People's Party (CHP), and (Bulent Ecevit²⁶) was installed as Prime Minister in 1974. Ecevit continued the policy of his predecessor, recognizing that the public required religion²⁷.

The 1980 military coup eventually brought the newly elected Motherland Party into power in 1983, led by (Turgut Ozal), who in turn emphasized education and Islamic morals as an anti-socialist force. Ozal accepted Islam as a source of morality but rejected political Islam²⁸. Ozal argued that restrictions imposed on the freedom of conscience breed extremism rather than the opposite. Thus, he sought to combat communism using Islamic values, mandating the compulsory teaching of Islam in all schools. Members of parliament and the cabinet began appearing in mosques, and the hijab was publicly permitted based on civil liberties. This followed the actions of (Kenan²⁹ Evren), the leader of the 1980 coup, who had initially imposed mandatory Islamic education on the school curriculum, a path that Ozal continued to pursue³⁰.

Among the most significant impacts of Ozal's policies, which led to the expansion of Islam in public spaces, was the issue of the hijab. This expanded the religious sphere and widened the scope of religious networks

²⁴ Suleyman Demirel: Born in the village of Islamkoy in Isparta Province in 1924. He finished his elementary education in Islamkoy in 1937, completed his middle and high school education in Afyonkarahisar, and graduated in 1949. He worked in the General Directorate of Electrical Power Resources Survey and Development Administration in Ankara, then was appointed as an editor in the statistical department of the General Directorate in Ankara in 1954. In 1955, he became the Director-General of that directorate in 1956, he entered the military academy to perform his military service, and after his discharge from the army, he was appointed as an instructor in the Department of Civil Engineering at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara. He turned to politics by joining the Justice Party in 1962, and in 1964, he was elected leader of the party until 1980. He served as Prime Minister five times between 1965 and 1993. He passed away on June 17, 2015. For more, see: Rayan Dounon Al-Abbasi, "Süleyman Demirel and His Political Role in the Development of Turkish Water Resources," *Journal of Education for Sciences, Regional Studies Center*, Issue 1, 2010, p. 13.

²⁵ Omer Lutfi frof, Asher- Devrim, C: H, Toplum sal Domusum Yayanbul, 2003, P.838.

²⁶ Bulent Ecevit: Born in 1950, he completed his secondary education in Istanbul and enrolled in the English Department of the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography at Ankara University. However, he left his studies before completing his degree and began his career as a translator and journalist. He was elected to parliament as a member of the Republican People's Party in the 1957 elections. He served as Director of Labor from 1961 to 1963 and as a member of the Republican People's Party in 1969. He became Prime Minister four times: first from January 26 to November 17, 1974; second from June 21 to July 21, 1977; third from January 5, 1978, to November 12, 1979; and fourth from January 11, 1999, to November 19, 2002. He died in 2006. For more information, see: Maher Hassan, "Death of Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit," *Al-Maari Newspaper*, Issue No. (3067) Cairo, November 5, 2012,

²⁷ Helen, Rosalio, *The Fethullah Gülen Movement*, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁸ Yavuz M H, Op. cit, P. 128.

²⁹ Kenan Evren: Born in 1918 in the Alaşehir district in western Turkey. He graduated from the military academy in Ankara in 1938, and from the military staff college in 1949. He left his position as deputy of military operations and instructor at the staff college during 1957–1958. He served as the Chief of Staff of the military staff schools during 1961–1971, and as Chief of the General Staff from 1978 to 1983. He was the leader of the 1980 military coup and became the President of the Turkish Republic following the coup. See: Saad Abdul-Aziz Maslat, *Internal Political Developments in Turkey 1983–1991*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, College of Education, University of Mosul, 2007, p. 16; Hozair Hassan Shalookh, *Constitutional Developments in Turkey*, op. cit., p. 261.

³⁰ Fuller, G., Op. cit, P. 136.

within the economy, media, and charitable sectors, such as those affiliated with the Gulen movement. These new spaces, formed under Ozal's leadership, served as an empowering tool for Islamic groups in Turkey, including the Gulen movement³¹. The 1997 coup emerged to overthrow Erbakan's government, and the National Security Council (MGK) was formed, solidifying the military's absolute dominance over political life in Turkey in what was termed the "post-modern coup." The National Security Council issued a plan that had to be approved before supporting any new government; its objective was to curb the influence of Islam in Turkey and impose a ban on certain religious gatherings and organizations³². In 1998, (Mesut Yilmaz³³) formed his new government and became Prime Minister, introducing measures specifically designed to limit Islamic influence in Turkey³⁴. The rules of the political game—which permitted multi-party pluralism within certain ceilings while undergoing successive coups—contributed to the development of the "Deep State³⁵" for security, public order, and secularism. This environment did not eliminate public action; rather, it redirected it. Instead of an overt partisan presence, there was an increasing tendency to build influence within society, as social influence is less susceptible to immediate dissolution and more capable of cumulative growth³⁶. The complex relations between political Islam and the military establishment revealed that while the partisan sphere could achieve breakthroughs, it remained under constant threat due to the nature of wagering on power and its limitations within the Turkish system. In contrast to all of this, the Hizmet model became highly attractive because it promised long-term influence without carrying a party banner—meaning, without declaring a direct confrontation with the authorities³⁷.

The Organizational Structure of the Movement (Hizmet): The Hizmet movement is characterized as a socio-institutional network rather than a traditional partisan organization. In other words, it does not build its legitimacy on an overt membership card or an explicit hierarchy, but rather on long-term bonds of trust, education, and institutions operating in education, the economy, and civic work. A consequence of this characterization is that the movement is measured not merely by the number of its supporters, but by its capacity to connect individuals to institutions within a single network. It is also measured by its ability to translate values (such as service, discipline, and altruism) into institutional behavior that is repeated and replicated across multiple locations. Here, the network is not just an organizational format, but a method of generating influence through the distribution of roles, a multiplicity of duties, and the integration of sectors³⁸.

³¹ Yavuz M H, Op. cit, P. 146.

³² Howem, Turkey today: a nation divided over Islams revival, west view press, Boulder, Colorado, 2000, P; 86.

³³ Mesut Yilmaz: Born in Istanbul in November 1947, he comes from a well-known family in the Rize district. He completed his primary and secondary education in Istanbul and graduated from the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University in 1971. He joined the Motherland Party in 1983 and was elected its chairman in June 1991. For more information, see: Suhad Karim, Mesut Yilmaz and His Impact on Turkish Politics until 2002, unpublished master's thesis, College of Education for Humanities, University of Diyala, 2019.

³⁴ Mecham, R. O., "From the ashes of virtue, a promise of light: the transformation of political Islam in Turkey," Third World Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2004, p. 339.

³⁵ Mohammed Nour Al-Din, Turkey's Coups: From Adnan Menderes to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Riad El-Rayyes Books, Beirut, 2016, p. 45.

³⁶ Youssef Ibrahim Al-Jahmani, The Party of Time: Wagering on Power, Dar Horan, 1997, p. 66.

³⁷ Ahmed Nouri Al-Nuaimi, Modern Islamic Movements in Turkey: Its Present and Future, Dar Al-Bashir, Amman, 1993, p. 143.

³⁸ Qasim Hussein Al-Rubaie, "The Parallel State in Turkey... Fethullah Gulen," Journal of Strategic Research, Bilad Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Baghdad, Issue 8, 2015, p. 150.

First:

Leadership:

The movement's leadership is structured around a dual framework: a symbolic, referential center that endows the discourse with its value-based unity, and a distributed operational leadership that manages day-to-day activities through local and sectoral units and circles. This duality allows the movement to appear non-partisan and civic on the surface, while maintaining a high degree of internal coordination and disciplined guidance. Within the context of this research, we observe that prior to the 1980s, the movement did not announce a formal structure for its operations; rather, it functioned through a logic of networked coordination that enabled decision-making via multiple channels, linking local hubs to higher levels without overt declaration.

Relatedly, leadership operates not merely through directives, but through value-oriented socialization—meaning the cultivation of a model of discipline, voluntary obedience, and commitment to service. This makes network management closer to a tool of shared organizational culture, management without orders in its military sense. As these institutional networks expand, they generate influence within society and the state through the accumulation of cadres and specialized expertise, even if the network does not define itself as a direct political actor³⁹.

Second:

Institutions

The movement's institutions are distributed across overlapping functional circles, the most important of which are⁴⁰:

1. Educational Institutions: "Schools, tutoring centers, student dormitories, and supportive activities." This circle within Hizmet produces cadres and builds social capital rooted in trust, academic excellence, and discipline. It serves as the primary gateway for renewing the network across future generations.
2. Media and Cultural Institutions: The function of this circle within Hizmet is to consolidate a moral, civic public image, widen the scope of societal acceptance, and produce a discourse that convinces the educated middle class that religiosity can be rational and open-minded without translating into political confrontation.
3. Economic Institutions: These do not merely represent a funding mechanism; rather, they form a network of relationships, labor, employment, mentorship, and mutual benefit that renders Hizmet sustainable. Here, the economy functions as a link connecting graduates, entrepreneurs, and institutions, thereby transforming social capital into a capacity for expansion⁴¹. The core strength of the Hizmet movement's network lies in the fact that it does not isolate these circles into silos; instead, it renders them mutually reinforcing. The educational sector provides the economy with qualified cadres, while the economy supplies education with resources. Concurrently, the media generates social legitimacy that facilitates operations, and the core social work endows the project with its moral image and reinforces trust. While this network appears to be the primary driver of the movement's strength and proliferation, it also accounts for the state's heightened sensitivity toward it, particularly when the state perceives that the network has shifted from a collection of civic initiatives into a vast organization of

³⁹ Hazem Sabah Ahmed and Mnahi Hassan Alwan, "The Fethullah Gulen Movement and the Coup Attempt Against the Justice and Development Party in Turkey," *Journal of Adaab Al-Farahidi*, Tikrit University, Vol. 2, Issue 32, 2018, pp. 250–258.

⁴⁰ Shujaa Mahmoud Khalaf, *The Deep State's Impact on Public Policies in Turkey After 2002*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, College of Political Science, University of Baghdad, 2022, pp. 171–176.

⁴¹ Mohammed Baba Ammi, *The Gulen Paradigm: Fethullah Gulen and the Hizmet Project in Light of the Reshd Model*, Dar Al-Nil, Cairo, 2011, pp. 45–50.

influence

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Third:

Funding

Funding constitutes the cornerstone of any extensive institutional network. One of the primary sources of strength in financing Hizmet lies in voluntary financial mobilization: "donations, support from entrepreneurs, contributions to building schools or other activities, and backing relief and cultural projects." The culture of giving within the movement is framed as a socio-religious practice that transcends mere financial donation, extending to participation through endowments (waqf), expertise, and social reputation⁴³.

Funding does not operate in a vacuum; it is linked to legal forms that permit the establishment of schools, associations, and institutions, as well as the management of resources within the framework of the modern state. Consequently, understanding the network necessitates referencing the legal foundation of associations in Turkey, which regulates establishment, governance, oversight, and funding, and defines compliance and procedures related to associations⁴⁴. Similarly, the Law on Foundations and Endowments regulates the mechanisms for establishing a waqf, managing its properties, and its oversight, thereby providing a legal framework for the operation of public-benefit or endowment-based institutions⁴⁵. Evidently, funding in Hizmet operates on two parallel levels: a values-based, social level that relies on trust, volunteerism, and donations; and a legal-institutional level that translates resources into viable entities capable of sustainability and expansion under the conditions of the modern⁴⁶ state. The transition of the Turkish economy toward economic liberalism in the 1980s led to the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurs who accumulated capital through commercial investments both within Turkey and globally. Many of these individuals were drawn to the ideas of Fethullah Gulen and consequently supported the movement's institutions, particularly those related to education. Fethullah Gulen actively encouraged this business class to sponsor student houses and fund university preparatory courses⁴⁷.

Fourth: Mechanisms of Proliferation and Affiliation

The establishment of the movement domestically and internationally is linked to two concurrent factors: the ease of replicating the model and the movement's flexibility. The model is built upon key, reproducible units: "the school, tutoring centers, student dormitories, the university, activities, and donations, among others." These units do not require a political declaration to function; instead, they require cadres, discipline, local funding, and social partnerships. Operating through education grants the movement the capacity to engage with communities through various well-received entry points, thereby building relationships with families, the middle class, and professional elites⁴⁸.

In addition, by virtue of its multi-faceted nature, the movement can expand through different tracks

⁴² Ahmed Salman Mohammed, "The Military Coup Attempt in Turkey (2016) and Its Impact on Turkey's Regional Policy," *Mustansiriya Journal of Arab and International Studies*, Al-Mustansiriya University, Vol. 14, Issue 58, 2017, p. 72–77

⁴³ Mohammed Baba Ammi, *The Gulen Paradigm*, op. cit., pp. 70–74.

⁴⁴ Republic of Turkey, Law of Associations No. 5223 of 2004, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, 2004.

⁴⁵ Republic of Turkey, Law of Foundations and Endowments No. 5737 of 2008, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, No. 268800, dated 27/2/2008.

⁴⁶ Alam, A., op. cit., p. 118

⁴⁷ Helen, Rosalio, *The Fethullah Gulen Movement*, op. cit., p. 70.

⁴⁸ Ahmed Nouri Al-Nuaimi, "The Role of Nur Students in Turkish Political Life: Fethullah Gulen as a Model," *Journal of Strategic Research*, Bilad Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Baghdad, 2016, pp. 110–112.

simultaneously: "an educational track, a cultural or economic track, and a civic track." This approach generates soft power that accumulates the movement's presence without the need for a political party. However, this pattern of proliferation becomes highly sensitive when the political environment changes or when the balance of trust between the state and these networks shifts, as the expansion may then be reinterpreted as infiltration rather than service ⁴⁹. As for the method of joining the movement, many participants first learned of it during their stay in student dormitories, through friends affiliated with it at university, or by attending university preparatory courses. For instance, a worker in a factory had enrolled in a state-supported preparatory course but found that the students who finished it did not achieve grades qualifying them for university admission. Upon meeting students who attended the movement's preparatory courses, he found individuals who offered them guidance in studying and instilled a desire for learning. Consequently, he transferred to that preparatory course, where he came to know the members of the movement, wished to understand them, admired them and the ideas of Fethullah Gulen, and aspired to become like them ⁵⁰.

Conclusion:

1. The emergence of the Hizmet movement was not an event isolated from the Turkish environment; rather, it was the result of an interaction of historical, religious, social, and political factors that contributed to shaping its intellectual identity.
2. The movement was influenced by the religious legacy left by Islamic reform movements in Turkey, such as the ideas of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, as well as the transformations that accompanied the construction of the modern Turkish state.
3. The Turkish social transformations and their accompanying events contributed to creating an environment conducive to the proliferation and expansion of the movement.
4. Multi-party politics, political crises, and military coups contributed to crystallizing the movement toward social and educational action.
5. It is evident that the Hizmet movement relied on a flexible organizational structure based on leadership, institutions, and donations.
6. The success and proliferation of the movement were not merely linked to its organizational structure, but rather to its capacity to employ education, civic work, dialogue, and tolerance as means to achieve its objectives.

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