

Islamism, Post-Islamism, and Civil Islam

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CIVIL DEMOCRACY DISTINGUISHES PHILOSOPHICALLY AND MORALLY between political life and religious faith. Religion and politics are not mutually exclusive under such modern conditions. Indeed, it is possible to be devoutly faithful and to embrace civil democratic politics, just as it is possible to be faithful and to adhere to an anti-democratic political ideology. Such is the case with Islam and Islamism; Islam the religion is compatible with civil democratic modernity, but Islamism is an anti-democratic political ideology. Whereas Islam is defined in the Quran as the “path to God’s blessings and eternal salvation,” Islamism as a political project seeks to energize and organize Muslims to struggle against what it perceives as a Western-dominated world system.¹ More specifically, Islamist ideology seeks to oppose Islam against secular, pluralistic and liberal understandings of the emancipated self and the democratic public sphere.

As a religion, Islam is widely considered to be essentially different from other religions in that its concepts of belief and political rule have been fused in different historical contexts. Because of this, Islam and the Muslim ideal of the “Islamic State” are generally assumed to be resistant to pluralist democracy and religious modernity. This is certainly the view propagated by the Islamist movement, which has largely defined political action in revolutionary terms and as inherently opposed to the modern liberal order. In 1941, the Pakistani ideologue

Abul A'la Mawdudi wrote that “Islam is a revolutionary doctrine and a system that overturns [modern] governments.”² Through this politicization of religion, Islamism has appropriated the ideal of the Islamic State and claimed it as its own.

Islamists imagine Islam as a totalistic and divine system for organizing politics, culture, law and economic life. For them, the Quran offers a programmatic blueprint for an “Islamic State” that contains prescriptions for all aspects of everyday human life. Indeed, like other modern political ideologies, Islamism is totalitarian in nature. Consequently, Islamists concern themselves mainly with the duties and obligations that their political project requires. They reject democratic pluralism and civil society, and they see little point in reflecting on ethical responsibility or in determining and safeguarding the rights of individuals. In fact, as with other totalitarians, Islamists do not respect the religious beliefs or conscience of others.

Islamists are focused principally on power, and they seek to achieve their goals of transforming society through its acquisition. Indeed, to the Islamist, power is more important than spirituality, and he will often sacrifice the latter for the sake of political action. Islamists are usually not men of dialogue, but instead are fond of constructing insurmountable borders by denouncing others—pious Muslims and non-Muslims alike—as secularists, liberals, and unbelievers. Islamist rhetoric is thus by design harsh and severe and Islamist preaching and proselytization is repulsive rather than inviting. Islamists seek to blame non-Islamist Muslims for the problems that many modern Muslim societies face; they attach little importance to the spiritual development of individuals and service to civic society and they focus their efforts instead on political action and their struggle against the enemies that they’ve made for themselves. There are, of course, multiple manifestations of Islamism and one can talk about the variety of Islamisms, not a single type. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned characteristics can mostly be found in all variations of Islamism.

Contrary to what Islamists would argue, however, Islamism is only one of the interpretations of Islam by Muslims. In an alternative Islamic understanding that might be broadly described as “Civil Islam,” Islam isn’t corrupted or transformed into a political ideology, nor is it state-centric. Instead, the main focus of Civil Islam is on the spiritual development of individual Muslims and the promotion of the general conditions for human flourishing, including a robust civil society, human rights, religious freedom, peace, ethics, social justice, and the rule of law.

Unlike the Islamists, the Muslim practitioners of Civil Islam do not view the West or modern secularism as an adversary, nor do they engage in shallow ideological rhetoric. Instead, their primary concern is with living the core Islamic injunction of “amr bil ma’ruf and nahy anil munkar” (enjoining the good and

discouraging the evil) by performing good deeds and acting in a virtuous and pious way. Moreover, in this understanding of Islam, secular and pluralist democracy is the only satisfactory and feasible modern political arrangement for Muslims. Civil Islam is critical of anti-religious secularist ideologies, but it is not threatened by the Anglo-Saxon understanding of secularism and, in fact, it embraces this form of religious modernity. In this perspective, so long as core human rights and especially the freedom of religion and expression are ensured, there is no need for a revolutionary Islamic state. If anything, Civil Islam holds that the state should be secular, and that it should remain neutral in its policies toward all religions. Indeed, Civil Islam does not seek to determine the political order of things, but concerns itself instead with spirituality, the individual soul and with the improvement of social life.

According to Nilüfer Göle, Islamism as a revolutionary and authoritarian movement initially distinguished itself with an “anti-systemic stand and a rigid ideological corpus.”³ Some Islamists, however, have since matured in their approach. Today, a new generation of Muslims who were reared on Islamist ideology has begun to adapt their behavior to the norms and expectations of civil democracy. Consequently, in some contexts, the Islamist movement’s internal dynamics and ultimately its political objectives have also begun to change. In some, though not all countries, the Islamist obsession with revolution has declined, and a process of distancing and individuation from collective militancy has taken place. Many have called the resulting form of subdued Islamism “post-Islamism.”⁴

Post-Islamism can be understood as both a condition and as an ongoing political project. As Asef Bayat has described it, post-Islamism is a political and social condition in which “the appeal, energy, symbols and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted even among its once ardent supporters.”⁵ Put another way, post-Islamism results after political Islamism is attempted in practice and fails. As Islamists become aware of their movement’s anomalies and inadequacies as they try to rule, they become compelled, both by Islamism’s own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reassess and reinvent their political ideology through democratic competition with other intellectual and religious tendencies. As such, Bayat further defines post-Islamism as a political project, or “a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains.”⁶ In this way, post-Islamists are seeking to update Islamism and marry it with individual choice, freedom, democracy, and religious modernity. A notable example of this trend may be the current Ennahda leadership in Tunisia.⁷ Post-Islamism acknowledges secular exigencies and seeks freedom from rigidity in breaking down the monopoly of religious truth.

In short, whereas Islamism represents the fusion of religion with political ideology and instrumentalized conceptions of divine law, post-Islamism emphasizes religiosity, human rights, and ethical responsibility.⁸ Thus, as a political movement, post-Islamists can enter into fruitful discussions about other ideas, including religious modernity and liberalism. For these reasons, post-Islamism has the potential to serve as a bridge away from Islamism and towards Civil Islam. At the same time, however, post-Islamists remain vulnerable to the revolutionary ideology and authoritarianism that is inherent in more standard Islamism.

Islamism, post-Islamism, and Civil Islam are each considerably influential in today's Turkey. For decades, Turkish Islamists have endured state repression, forced closures of their political parties, and the meddling of the military-bureaucratic "deep state" in their everyday activities. Since the 1980s, however, a still ongoing process of reforming and opening up the country's political system has created new democratic opportunities for Islamists to participate in public life. Through this, Islamists have become more experienced at participating in the democratic process, and they have learned to compete successfully with other movements for favor with the Turkish electorate. They have influenced the formation of political parties, most notably the now-ruling and politically dominant Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP).

The AKP, however, is not simply an Islamist party. It is rather an amalgamation of different groups, not all of which may be accurately considered Islamist. As prospective officials running for election and as ruling politicians, Islamists within AKP have had to address and also represent the interests of a group much larger than their own ideological constituency. The combination of this democratic learning process with the existing political constraints imposed on Islamism by the established secular order has contributed to a strong tendency toward post-Islamism in Turkish religious and political life.

Civil Islam has also had significant influence in modern Turkey. Among other things, it has played an important role in moderating the Islamist tendencies within AKP. Indeed, the growing influence of Muslim groups in Turkish civil society has been a crucial factor in Turkish Islamism's transformation and the resulting trend toward post-Islamism. The Hizmet movement is the main proponent of Civil Islam in Turkey. As part of the coalition that makes up the governing AKP, the Hizmet movement's adherents have been instrumental in the development of a more tolerant political platform within the party that has competed with and constrained its Islamist tendencies, and that ultimately aims to jettison Islamist ideology entirely. Today, there is a growing competition within Turkey and inside the AKP in particular between Islamism and the practitioners of Civil Islam. If the

post-Islamist condition in Turkey is to deepen and to ultimately yield to a stable accommodation between Islam and democratic pluralism, it will be the result of Civil Islam's progress against Islamism.

Understanding the Hizmet Movement

THE HIZMET MOVEMENT ORIGINATED IN TURKEY AND IS NOW ACTIVE IN education, civil society, business and other activities in over one hundred and fifty countries worldwide. Fethullah Gülen (b.1941) is the social and the spiritual leader of the movement. The movement, which is not sponsored by a government or by a political party, is a transnational civic initiative rooted in the spiritual and humanistic tradition of Islam. One of the main goals of the Hizmet organization has been the elevation of a Muslim consciousness that is compatible with modern civil democracy and opposed to Islamism. For Gülen, Islamists are usually motivated by personal and political agendas rooted in the pursuit of worldly ambitions and power as well as by anger and hostility toward others:

Muslims cannot act out of ideological or political partisanship and then dress this partisanship in Islamic garb, or represent mere desires in the form of ideas; strangely enough, many groups that have put themselves forward under the banner of Islam export a distorted image of Islam and actually strengthen it.⁹

As a Muslim movement, Hizmet seeks to revitalize religious faith, and it also believes Islam has a role to play in enriching and sustaining civic and democratic political life. But in sharp contrast with Islamists, participants do not seek to become a political party, nor do they seek political power for themselves or for the purposes of spreading a particular political ideology. Instead, the movement aims to improve modern society and advance the human condition by strengthening spirituality and individual piety. Hizmet does this through encouraging individuals to embrace certain "life-strategies" which stress worldly asceticism (*zuhd*), self-negating altruism and service to others.

The pietistic character of Hizmet teachings and the movement's focus on individuals are important to grasp. Gülen's understanding of Islam and Islamic

scripture is esoteric rather than an exoteric. While Islamists promote a juridical and politicized interpretation of the Quran, Gülen's approach to the Quran aims to reveal its deepest teachings on spirituality and humanity's longing for the Divine Being. Indeed, the importance of Sharia law is mentioned only two times in the Holy Book (42:13 and 45:18) whereas the exigency of faith is manifest on numerous pages. Through rich and literary exegesis, Gülen helps to reveal Islam's inner spiritual dynamics and he stresses over and over again the "self-transcendent" experience that is possible to anyone in everyday life. Illuminating these aspects of Islam was Gülen's motive in composing his four-volume study, *Emerald Hills of Heart: Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. Through a learned reconstruction of traditional Sufism and concepts, the study shows, among other things, the limits and fundamental poverty of Islamist thought and it helps to overcome the seeming incompatibility of Islam and civil democratic modernity.¹⁰

While Fethullah Gülen's multifaceted teachings are clearly rooted in classical Turkish Sufism, he is best understood as a modern reformer of these spiritual traditions who is involved in updating them for the modern world.¹¹ In the Sufi approach, those who are fettered by and obsessed with worldly ambitions cannot perceive or come close to *Nur*, that is, "the Light." In religious practice, therefore, everyday desires and attachments to the material world are drastically devalued, and complete closeness with the Divine Being is sought. Gülen's very style of preaching is unique and charismatic, and meant to underscore his mystical and personal asceticism. His sermons are full of symbolism, allegories and aphorisms; instead of canonical interpretation, the spiritual and internal dimensions of Islamic belief are accentuated. Gülen often weeps during his sermons, and he points to the example of the early Muslims (the *Sahaba*, the friends and helpers of the Prophet Mohammad) in an effort to re-enact their well-known sufferings and their struggles in the way of Islam. Such emotional performances serve as an expressive vehicle to establish connections between the earliest Muslims and contemporary ones.¹² But in contrast to the harsh rhetoric of Islamists, Gülen's preaching looks to the early Muslims' compassion and love; as the Prophet had said to his friends, "God Almighty is kind and likes kindness in all things" (Bukhari 6601). Through this, a type of saintly personality is suggested as a model for emulation, and believers are encouraged to take as their life-project the goal of triumphing over carnal desires, politicized ambitions and the fleeting pleasures that the world offers to the egotistical self. For Gülen, "when one sacrifices his enjoyment of material pleasures, he grows perfect as long as he frees himself from selfishness and self-seeking and lives only for others."¹³ Through this, the selfish ego and worldly political ambitions vanish in the all-pervasive ocean of Islamic spirituality.

While such self-transcendent practices are emphasized, Gülen does not call for renouncing or withdrawing from modern society. The world should be abandoned only in one's own soul, that is, internally, but not externally. In this, Hizmet participants depart from the ways of the dervishes of the traditional Sufi brotherhoods. The dervish's focus is exclusively on the "other-world" and is thus radically anti-social. By contrast, the personal asceticism taught by Gülen stresses the importance of involving one's self in the modern world; far from being an obstacle to self-transcendence, Gülen's followers regard deepening engagement in modern civic life for the benefit of others as an opportunity to become closer to God.

On the basis of this, the Hizmet movement rejects the politicized approach of Muslim Brotherhood ideologues like Said Qutb who call on believers to renounce the *jahalliya* (ignorance) of the modern world and to struggle against the "un-Islam" of civil democracy. Indeed, as Paul Heck has argued, in contrast to the puritanism of Wahhabism, the anti-modern pietism of Tablighism, and the harsh and enmity-filled ideology of contemporary jihadism, reformed Sufism as practiced by the Hizmet movement adopts a positive view of the modern world. In this Islamic perspective, "the internal workings of the universe (science, history, politics, philosophy, art and culture) are not something Muslims should fear or try to stuff into an Islamized box but rather engage positively in view of the spiritual insight of Islam."¹⁴ As such, the Hizmet movement actively concerns itself with shaping and improving society in the image of rationalized religious ideals, including by altruistic service to others.

Living and engaging in the world not for selfish interests but for the benefit of others forms the basis of the Hizmet movement's whole social action. For Hizmet participants, self-negating service to others can be regarded as a form of modern religious practice. This service to others is a function of individual choice; unlike in some traditional Sufi orders where prayer is imposed on individuals by the larger community, service to others is not externally-imposed or strictly systematized in Hizmet practice. Instead, individuals are encouraged to choose the intensity and frequency of their practice. For these reasons, participants can choose to apply the rationalized religious maxim of "living only for the others" in their roles as committed and pious teachers, as scientists, doctors, engineers, businessmen, tradesmen and so on. Because of this core teaching, it is not surprising that the movement has expanded rapidly—and not only in Muslim countries, but also in non-Muslim ones.

Gülen's rationalization of religious ideals and principles that are in tune with modern secular practices forms the basis for his Islamic approach to civil society. He teaches the importance of living Islam in this world: "Our right foot is fixed

upon the center of the truth (*haqiqa*) while our left foot is rotating in and around the seventy-two nations.”¹⁵ As such, a Muslim’s identity and the call to Islam is not an obstacle to live in peace with the people of other faiths and secularist actors. Instead, Islam is a call to critical engagement and communication with others and to working together for shared goals like the betterment of human society. According to this secularized understanding of Islam, the purpose of a Muslim’s involvements in “the world is to tell the other persons diamond-like truths that they try to represent.”¹⁶ It is on this basis that the Hizmet movement has competed directly with the revolutionary and authoritarian ideas of Islamists. The religious attitude of Civil Islam rejects the politicized doctrine and the “us vs. them” approach of Islamists, and instead stresses the importance of living Islam through sincerity, honesty, personal piety, and through selfless service to others through modern civil society.

Civil Islam and Democratic Modernity

THROUGHOUT GÜLEN’S TEACHING, ONE CAN SEE AN ABIDING CONCERN WITH fostering a communitarian ethos that aims to improve modern society through the revitalization of Islamic spiritualism, individual religious piety and service to others. Of course, in some secularist contexts—such as in the post-Soviet countries of the larger Turkic world—this could be seen as a challenge to the normative framework and to purely areligious forms of sociability. This may be one reason why critics have mistakenly suspected the Hizmet members as crypto-Islamists who harbor a hidden agenda. But the movement’s approach to transforming interpersonal relations through Civil Islam and achieving peaceful socio-cultural change is very different from the Islamist approach, both in terms of its relation to the public sphere and also because it is not at odds with modern secularism and civil democracy.

Gülen’s ideas are effective in practice because they have rationalized religious ideals and shown their core compatibility with secular interests. This is a projection of worldly mysticism onto his understanding of secularism. In fact, he seeks to eradicate the elements which give rise to actual and potential conflict between Islamic religious interests and the modern world. The absence of any deep antagonism between “the divine” and “the worldly” in Gülen’s theology facilitates

this idealistic effort. As a practical matter, Gülen takes seriously the general failure of many Muslims to succeed at modernizing their societies in the realms of science, technology and education. For these reasons, he seeks to prove that science and Islam are not at odds. In his view, the more Muslims witnessed the perfect order of nature by the use of modern sciences, the greater they understand God. Through this, the modern idea of progress through the advance of science, technology and education is shown to be perfectly compatible with an esoteric and spiritual understanding of Islam. As early as 1997, Gülen explained his understanding of modern secularism, stating firmly that it does not represent a non-Muslim way of life.¹⁷ The modern separation between the sacred and profane is accepted in reformed Sufism. For him, “secularism cannot be rejected...[it] consists of worldly affairs which are a part of human life... Secularism includes both the sacred and profane wherein they are separated.”¹⁸

According to Gülen, such an understanding of secularism based on the dichotomy between the sacred and profane actually existed before the modern era in the times of the Seljuks and Ottomans. Indeed, the numerous volumes of Ottoman Secular Law (*Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*) demonstrate the Sublime Porte’s secular approach to solving worldly problems: the body of law relied on secular reasoning independent from Sharia. Moreover, Gülen has argued that without secularism, the Ottomans’ multi-ethnic and multi-religious administration of a population of two hundred fifty million people on three continents could never have succeeded.

While Gülen embraces modern secularism, he is opposed to radical secularism, including the imposition of the idea that humanity can be religion-free; to the general trend toward the de-sacralization of human nature; and to anti-democratic oppressive ideologies which are rooted in secularism, such as communism. As he writes:

Secularization is an inevitable characteristic of human nature. But man is not only a body. He has a soul, too. He has a metaphysical dimension besides the physical one. He has both sacred and profane aspects. Therefore a perfect democracy can welcome both the physical and metaphysical needs of its subjects.¹⁹

In a newspaper interview on the same subject, Gülen went further, arguing that modern democracy actually requires religion to nourish and sustain it:

The needs of a person are not solely made up of worldly needs. People should have the benefits of freedom of thought and free-

dom of economic action, but they also have another side which is open to eternity... If democracy is to be a full-fledged democracy, it needs to include things that help to fulfill such demands and it needs to give support to them. That means, democracy requires a metaphysical dimension. It also needs a side that is open to our accounts for the other world, to our unfulfilled accounts. Why not have such a democracy?²⁰

Gülen's understanding of secularism is connected to his efforts to transcend the conflict promoted by Islamists between Islam and modern pluralism. The Hizmet movement does not make the stark distinctions that Islamists make between Islam and un-Islam. Instead of the binary opposition promoted by "dar-al Harb" (place of war) and "dar-al Islam" (place of Islam), Gülen describes the modern world as "dar-al Hizmet," or as a "place of service." For this reason, Klas Grinell defines Gülen as a "border transgressor."²¹ Gülen imagines the world through this secular dimension, and his idea of "service to humanity" is the core of his Civil Islam approach. Moreover, he does not see the *Ummah* as a political entity, that is, as the "Muslim Nation," but as a socio-cultural space that is internally diverse and not opposed to the non-Muslim world. For these reasons, the movement has spearheaded inter-faith initiatives and other forms of outreach aimed at curtailing the clash between Islam and the West promoted by Islamist movements and others. As John O. Voll has observed, "in the clashing visions of globalizations, F. Gülen is a force in the development of the Islamic discourse of globalized multicultural pluralism. As the impact of the educational activities of those influenced by him attests, his vision bridges modern and postmodern, global and local, and has a significant influence in the contemporary debates that shape the visions of the future of Muslims and non-Muslims alike."²²

Against the Islamist conceit of the Islamic State, Gülen stresses the fact that "Islam does not propose a certain unchangeable form of government or attempt to shape it."²³ In fact, the only fundamental principles that Islam prescribes for political life are the "social contract and [the] election of a group of people to debate common issues."²⁴ Thus, rather than opposing civil democratic modernity, Islam requires many of its core tenets:

On the issue of Islam and democracy, one should remember that the former is a divine and heavenly religion, while the latter is a form of government developed by human beings. The main purposes of religion are faith, servitude to God, knowledge of

God (*ma'rifah*), and good deeds (*ihsan*). The Qur'an, in its hundreds of verses, invites people to the faith and worship of the True (*al-Haqq*).²⁵

In this approach, the separation of the religious and political domains that civil democratic modernity rests upon is obvious; human beings are existentially free not only to make choices about their personal lives but also to make choices with regard to their political actions.²⁶

... in Islam it is not possible to limit the concept of governance and politics into a single paradigm...²⁷ If secularism is understood as the state not being founded on religion, hence it does not interfere with religion or religious life; as the faithful living his religion does not disturb others; and furthermore if the state will accomplish this task in a serious neutrality, then there is no problem [for Muslims].²⁸

While Islamists remain focused on their political and other worldly agendas, Gülen keeps reiterating that a Muslim's life revolves around worship. He is thus deeply critical of Islamism's literalist approaches to the Quran and politicized Islam and focuses instead on what is most important to modern Muslims, that is, the renewal of their faith:

If a state... gives the opportunity to its citizens to practice their religion and supports them in their thinking, learning, and practice, this system is not considered to be against the teaching of the Quran. In the presence of such a state there is no need to seek an alternative state.²⁹

Through this, Gülen strongly opposes Islamism's penchant for seeing the Quran as the foundation for a political project:

The Quran is an explanation of the reflections of the divine names on earth and in the heavens... It is an inexhaustible source of wisdom. Such a book should not be reduced to the level of political discourse, nor should it be considered a book about political theories or forms of state. To consider the Quran as an instrument of political discourse is a great disrespect for the Holy Book and is

an obstacle that prevents people from benefiting from this deep source of divine grace.³⁰

On the basis of this, the Hizmet movement seeks to promote a new Islamic attitude, one that embraces secularism and that stresses tolerance and respect for all people regardless of their faith and worldview. Such an attitude is not only necessary for civil democratic modernity, but it is also required in Civil Islam.

Civil Islam and Turkey's Future

OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES, THE HIZMET MOVEMENT HAS HAD A MAJOR influence on the ongoing transformation of Turkish political and religious life. The spread of Civil Islam has helped not only to usher in the post-Kemalist era, but it has also stimulated changes inside Turkish Islamism. Like the Muslim Brotherhood in Arab societies, the Turkish Islamist movement in the 1970s was hostile toward modernity, and it conflated religious belief with the need to struggle against the secular order and Western influences. The spread of Islamist ideology, therefore, has only sharpened the distinction between religious faith and loyalty to the modern Turkish state and its founding secularist ideology. But Civil Islam offers Muslims an alternative model, one that shows that it is possible to live as a pious Muslim while embracing secular democratic pluralism. Through this, religious faith and citizenship have become increasingly reconciled for sizeable segments of the Turkish electorate. The spread of Civil Islam has opened new possibilities for engagement with civil democratic institutions, just as it has counteracted Islamist efforts to politicize religion and fostered a new post-Islamist orientation.

Civil Islam has also been a major factor behind the political rise of the AKP. Of course, these developments cannot be understood in isolation from the larger sociological changes that have taken place across the country, most notably, the new economic and political vitality of Anatolia, where the AKP's core political base lies. In many ways, the new Anatolian middle class embodies the Hizmet teachings: they are religiously conservative, but democratically and civically engaged professionals and business people. Civil Islam is deeply influential in Anatolia through Hizmet-affiliated educational and media institutions. In fact, many Anatolian business people as well as AKP politicians have sent their children

to Hizmet schools. Moreover, the Hizmet-run daily newspaper *Zaman* has the largest circulation by far in Anatolian towns, and the majority of the AKP's supporters are regular readers.³¹ The entrepreneurial and pro-business outlook of this population has been fostered by civil associations, including the Hizmet-affiliated organization known as TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists), which includes 7 business federations in 7 regions of Turkey, with a total of 176 business associations. As a whole, this has weakened the appeal of radical Islamism on the wider socially conservative masses of Anatolia, who have become increasingly open to international engagements.

For these reasons, Hizmet had considerable influence in shaping the AKP's agenda during its first two terms as the ruling party, from 2002–2011. As the political scientist Ahmet Kuru and others have observed, the interactions between the Islamist elements within the AKP and the Hizmet movement played an important role in the formation of the party's early perspectives on secularism, business and civil society.³² Civil Islam in particular helped to weaken Islamism's adversarial, anti-Western and authoritarian dimensions as it provided Muslims with a new way to connect to civic democratic institutions. Today, participants of the Hizmet movement are actively seeking to influence the AKP by stressing the importance of cooperation with non-Muslims and secularist Muslims, and also democracy and human rights.³³ Moreover, the movement has also been a clear advocate for the EU membership process, and at home it has been an advocate for egalitarian democracy and free-market reforms.

Civil Islam as it has evolved in Turkey has the potential to influence other Muslim societies. Major developments in Turkey have already been followed by considerable interest by the media, thinkers and activists in many Muslim societies, and for its part, the Hizmet movement has increased its activities throughout the Muslim world. In 2006, the Hizmet movement responded to criticism that it was not paying sufficient attention to the Muslim world in comparison with its focus on dialogue with non-Muslims by launching a new initiative of the Abant Platform, which is a part of Journalists and Writers Foundation in Istanbul. The platform invited Arab, Jewish and Turkish intellectuals from Middle Eastern countries to discuss the future of the region. Later in February 2007, the platform co-organized a meeting in Egypt with the prominent Al-Ahram Institute to discuss Turkish and Egyptian experiences with democracy, modernization and secularism. A more recent 2011 meeting directly suggested that Turkish Civil Islam could become an inspirational model for the Arab countries to emulate.³⁴ Moreover, the Hizmet movement, being aware of the need to situate itself in the Middle East and demonstrate the relevance of Civil Islam to Arab countries,

has published an Arabic-language magazine, *Hira*, since 2005.³⁵ *Hira* has been bringing together Turkey and the Arab world for eight years. 37,000 copies of the journal are distributed to intellectuals in the Arab world via subscriptions. The magazine and its social platform have organized more than 27 symposia and conferences in a number of countries (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Sudan and Turkey) that have attracted more than 2,500 Arab scholars and intellectuals. *Hira*'s media and social activities as well as educational initiatives draw attention to Civil Islam in Turkey, and the free exchange of ideas about Civil Islam has already helped establish some new educational initiatives in Arab societies.³⁶

Taken together, the spread of Civil Islam teachings has helped to change the cognitive and normative political frameworks of observant Muslims in Turkey and beyond. It has shown that Islam and civil democratic modernity can go hand in hand. This has helped to ameliorate the societal tensions generated by the ideas propagated by Islamists, creating a new post-Islamist tendency. At the same time, it has created new tensions. After all, the Hizmet movement's understanding of Islam is stateless and cosmopolitan, and thus different from the perspectives of post-Islamists who still seek to use the state and democratic politics to promote Islamist practices against secular democratic ones. As Gülen puts it, Islam does not need a state to survive; in the modern age, civil society can independently maintain Islam even where Muslims are not the majority.³⁷

The current struggle between Civil Islam and Islamists within the AKP will be the defining one for Turkey's future. Indeed, now that the AKP has entered its third term in power, many have begun to question—and with good reason—whether the party is reverting back to Islamism. Some AKP politicians have engaged in heavy-handed rhetoric that resonates with modern Islamism. Prime Minister Erdogan's renunciation of the Gezi Park protestors in Istanbul in the Summer of 2013 is seen by many as a sign that he and others in the AKP are becoming intolerant of secularist voices. Not everyone in the AKP supports this, however. Indeed, during the Gezi Park incidents, leading AKP political figures, including the popular President Abdullah Gül and the Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, openly disagreed with Erdogan. Since then, Erdogan's criticisms of co-ed student housing at universities and his insistence on closing down prep schools and tutorial centers (opened to prepare students for achievement tests and university entrance exams) which belong to the private sector have raised new fears of the state being used to promote an Islamist agenda.

Erdogan's Islamist bluster can damage his party. It has already deepened the fissures inside the political coalition that makes up the AKP. The proponents of

Civil Islam within the AKP have largely resisted Erdogan's growing authoritarianism, and they have sided with the country's honest democrats. The Civil Islam of Hizmet once more verifies the movement's anti-Islamist stance. The politicization of Islam is a dangerous path, one that could lead to totalitarian control of the state by giving ambitious men the religious licence they seek to undermine the civil society and the separation of government powers that constrains them. If Turkey is to pull back from its current drift toward Islamist autocracy, then its citizens will need to resist the instrumentalization of religion for worldly power and demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with civil democratic modernity.

NOTES

1. Mustafa Akyol, *Islam Without Extremes, A Muslim Case for Liberty* (New York, NY: Norton House Inc, 2011), p. 198.
2. Ibid.
3. Nilüfer Göle, "Islamic Visibilities and Public Sphere," in Göle, Nilüfer & Amman, Ludwig, *Islam in Public: Turkey, Iran and Europe* (Istanbul, Turkey: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2006), p. 174-75.
4. Ibid.
5. Asef Bayat, "The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society," *Critique, Critical Middle East Studies*, No. 9. (Fall 1996), p. 45.
6. Asef Bayat, *Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question*, ISIM Papers, N8 (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 18.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. See also Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
9. Fethullah Gülen's comments in *Turkish Daily News National*, January 11, 2000.
10. Fethullah Gülen, *Emerald Hills of Heart, Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* (Clifton, NJ: Tughra Books, 2004).
11. Fethullah Gülen, *Görüntülü Vaaz Seti I, 20 VCD* [Audio-Visual Sermons I, 20 VCDs] (Nil Yayınları Sesli Görüntülü Eserler, 2001).
12. See Esra G. Özyürek, "Feelings Tell Better Than Language: Emotional Expression and Gender Hierarchy in the Sermons of Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, (Spring 1997), No. 16.

13. Fethullah Gülen, *Truth Through Colors* [a picturesque album book with Gülen's aphorisms] (Nil Publications, 1992).
14. Paul L. Heck, "Turkish in the Language of the Qur'an: Hira," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury academic, 2013), p. 146.
15. Fethullah Gülen's comments, *Zaman*, July 3, 1996.
16. Ibid.
17. Fethullah Gülen's comments in Samanyolu Television channel (*STV - Haber Kritik*), March 29, 1997.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Nuriye Akman's interview with Fethullah Gülen, daily *Zaman*, (March 24, 2004).
21. See Klas Grinell, "Border Thinking: Fethullah Gülen and the East-West Divide," in Esposito, John and Yilmaz, Ihsan, *Islam and Peacebuilding: Gülen Movement Initiatives* (Clifton, NJ: Blue Dome Press, 2010).
22. John O. Voll, "Fethullah Gülen Transcending Modernity in the New Islamic Discourse," in Yavuz, M. Hakan and Esposito, John L. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), p. 247.
23. Fethullah Gülen, *Essays, Perspectives, Opinions* (New York, NY: The Light, 2006), p. 14.
24. Ibid, p. 17.
25. Fethullah Gülen, "An Interview with Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World (Special Issue on Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen)* Vol. 95, No. 3 (2005), p. 451-452.
26. Ibid, p. 453.
27. Ibid, p. 454.
28. Mim Kemal Öke and Osman Özsoy's interview with Fethullah Gülen, in Armağan, Mustafa and Ünal Ali, *Medya Aynasından Fethullah Gülen, Kozadan Kelebeğe* (Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), p. 108.
29. Fethullah Gülen, "An Interview with Fethullah Gülen," *The Muslim World (Special Issue on Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen)* Vol. 95, No. 3 (2005), p. 451.
30. Ibid, p. 456.
31. Marie-Elisabeth Maigre-Branco, "The Influence of the Gülen Movement in the Emergence of a Turkish Cultural Third Way," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 102.
32. Ahmet Kuru, "Globalization and Diversification of Islamic movements: Three Turkish Cases," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.120 No. 2 (2005), pp. 253-274
33. The movement's dialogue with non-Muslim religious leaders, for example with Ecumenical

- Patriarch Bartholomew, and the related support for the re-opening of the Greek Orthodox *Halki* Seminary is significant. All these acts mean that Hizmet defended the rights of religious minorities in Turkey and supported the idea of inter-faith dialogue.
34. Etga Ugur, "Organizing Civil Society: The Gülen Movement's Abant Platform," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), p .60-61.
 35. For a detailed analysis of Hira magazine see Paul L. Heck, "Turkish in the Language of the Qur'an: Hira," in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013).
 36. In part because of the *Hira* platform's efforts, the Selahaddin College was launched in Egypt after the magazine's first publication. Moreover, an Arab businessman, inspired by *Hira*, donated a vast amount of land for the construction of a school in Aden, Yemen. A substantial amount of investment has also been made to build a huge college campus and constructive steps have been taken to open five schools through donations from Moroccan philanthropists.
 37. See Ihsan Yilmaz, "Beyond Post-Islamism: The Transformation of Turkish Islamism to Non-Islamism" in Greg Barton et al. *Muslim World in Transition: Creative Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013).