



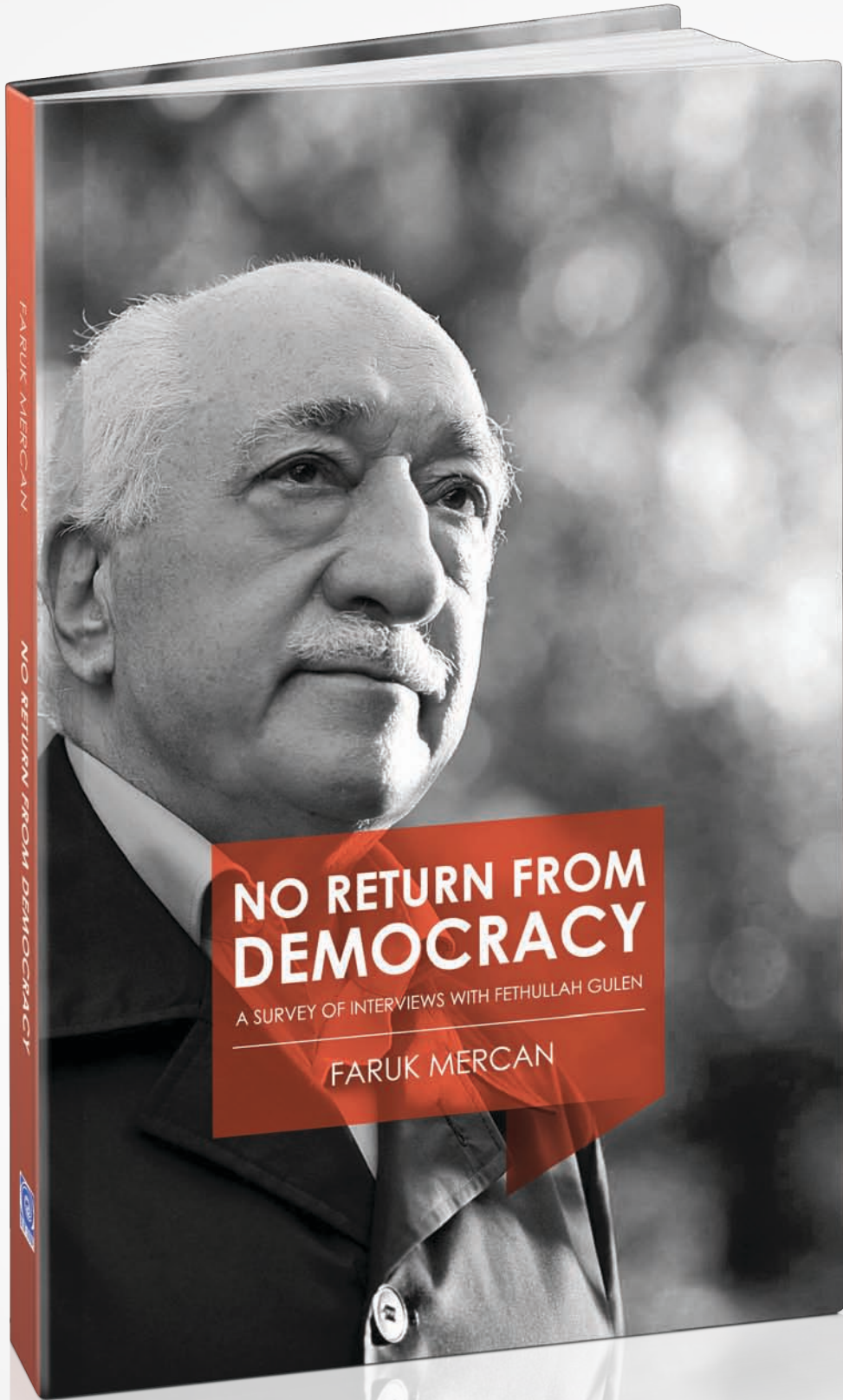
WHAT WENT WRONG WITH TURKEY?

July 15 Coup Attempt

Erdoğan's Rogue State

The Persecution of the Hizmet Movement

THE
Fountain
SPECIAL ISSUE



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THE Fountain SPECIAL ISSUE

About This Special Issue

The Fountain has always aimed to be a source of hope for seekers of knowledge. For that purpose, we have tried to offer a perspective of “dialogue” that spans multiple dimensions: between the heart and mind, religion and science, East and West...

While doing so, we’ve done our best to keep our style accessible to all English speakers, regardless of their nationalities and faith traditions. We have been very careful to stay free of political considerations, of which we have always been cautious due to the risk of causing friction among different individuals and groups.

This special issue is somewhat different. **The Fountain** has found itself as one of the many victims of the unprecedented persecution underway in Turkey. **The Fountain** used to be published as a co-product with partners in Turkey. Our partner publishing company has been illegally shut down, many of their staff have been sent to jail, and many others have fled the country, their home. Along with their other publications, **The Fountain** has also been banned in Turkey, simply because we – proudly – publish Mr. Fethullah Gülen’s articles.

We at **The Fountain** are deeply heartbroken and hurt, not only because we have lost an important business partner, which helped us for many years in the production and marketing of the magazine outside the US. More importantly, we read every day in the news media about the persecution of our Turkish colleagues and there is not much we can do to help them.

One thing we can do, however, is to be their voice, to inform the world of this unfair and shameful violence conducted by the Erdoğan regime against innocent editors, authors, and scholars, our former colleagues, in addition to tens of thousands of individuals who are being jailed simply for their affiliation with the Hizmet Movement and Fethullah Gülen, a most distinguished Islamic scholar and peace advocate.

In this special issue, **The Fountain**’s mission to disseminate hope to the world is exclusively for the victims of this purge in Turkey. This is a responsibility on our shoulders and has compelled us to go a bit off our usual track in the hopes of bringing to your attention the persecution and suffering inflicted upon innocents. This sad era in Turkish politics will have grave consequences for Turkey – and quite possible for the entire world.

It is our prayer that in the future we will not have to produce another special issue to cover such persecution. We hope we’ll continue to study the book of nature and cover perspectives from faith and scientific thought, all while being a source of reliable knowledge for our readers.



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A dramatic scene with red curtains, a helicopter silhouette, and the Turkish flag. The scene is lit with a strong red glow, creating a somber and intense atmosphere. The curtains are heavy and draped, with a small light source visible on the floor in the foreground. The helicopter is silhouetted against the red background, and the Turkish flag is partially visible on the right side.

WHAT WENT WRONG WITH TURKEY?



EDITORIAL

Asli recounts how her mother-in-law recently caught her six-year-old son stealing a pomegranate from the neighbour's tree. When she asked her grandson why he was stealing, he replied: "I'm stealing this pomegranate so that the police arrest me and take me to prison, so I'll be with Daddy. I will return it as soon as Daddy leaves jail."



A blind journalist, a teacher with major physical disability, a NASA scientist, an American Christian Pastor, the Amnesty International

director, and a deceased prosecutor. What could have brought these otherwise unlikely figures to share the same fate? Last year's coup attempt in Turkey. The Turkish government says these individuals plotted to top-

ple the state on July 15, 2016. Assisting them, according to the government, were new mothers and their babies, children and the infirm. Unfortunately, this is not a tall tale nor is it a dark comedy; these people

The coup was already planned to fail. It seems increasingly like a trap set by Erdoğan and his clique, designed to uproot all the opposition in the army and the wider society. For him to be able to cleanse all his opponents, especially the Hizmet movement, he needed a brutal event to demonize the opposition in the eyes of the nation. He needed public approval for the persecution he has committed. Hence, the coup was "a gift of God" - his own words - to remove all obstacles to his march to become the absolute monarch. The coup, for that matter, was not really against Erdoğan, but for Erdoğan.



are now behind bars on charges of being a member of a terrorist organization.

While the mystery over the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, still clouds what really happened that night, the cold reality of the pain suffered by hundreds of thousands of Turkish citizens is hard as steel. As in the example above, there are thousands of kids who are separated from their parents, who, before purged, served as decent civil servants, teachers, doctors, professors, or journalists. Thousands of

women have been jailed, including hundreds of new mothers. Despite its long-standing state culture and established institutions, Turkey is now effectively under the rule of one man: Erdoğan. The country appears more like a failed state with each passing day.

How did we get here?

A true analysis of the coup and the ensuing purge would be deficient without taking a few steps back, to try to understand the dynamics that paved the way for Erdoğan's absolute rule over the

state. His political activism, used to abuse the religious sentiments of the masses, is one of those key dynamics. The failure of the Kemalist *ancien régime* of the Republic has been another factor; the former Republic, so to speak, did not only fail to provide efficient civic services to the general public, but also undermined their basic human rights, as in the case of Kurdish communities and the Muslim headscarf ban. When this "former republic" brought the nation to a complete economic bankruptcy in



Istanbul, Turkey July 16, 2016: AKP supporters are cheering after the attempt of a military intervention in Turkey, in Atatürk International Airport.

2001, Erdoğan's new AKP was the only alternative for Turks who were already exhausted of the former, failed administrations. As prime minister, Erdoğan made use of this popular support and even carried it forward with reforms in healthcare, public transportation, and other civic services. His government's serious steps toward European Union accession broadened his popularity beyond conservative circles and secured the support of many liberal, pro-European intellectuals.

Erdoğan was exceptionally suc-

cessful in reaching out to the grassroots. He used the privileges of being in office and channeled public funds to establish an efficient top-down network, where he ensured his message and directives could reach every corner of his constituency, many of whom were made beneficiaries in one way or another, either through financial support or status within the party.

All these factors played a role in what Turkey has become today. Almost an almost a decade-long rise in international standing, Tur-

key could have served as regional role model. But in the last half-decade the country's stature has fallen sharply. The beginning of this downfall can be traced to the signs of Erdoğan being corrupted by power during his third term as prime minister. The Gezi Park protests and the corruption probes in 2013 revealed Erdoğan's true identity. To suppress the protests and to cover up the probes, he initiated an unprecedented crackdown on the free press in 2014 and 2015, and did everything he could to polarize the

country. The coup attempt was the final nail in the coffin for Turkey's image as a hopeful of an Islamic-majority democracy.

Of course, there were hints along the way that Erdoğan had a darker, more authoritarian side. Two decades ago, he revealed his true feelings when he said, "Democracy is a tram; we get off when we arrive at our destination. Democracy is not a goal; it is a means."² These words were ignored during his first two terms, when he and his party appeared to work hard to reform the state apparatus and liberate the country from military tutelage. But as in the classic parable, those who went to hunt the dragon sitting on the treasure were mesmerized by the treasure and became the new dragon. After the military was sidelined, Erdoğan could not hide his secret aspirations to be the new Sultan of Turkey or even a Caliph over all Muslims. He believed he had the sole authority to rule and decide on the fate of the nation. He did not even feel the need to hide the fact that he ordered the police to fire on the Gezi Park protestors, nor did he abstain from calling anyone he disliked a "traitor."

The trap

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said when he and President Erdoğan blamed the Gülen movement for the coup, it was based on their own judgment; they did not even know who was involved. Based on this "judgment," instead of ensuring the security of his citizens, Erdoğan provoked them to take to the streets and confront soldiers many of whom thought they were out for an extraordinary exercise. This action resulted in hundreds of deaths. It is very likely that the president rallied his grassroots network of party members and the snipers of his "revolutionary guards" – SADAT – to turn the night into a bloodshed. Many can speculate how the night could have ended without people in

the streets, but it is very likely that there wouldn't have been as many deaths if citizens had stayed home. But from the recent revelations, we now understand that the coup was already planned to fail. It seems increasingly like a trap set by Erdoğan and his clique, designed to uproot all the opposition in the army and the wider society. For him to be able to cleanse all his opponents, especially the Hizmet movement, he needed a brutal event to demonize the opposition in the eyes of the nation. He needed public approval for the persecution he has committed. Hence, the coup was "a gift of God" – his own words – to remove all obstacles to his march to become the absolute monarch. The coup, for that matter, was not really *against* Erdoğan, but *for* Erdoğan.

Under the state of emergency rule and with no oppositional press left, the only narrative that is heard in Turkey is what the government has been propagating. In a post-truth Turkey, fact-checking about the coup has become possible – at least to a certain extent – only recently when the suspects started to testify in court after months of detention and, in many cases, torture.

Questions

Turkey has to move on from the "alternative facts" of Erdoğan to the realities of persecution. It needs to hear the voices of the hundreds of thousands of innocent, ordinary citizens who have suffered under an unjust regime. Why are the five pilots, who bombed the base where the putschists were, bringing an end to the coup, now in jail? If these pilots were Gülenists, then was the coup committed or prevented by Gülenists? Isn't it telling enough that not even a single one of the suspects accused of being affiliated with the Hizmet movement has shown any violent reaction despite being detained for months? They have been jailed for no reason, and had their properties con-

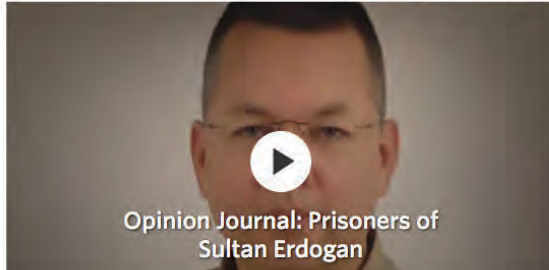


fiscated and bank accounts frozen. They've been dismissed from their jobs, and had their livelihoods taken away. Is Erdoğan accusing Gülen of plotting the coup attempt because he opposed the flotilla incident in 2010, when Erdoğan sent innocent people to death? Or does Erdoğan want to annihilate Gülen and the Hizmet movement because they did not comply with his autocratic whims and stood against his obscene corruption and the kleptocratic regime he set up over the years? Was this coup attempt meant to serve the regional goals of Erdoğan who wanted to invade Syria? If not, why are all the dismissed and jailed staff of

OPINION | COMMENTARY

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Serkan Gölge, a Turkish-origin NASA scientist; Andrew Brunson, an American evangelical minister; Cüneyt Arat, a visually impaired journalist; Idil Eser and Taner Kılıç, directors of Amnesty International. The Erdoğan regime have arrested these individuals, who, they claim, have plotted to topple the Turkish government.

ficers and generals the ones who strictly aligned themselves with NATO and never dared to commit to a suicide mission like sending troops to Syria?

Lost values

All the persecution aside, what really hurts is the deterioration of values in Turkish society, especially among conservative circles who supported Erdoğan from the very beginning. With the rise of the AKP and Erdoğan, the conservatives, who had been pushed to the periphery by the Kemalist establishment, have made inroads to the center, by way of which they

discovered the treasures therein. Although they used to consider the secularist establishment “infidels” for their principle of statism, now dazzled by the new riches they have attained, these nouveau riche conservatives have started seeing state power as the ultimate goal. They will do anything to keep it in their hands. In the neo-religious nationalist discourse of Erdoğan, they act upon a sense of revenge against the *ancien régime* and whoever stands in the way of their victory. For them, this is a war. Under a wrong anachronistic – perhaps, prehistoric – rules of engagement

and jurisprudence, they believe they can rightfully loot the properties of their enemies, take their wives as concubines, produce fake news, throw the gravest possible slanders, and most offensively, they do so on the basis of a distorted interpretation of Islam. Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) advice to act with a strategy in the case of a warfare to avoid conflict and not to cause bloodshed if war is unavoidable, has been abused in an effort to attain victory. Nothing is further from the true message of Islam. This nihilist hypocrisy is closer to Machiavellianism.

This publication aims to give voice to the thousands of innocent people persecuted by the state terrorism of the Erdoğan regime. You will read an alternative narrative to what really happened on the night of the attempted coup. You will also discover how the government's narrative is baseless and fails to be taken credibly outside of Turkey; how women and children are victimized in this crackdown; how civil liberties, justice, and state rationality are trampled; and what some scholars think of Fethullah Gülen and the Hizmet movement. The authors do not only share what they have observed and read about these recent developments, but they also articulate the great pain and disappointment they feel about what the once-beautiful Turkey has become. the great pain and disappointment they feel about what the beautiful Turkey has become. ▴

Notes

1. <http://webdoc.france24.com/turkey-referendum-purge-erdogan-cleansing/episode-1-asli/index.html>
2. Interview with Nilgün Cerrahoğlu in *Milliyet*, July 14, 1996.

THE TURKEY I NO LONGER KNOW

FETHULLAH GÜLEN

The Turkey that I once knew as a hope-inspiring country on its way to consolidating its democracy and a moderate form of secularism has become the dominion of a president who is doing everything he can to amass power and subjugate dissent. Turkey, my homeland, is in need of help from the world to return to a democratic path.

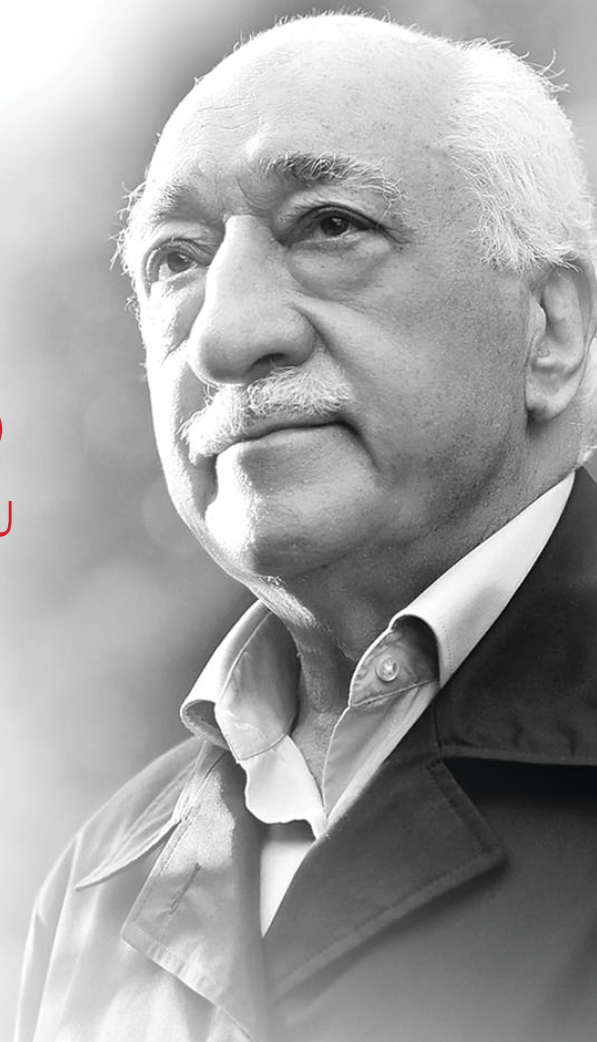
Since July 15, 2016, following a deplorable coup attempt, Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has systematically persecuted innocent people — arresting, detaining, firing and otherwise ruining the lives of more than 300,000 Turkish citizens, be they Kurds, Alevis, secularists, leftists, journalists, academics or participants of Hizmet, the peaceful humanitarian movement with which I am associated.

As the coup attempt unfolded, I fiercely denounced it and denied any involvement. Furthermore, I said that anyone who participated

in the putsch betrayed my ideals. Nevertheless, and without evidence, Erdogan immediately accused me of orchestrating it from 5,000 miles away.

The next day, the government produced lists of thousands of individuals whom they tied to Hizmet — for opening a bank account, teaching at a school or reporting for a newspaper — and treated such an affiliation as a crime and began destroying their lives. The lists included people who had been dead





The Turkey that I once knew as a hope-inspiring country has become the dominion of a president who is doing everything he can to amass power and subjugate dissent. Turkey, my homeland, is in need of help from the world to return to a democratic path.

In April, the president won a narrow referendum victory— amid allegations of serious fraud — to form an “executive presidency” without checks and balances, enabling him to control all three branches of the government. To be sure, through purges and corruption, much of this power was already in his hands. I fear for the Turkish people as they enter this new stage of authoritarianism.

It didn't start this way. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came into power in 2002 by promising democratic reforms in pursuit of European Union membership. But as time went on, Erdogan became increasingly intolerant of dissent. He facilitated the transfer of many media outlets to his cronies through government regulatory agencies. In June of 2013, he crushed the Gezi Park protesters. In December of that year, when his cabinet members were implicated in a massive graft probe, he responded by subjugating the judiciary and the media. The “temporary” state of emergency declared after last July 15 is still in effect. According to Amnesty International, one-third of all imprisoned journalists in the world are in Turkish prisons.

Erdogan's persecution of his people is not simply a domestic matter. The ongoing pursuit of civil society, journalists, academics and Kurds in Turkey is threatening the long-term stability of the country. The Turkish population already is strongly polarized on the AKP regime. A Turkey under a dictatorial regime, providing haven to violent radicals and pushing its Kurdish citizens into desperation,

would be a nightmare for Middle East security. The people of Turkey need the support of their allies around the world to restore their democracy.

Two measures are critical to reversing the democratic regression in Turkey:

First, a new civilian constitution should be drafted through a democratic process involving the input of all segments of society and that is on par with international legal and humanitarian norms, and drawing lessons from the success of long-term democracies in the West.

Second, a school curriculum that emphasizes democratic and pluralistic values and encourages critical thinking must be developed. Every student must learn the importance of balancing state powers with individual rights, the separation of powers, judicial independence and press freedom, and the dangers of extreme nationalism, politicization of religion and veneration of the state or any leader.

Before either of those things can happen, however, the Turkish government must stop the repression of its people and redress the rights of individuals who have been wronged by Erdogan without due process.

I probably will not live to see Turkey become an exemplary democracy, but I pray that the downward authoritarian drift can be stopped before it is too late.

Originally published in Washington Post, May 15, 2017. Updated for this issue. ▀

for months and people who had been serving at NATO's European headquarters at the time. International watchdogs have reported numerous abductions, in addition to torture and deaths in detention. The government pursued innocent people outside Turkey, pressuring Malaysia, for instance, to deport three Hizmet sympathizers in May 2017, including a school principal who has lived there for more than a decade, to face certain imprisonment and likely torture.



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN TURKEY ON JULY 15, 2016?

An Alternative to the Turkish Government Narrative

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Alliance for Shared Values, New York

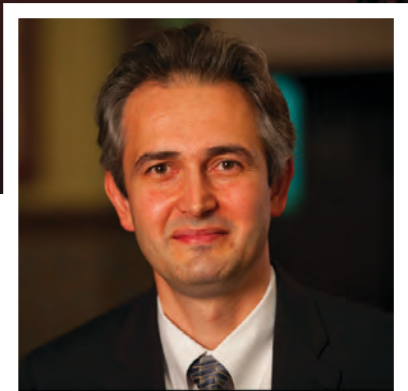
On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a horrific event: an unsuccessful military coup. But a year after the tragedy, questions about what really happened remain unanswered. What we know for sure is that the failed coup provided President Erdoğan with an excellent excuse to consolidate his power: despite widespread claims of voter fraud, he secured a narrow victory in an April 2017 referendum – which was conducted under state of emergency conditions – to amend the constitution and open his path to becoming the executive president of Turkey in 2019. This article highlights the Turkish government’s specious claims about the attempted coup and its alleged planners and provides a counter-narrative.

Erdoğan’s claim and responses by Western governments and intelligence services

With the coup attempt ongoing, Erdoğan claimed, on national TV, that Fethullah Gülen, a retired preacher and a vocal Erdoğan critic, was the coup’s mastermind. Gülen condemned the attempt while it was in progress and denied any involvement. He challenged the Erdoğan government to allow for an international investigation into the event. He pledged to abide by its ruling. Erdoğan did not respond to this call.

Western governments and observers have not accepted Erdoğan’s narrative of July 15th, either. In particular:

- Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the Turkish government, as part of the extradition process, must link



Gülen to the incident with evidence that withstands scrutiny in an American court. As of this writing, approximately one year after the incident, the Turkish Government has not submitted evidence that meets this criterion.

- James Clapper, former director of U.S. National Intelligence, said Gülen’s involvement in the coup didn’t pass the “smell test” of credibility.
- The United State House Intelligence Committee chairman Devin Nunes told Fox News that it was “hard to believe” that the U.S.-based Turkish cleric was behind the attempt.

- When asked by *Der Spiegel* whether Gülen was behind the coup, Bruno Kahl, Head of Germany's BDN Foreign Intelligence Agency, responded, "Turkey has tried to convince us of that at every level but so far it has not succeeded."
- The European Union Intelligence Center INTCEN's report on the incident contradicted the Turkish government's claim that Fethullah Gülen was behind the plot. The report concluded that the coup was mounted by a range of Mr. Erdoğan's opponents. The Service found it unlikely that Gülen himself played a role in the attempt, according to the *Times of London*. It also determined Erdoğan's purges were planned well before the incident.
- *German Focus magazine* reported in their July 2016 issue that British signals intelligence agency GCHQ intercepted communication between top Erdoğan brass about half an hour after shooting started that the coup would be blamed on Gülen and purges would start the next day.
- A report by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament on UK-Turkish relations stated that the "UK government does not have any evidence that U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gülen organized Turkey's July coup attempt." The report went on to say:

Given the brutality of the events of 15 July, the severity of the charges made against the Gülenists, and the scale of the purges of perceived Gülenists that has been justified on this basis, there is a relative lack of hard, publicly-available evidence to prove that the Gülenists as an organisation were responsible for

the coup attempt in Turkey. While there is evidence to indicate that some individual Gülenists were involved, it is mostly anecdotal or circumstantial, sometimes premised on information from confessions or informants, and is—so far—inconclusive in relation to the organisation as a whole or its leadership.

Why the Turkish government's narrative was not found credible by the West

- The day after the coup attempt, the Turkish government began purging thousands of members of not just the military, but also the judiciary. Western observers noted that it would be impossible for the government to identify those responsible for the incident on such short notice.
- The lack of concrete evidence linking Gülen to the incident. The few testimonies extracted from officers who "confessed" their links to the Hizmet movement were not found credible because, ironically, pro-government media channels aired photos of those same officers showing clear signs of torture.
- Finally, Erdoğan's own narrative is full of contradictions. Erdoğan claimed that he or his intelligence service knew nothing about the preparations for a military coup attempt up until the day of July 15. Western observers found it inconceivable that an event of this magnitude, which would require weeks if not months of preparation, could be orchestrated from another continent and not be discovered by Turkish Intelligence and a host of other intelligence agencies. Erdoğan claimed to have learned about the event not from his intelligence service, but from his brother-in-law. Yet, he did not

dismiss the head of the intelligence service who, according to his own narrative, not only failed to detect the preparations for the incident, also failed to inform or protect the president after receiving a tip from an informant on the afternoon of July 15. Similarly, the chief of general staff was not dismissed despite failing to stop the incident after having learned about it several hours in advance.

Some observers also noted the following two reasons why Gülen organizing such an attempt would be implausible and irrational:

Starting in the early 1990s, Hizmet movement participants have set up schools, hospitals, medical clinics, and other civic institutions around the world. A coup attempt masterminded by Gülen, if successful, would send an alarming message to world leaders and spell the end of Hizmet around the world.

The top brass of the Turkish military consists mostly of Kemalists, or those sympathetic to the ideology of the founder of Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. There has never been a credible allegation that the top brass had any Gülen sympathizers. In fact, none of the top brass, including the chief of general staff, second chief, force commanders or army corps commanders has been accused of being a Gülen sympathizer. In an information age, it is impossible for lower level officers to stage a coup without the knowledge and approval of the top brass. If they did, there would be strong reaction from within the military itself. On the night of the coup, there was very little reaction from within the military itself.

Adding to suspicions about the government's narrative was the Erdoğan government's apparent unwillingness to fully investigate the incident. The parliamentary commission was delayed because

the ruling AKP party delayed appointing members to the commission. Once formed, the commission, dominated by AKP members, refused to call key witnesses for testimony. Mithat Sancar, an opposition member of the commission, said the following:

The ruling AKP did not form this commission to illuminate the coup attempt. They constructed a coup narrative... They were expecting (this commission to produce) a work that would support this narrative.

Only information or rumors that support the government narrative have been allowed to be disseminated, and all other information has been censored by government authorities and a compliant media. Scores of lawyers have been arrested and attorney-client privilege has been revoked under a state of emergency, leaving accused individuals unable to defend themselves through due process.

Below we provide a narrative based on the information available from public sources and received in personal communications with the lawyers, relatives, or friends of individuals accused by the Turkish government. The author of this document is not in a position to claim that the following is what happened, but the alternative scenario provided here answers more questions than the government narrative, and therefore deserves to be considered as part of an independent investigation.

Possible narratives about July 15, 2016

We will discuss two narratives here due to space limitations:

The Broad Coalition Narrative

The prevalent view among Turkey observers in Europe and the U.S. is the following: A broad coalition of military officers, from different ideological backgrounds, had discussed an intervention against



Kemal Kilicdaroglu, chairman of main opposition party CHP:
"The real coup was done on July 20, after the controlled coup of July 15th was over. Nobody should forget July 20th. This is the date when the executive branch got the approval for the state of emergency from the parliament. Now, the real putschists of July 20 want to constitutionalize the current situation."

the Erdoğan government. They believed Erdoğan undermined Turkey's democratic institutions and secularism. This coalition included but was not limited to officers who feared being purged at the August meeting of the Military Supreme Council. An informant alerted Turkish Intelligence of the plot on the afternoon of July 15, forcing some officers to start the action early. However, many officers gave up and refrained from participating, and hence the action of the remaining officers was doomed to failure.

The Collusion Narrative

The collusion narrative is a variation of the broad coalition narra-

tive. This theory also recognizes the presence of strong anti-Erdoğan sentiment within the military, and discussion of an intervention, but posits that an ultra-nationalist faction associated with the Eurasian-oriented Homeland Party (Vatan) colluded with Erdoğan and the Turkish intelligence to stage a pre-emptive coup on July 15. The collusion narrative suggests that the incident on July 15 was a mobilization of a very small portion of the military, a weak and compromised action designed to fail.

According to this narrative, the attempted coup was, borrowing the language of a political commentator, "A genuine plan that was compromised and weakened, and allowed by President Erdoğan to play out in order to crush it and achieve his strategic goals."

The so-called "Eurasianist clique" within the Turkish military¹ was described in a 2003 leaked cable by U.S. Embassy in Ankara as pursuing Eurasianism as an alternative to the U.S. "without understanding the Russia-dominated nature of the 'Eurasia' concept". In 2003, the pro-U.S. and pro-NATO group called the "Atlanticists" were seen as losing influence within the Turkish General Staff.

What happened on July 15th does not exhibit the pattern of a coup planned by the military, but rather one planned by the intelligence service where military officers unwittingly played a crucial role. From their testimonies, these officers were mobilized under the pretense of participation in a regular exercise, educational exercise, "unconventional exercise," operation to protect general staff headquarters, or protection of a military or civilian compound from a terrorist attack. It is also important to note here that there is not a single officer who states in his testimony that he acted by the directives of a civilian. This is worth not-

ing, for the government narrative claims that officers associated with Gülen staged the coup with directives from civilians affiliated with Gülen.

Other indicators also substantiate the argument that the coup attempt was premeditated to provoke public outrage and pave the way for Erdoğan's autocracy. For instance, evidence including witness testimonies indicated that many civilian deaths happened not in the hands of soldiers, as Erdoğan's media claimed, but by some paramilitaries allegedly connected to SADAT, a defense consulting company, which is becoming "Erdoğan's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps."² Erol Olçok and his son were killed on the night of the coup, and Olçok's wife is telling, based on eye-witnesses, that they were killed by snipers.³

Bombing of the Parliament has also left a lot of questions. The images of the parliament building show a much less damage than F16 fighter bomb would leave behind; they are more like a C4 explosion from *inside*, not from *above*.⁴

Contradictions in the Erdoğan camp

The statements by President Erdoğan and his allies, including Hakan Fidan, the director of National Intelligence Service (MIT) and the chief of general staff, include many contradictions and leave many important questions unanswered.

Although Erdoğan said he learned about the coup on the night of the coup from his brother-in-law, Hüseyin Gürler, a non-commissioned officer, says in his testimony that they informed the President on June 11, 2016.⁵

Erdoğan's refusal to fire, or even investigate, his intelligence chief and military chief despite their failure to inform or protect him remains a puzzle.

Erdoğan's claim that he was first informed about the event by

his brother-in-law around 9:30 pm and that he could not reach his intelligence chief were contradicted by Chief of General Staff Akar. In his written statement to the parliamentary investigation committee, Akar stated that Intelligence Chief Fidan called and spoke with the head of Erdoğan's guard while in his presence before 8:30 pm. *Hürriyet* columnist Ertuğrul Özkök wrote on July 18, 2017, that Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said in an interview with Fikret Bila that he called Director Fidan at around 10:30 - 11 pm that night, and Mr. Fidan did not say anything to him nor to President Erdoğan about the coup attempt.

Erdoğan claimed that his airplane was assaulted by pro-coup fighter jets but protected by pro-government jets. The Greek Air Force refuted Erdoğan's claims stating that no such air fight occurred.

On the afternoon of Friday, July 15, a captain referred to as O.K. informed MIT (National Intelligence Organization) headquarters that an attack on the headquarters was planned, with the goal of capturing MIT Chief Fidan. This officer was never identified publicly, ostensibly to protect him, and he was later discharged from the military, rather than given a medal of honor. He was later re-admitted to the military and given a position at MIT.

MIT Chief Fidan sent his deputy to the Office of General Staff at 4 pm and later met with the Military Chief Gen. Akar at 6 pm. According to the accounts of President Erdoğan and PM Yıldırım, Fidan did not inform or protect the president or the prime minister. In fact, they claimed that they could not communicate with Fidan until 10 pm.

Fidan's account of the events is full of puzzles and contradictions. According to Gen. Akar's testimony, Fidan called Erdoğan's guards and asked them if they were pre-



Selahattin Demirtas, the co-chair of HDP, the second largest opposition party, in a speech at Turkish parliament stated that Erdoğan knew about the coup attempt and foiled it before it started and his men added some dramatic elements (such as bombing the parliament) so that Erdoğan can take full political advantage of the incident. Demirtas also claimed that many in the parliament are aware of this but afraid to speak publicly. Demirtas was arrested in February 2017 under terrorism charges.

pared for an attack, without specifying the nature or the scale of the attack and without asking to speak with President Erdoğan. Instead of staying with Gen. Akar to investigate and take precautions against a possible coup, Fidan left the general staff headquarters to attend pre-arranged meetings.

Gen. Umit Dundar, commander of the 1st army in Istanbul, pledged allegiance to Erdoğan during the early hours of the attempt, accord-

"(On whether Gülen was behind the coup) Turkey has tried to convince us on a number of different levels. But they haven't yet been successful. The Gülen movement is a civilian association for religious and secular education. For years, it was a collection of tutoring centers and training facilities that worked together with Erdoğan."

Der Spiegel interview with Bruno Kahl, German Intelligence Chief

ing to Berat Albayrak, Erdoğan's son-in-law. It is unlikely that the military leadership would consider committing to a coup without the participation of the commander of the 1st army. It is possible, therefore that Dundar earlier gave the impression that he was in favor of a coup and misled some officers while intending to side with Erdoğan.

Military units in Istanbul closed access to the Bosphorus Bridge around 8 pm. It was later revealed that these units were under the impression that they were participating in an exercise. Gen. Dundar did nothing to stop the bridge closure despite the fact that the bridge lies in the area of the 1st army.

Gen. Hulusi Akar, Chief of General Staff, did not go along with the demands of the pro-coup officers. However, some of his actions raise questions. Could top level commanders hold meetings about a military coup without his knowledge and approval? Was he threatened by Erdoğan to play along with his plan? Why did he

not protect himself or the general staff headquarters, or inform Erdoğan? Why did he not take more effective actions between 4 pm, when he was first informed by MIT Chief Fidan, and 9 pm, when he was reportedly taken hostage?

Gen. Akar was also criticized for not recalling force commanders, who were attending wedding ceremonies, to return to their headquarters and resume command of their forces. Despite the early information, these commanders did not take precautions to protect themselves and were later taken hostage. Their self-reported actions to try to stop the coup attempt were meager and raise many questions.

Gen. Akın Ozturk, the former commander of the Air Force, was charged with being the military leader of the coup by the government. However, the Office of the Chief of the General Staff issued a message describing him as a hero who tried to stop the pro-coup officers and prevent bloodshed. This message was later removed, but is available on other sites. He was charged nevertheless, then arrested and jailed.

Selahattin Demirtas, the co-chair of the *HDP, the second largest opposition party*, in a speech before the Turkish parliament, stated that Erdoğan knew about the coup attempt and foiled it before it started and his men added some dramatic elements (such as bombing the parliament) allowing Erdoğan to take full political advantage of the incident. Demirtas also claimed that many in the parliament were aware of this but afraid to speak publicly. Demirtas was arrested in February 2017 under terrorism charges.

Responses to the government's "evidence" against Gülen

The Erdoğan government's alleged "evidence" implicating Gülen and his sympathizers fails to convince.

The affiliation of the three police officers, who allegedly participated in the attempt alongside soldiers, with the Hizmet Movement is questionable. These officers were not among the thousands of police officers purged by the Erdoğan government prior to July 15. In any case, if Erdoğan's claims of Gülen having thousands of sympathizers within the police force is true, it doesn't make sense that only three would participate in the attempt.

The confessions of affiliation with Gülen by officers like Levent Turkkan and General Sağır were taken under duress. These confessions are not reliable, as they later said they were tortured for those confessions.

Both Gülen and Gen. Hakan Evrim, who allegedly made the offer for Akar to speak with Gülen, denied this claim. Akar was not called to give testimony to the parliamentary commission about this and other allegations involving him. He did not address this issue in his written responses to the commission.

The government claimed that Adil Oksuz, who is a professor of Theology at Sakarya University, was the organizer of the air force officers affiliated with Gülen. Besides the fact that it is impossible to stage a military coup with the air force alone, this allegation has many problems. The government claimed that Adil Oksuz was arrested near the Akinci Air Base, the alleged headquarters of the attempt. According to an interview given by Adil Oksuz's family, when he met with them before his disappearance, Oksuz claimed that he was brought to the base against his will after being detained at a police checkpoint. Despite the alleged presence of an intelligence service file on him, he was deliberately let free by two judges on July 16 and at a mandatory report at the courthouse on July 18. He then traveled on a commercial flight to Istanbul,

going through airport security checkpoints with his own ID, and then disappeared after meeting his family. It appears that the government wanted Oksuz to disappear so that the claims against him and the alleged link to Gülen could be circulated without challenge.

Gülen acknowledged that around 30 years ago, when Oksuz was a student, he was part of a study circle within the movement. “Adil Oksuz, at one time, I think when he was studying at school, he became part of our study circle,” he replied.

But while he acknowledged the Turkish government’s account that Oksuz had visited the Golden Generation Retreat and Recreation Center before the July 2016 coup bid, Gülen dismissed allegations that the visit constituted the smoking gun in the coup investigation. “A few years ago, he [Oksuz] came here once. I later saw in the media this picture of his child with me. This is something hundreds of people do. From taking a picture to making that kind of connection would be jumping to conclusions.”⁶

Strategic goals achieved by Erdoğan thanks to the coup attempt

The July 15th incident gave Erdoğan an excellent excuse to pursue his goal of consolidating his power.

- The morning after the coup attempt, a huge purge started, with over 2,700 members of the judiciary and over 120,000 government employees sacked, 8,000 military officers dismissed, including 150 NATO officers.
- None of the army or army corps commanders have been accused of being Gülen sympathizers. However, Gen. Adem Huduti, commander of the 2nd Army, was known as a Kemalist/secularist commander, and Gen. Erdal Ozturk, commander of the 3rd Army Corps, was also

known as a Kemalist/secularist commander. Both were arrested. What these commanders had in common – along with Gen. Semih Terzi, commander of Special Forces’ 1st Brigade, who was killed by an inferior officer – was their strong opposition to the Turkish military’s incursion into Syria. Shortly following the coup attempt, in August 2016, the Turkish military began an operation in Syria.

- Erdoğan’s bid for an executive presidency gained momentum. In a constitutional referendum in April 2017, Erdoğan narrowly secured the path to his executive presidency.

Concluding remarks

On July 15, 2016, a horrific and an unprecedented incident happened in Turkey. It cost the lives of hundreds of soldiers and civilians, and was crushed primarily by the efforts of the police force and civilians. Many aspects of the incident baffled observers, and many unanswered questions remain. As shown in this article, the actions of many of the primary actors don’t make sense if the government’s narrative is to be accepted. However, if an alternative narrative is considered, these actions make sense and the questions are answered. Based on many indicators listed above one highly likely narrative suggests it was a trap from the very beginning; it was planned and directed by MIT and its affiliates in the army with an impression as if it was a collective action in the chain of command. Officers who had already been profiled as oppositional were called in – they only obeyed orders without realizing it was a trap.

At this point there is not enough evidence to fully support these alternative narratives. This discussion is not intended as an accusation, but rather as a call for an independent investigation, full of



“... none of us believes that Gülen was behind the coup. It is convenient for Erdoğan to blame his principal opponent because it will facilitate the arrests of any and all opponents not linked to the actual coup by claiming that they are Gülenists.”

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA officer, executive director of the Council for the National Interest.

international experts, to ensure independence from the political pressures in Turkey. For such an investigation to accomplish its task, the Turkish government should also guarantee the safety of accused military officers and their families so that the officers can give their testimonies without fear of reprisal by the government. ▲

Notes

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“AND NOT EQUAL ARE THE GOOD DEED AND THE BAD”

ON VIOLENCE, POWER, AND PEACE IN TURKEY’S
MOST DISASTROUS YEAR

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Why do the most violent people in the world accuse the most peaceful of violence?

The last year represents one of the darkest periods in modern Turkish history. In lectures around the world, I once argued for the geopolitical significance of Turkey, which at the time was functioning as an impressive, democratic bridge between East and West. Here was a deeply devout Muslim nation that stressed democracy and civil liberties, a country that modeled an authentic religious identity and yet was not afraid of science and the secular world.

And then all hell broke loose. Our world is no stranger to ruthless and megalomaniacal leaders presiding over brutal and immoral regimes. And yet even by these standards, the Erdoğan regime has set records over the last years. The government's attack on freedom of speech and education is particularly dangerous:

The numbers surrounding other educational sectors are mind-boggling: 44,000 staff from the Education Ministry, the great majority of them teachers, 1280 schools, 800 dormitories and 550 foundations (many of them educational).

Upwards of 90,000 civilians have been detained, with roughly half arrested, and more than 120,000 have been fired or suspended from their jobs... So consequential was the purge of deans that at one university, the Rector, Prof. Dr. Ihsan Gunaydin, became the dean of six faculties (Celik, 2017).

The brutality of the purges and the suffering they have caused are self-evident and are being covered by other authors. In this article I wish to explore a different question: how is one to understand the conflict between good and evil, and peace and violence, this disastrous year in Turkish history represents? Why does the dictator label the peaceful imam a terrorist?

Hizmet, the movement inspired by Fethullah Gülen, and falsely accused by the Erdoğan regime of plotting the 2016 coup attempt, is known publically for its service projects around the world. In an age when many non-Muslims often associate Islam with violence and terrorism, Hizmet exists as an informally structured movement

of religiously inspired individuals who engage in acts of goodness. Although Hizmet is especially known for building schools and offering high-quality education around the world, organizations inspired by the movement have been involved in charity around the globe: famine relief in Somalia; disaster relief after the tsunami in Japan; responses to earthquakes in Pakistan, Peru, and Haiti; involvement after the Bangladesh floods; and medical treatments offered to many poor communities in Africa.

In the United States, people are most likely to have participated in friendship dinners and public forums. In his book on Hizmet, the famous American scholar of religion Martin Marty comments:

When, on occasion, we and our colleagues were challenged to point to forms of Islam that could be called "moderate," "open," or "dialogical," we explored a Turkish-based but international movement often called Hizmet... This same interest had drawn me to study Hizmet as a model or exemplar of a promising way of being religious in Islamic contexts (Marty, 2015, 2).

In North America, Hizmet's interfaith dialogue activities stand out. Over the last two decades, religious differences have been used by certain groups to incite violence. Hizmet interfaith dialogues explore ways that religious differences can become constructive, not destructive. One might even say that *because* Hizmet is a Muslim movement, it seeks brotherhood/sisterhood across the families of Abraham.

There are skeptical voices. Fethullah Gülen is above all else an imam and scholar of Islam, working primarily in the Sufi tradition. He teaches and practices traditional Islamic purity and calls his followers to personal piety. Consider this passage from his *Pearls of Wisdom*:

There is no limit to doing good to others. Those who have dedicated themselves to the good of humanity can be so altruistic that they live for others. However, such altruism is a great virtue only if it originates in sincerity and purity of intention, and if it does not define the others by racial preferences.

But can such pious language really speak to the complexities of the modern world? Or does it represent an escape into internal spirituality? Or worse, is the strong focus on "sincerity and purity" merely a cynical front, while behind the scenes Mr. Gülen pulls the strings of power, seeking to bring down governments and put himself into positions of political power?

One can only say that, if overthrowing regimes is his goal, he is singularly bad at it. As Graham Fuller asks, "Why would Gülen choose to attempt a coup that's contrary to all his views, and at a time of maximum weakness vis-à-vis Erdoğan?" (Fuller, 2016). Studies of the July 2016 so-called coup attempt reveal that it was never a

serious effort to bring down the Turkish government. It would require a massive conspiracy theory to connect Gülen with the gun-carrying rebels. For example, one would have to say that all of Gülen's teachings for three decades were merely a hypocritical pretense. All his claims that violence is never justified in the name of religion were merely a way to mislead opponents while Gülen orchestrated violent political actions aimed at putting him and his followers in charge of the Turkish government. He only preached peace because he really wanted to wage war.

It doesn't make sense. As Goshen-Gottstein notes, "[Gülen's] views respecting democracy, the rule of law, and opposing terror and violence have been consistent for decades" (Goshen-Gottstein, 2016).

If the charge is absurd, then the interesting question becomes: why is it made? Politically, the answer is obvious: Erdoğan adds to his power by finding a scapegoat. Labeling the Gülen Movement a terrorist organization also gives him an easy excuse to cripple the strongest civil society organization in Turkey, which helps him in his drive for absolute power.

But I want to ask the deeper "why" question. My goal is to understand the relationship between peace on the one hand, and striving for power through violence on the other. In service of this goal, I'll set the question against the backdrop of the Qur'anic verse, "And not equal are the good deed and the bad" (Surah 41, verse 34).

The greatest challenge to a dictator is a movement of people who are ready to make great personal sacrifices based on their belief in God. (By contrast, the greatest gift for a dictator are people who will kill others based on their belief in God.) After all, the dictator's army and police together with his control over laws (the legislative

branch of government) and how they are enforced (the judicial branch) can suppress his direct opponents and small movements within the state. But a strong enough civil movement will ultimately remove him from power. To use only one of myriad examples, think of the peaceful rebellion of East Germans that brought down the wall in 1989. This is why dictators often become obsessed with charismatic cultural and religious leaders: their power is of a completely different sort than that of political strongmen. Dumanli clearly expresses this insight:

A peaceful civil society movement called Hizmet, or service, focusing on democracy, education, interfaith dialogue and social welfare efforts has become the primary object of Erdoğan's obsession. In its mission and values, Hizmet is similar to the U.S. civil rights movement. Its supporters are ordinary citizens drawn from a cross-section of public or private institutions, but Erdoğan equates their presence in the bureaucracy with a legal coup. The government has purged thousands of police, prosecutors and other public officials. Erdoğan's attack machine has also cracked down on Hizmet in the private sector, going after institutions and businesses affiliated with its supporters. (Dumanli, 2015).

He argues that the movement's growth and impact both inside and outside Turkey position both its leader and its followers as indicative of a "post-political" turn in twenty-first century Islamic political identity in general, and illustrative of Turkey's political, economic, and cultural transformation in particular.

Erdoğan adds to his power by finding a scapegoat. Labeling the Gülen Movement a terrorist organization also gives him an easy excuse to cripple the strongest civil society organization in Turkey, which helps him in his drive for absolute power. Dictators like Erdoğan crush religious leaders like Gülen because the two inhabit completely different realities.

The answer to our guiding question now begins to emerge. Dictators like Erdoğan crush religious leaders like Gülen because the two inhabit completely different realities. One reality is the logic of power. A person who is addicted to ruling over others will maintain his power at all costs, because power is his central reality. But people who subordinate worldly power and prestige to the call of compassion have their eyes focused on a different reality. Their religious ideals are incomprehensible to dictators. Consider the way Mr. Gülen formulates his goals:

...if we are able to implant in the young firm belief, pure and sound thoughts, a strong feeling of love of nation and country; if we enable them to come together around a sacred cause to which they should be made to dedicate themselves; if we bring them to prefer such values as honor and dignity over passing pleasures; and if we inculcate in them the duty of loyalty to the country and working for its good... then the young will maintain their essential identity against mental and spiritual corruption (Hendrick, 2013, 123).

As Hendrick comments, “[Gülen’s] objective is to cultivate *action-oriented people of service* who dedicate their personal and professional lives toward the realization of a better future” (ibid., 101).

The anthropologist can demonstrate the different social and cultural worlds that these two men inhabit. The philosopher will argue that they live by two different “logics.” For the religious observer, however, the differences cannot be expressed without using the terms “good” and “evil.” In the Christian New Testament, it is said of Prophet Jesus, “He was in the world ... and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10). Martin Luther, the Christian leader who is called “the Father of the Reformation,” described two kingdoms: the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of heaven. In the contrasts between Erdoğan and Gülen, we surely see examples of this distinction.

Of course, many religious persons are walking their own journey from one kingdom to another. (Perhaps this is one meaning of *hajj*.) Religious people do not live perfect lives. If the distinction is between light and darkness, we are often struggling our way toward the sunrise (or, perhaps, the sunset). What we do believe, however, is that the categories of light and darkness express real realities in human existence. Moral questions are raised not only in individual lives, but also in the history of kingdoms and countries. The Christian scriptures describe the difference: “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (*Matthew*, 26:52), whereas “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (*Galatians*, 5:22).

And not equal are the good deed and the bad. ▲

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A MEDITATION ON PERSECUTION

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Among the many gospel hymns and spirituals that have provided strength for a suffering people over the decades, one has stayed with me in recent weeks. That song—sung by the great soul artist Sam Cooke, and covered by many gospel choirs – is entitled “I’m So Glad,” but I remember it as “Troubles Don’t Last Always.” Among its key lines, as performed by Rev. Timothy Wright and the Chicago Interdenominational Mass Choir, is the following:

“Weeping may endure for a night, keep the faith it will be alright. Troubles don’t last always.”

Since July 15, 2016, following a failed coup whose origins are still unknown while many signs indicate it may have been orchestrated by the Turkish government, people associated with the global Hizmet movement have been targeted for persecution. This persecution, however, is not new; it has been going on for decades. The rationales have constantly shifted.

The failed coup is just the latest excuse.

Christians like me, who follow the example of Jesus, know that goodness is always targeted by those committed to corruption. The Apostle Paul, in his 2nd Letter to the Church at Corinth, wrote of the early Christian community: “We are pressed on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (4:8-9).

Among the people of Hizmet, Fethullah Gülen knows from his own life-story, which I am writing at present, that those committed to good often face persecution. But those troubles don’t last. Goodness wins.

Gülen’s father, Ramiz, knew this truth. He wanted to name his eldest son Muhammed Fethullah, after the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the registrar of the secular government thought the name “too Islamic.” But Ramiz kept the faith, and eventually succeeded to register him



three years later with his newborn second son.

Gülen’s mother, Refia, also knew this truth. She had the capacity to teach the Qur’an to other women, but at the time such public teaching was illegal in Turkey. But she kept the faith, and women in the villages of Korucuk and Alvar, and the city of Erzurum, eventually gained a deeper knowledge of their religious traditions.

In his own life, Gülen has faced repeated troubles and oppressions. When he served in the military (1961-63), not all commanders found his faith admirable. At least one made it so difficult for Gülen that his health failed, requiring a leave of absence. During his second appointment as an imam, in Edirne, when his reputation as a preacher began to grow

and crowds came to hear him, he drew the interest of the police. On one occasion, he received a death threat. On another, he was arrested and detained. That case went to trial, but Gülen was eventually exonerated. These troubles have always preceded greater success.

It is, of course, impossible to predict the future. The most recent persecutions have destroyed livelihoods and lives. Our collective voices should oppose and resist the authoritarian actions of the Turkish government. We must organize to protect the innocent and to shelter them from ongoing harm, insofar as possible. But persecutions cannot destroy the good, the true, and the beautiful.



Such eternal realities are beyond the reach of the corrupt and violent, just as they are also beyond their understanding.

As the one whom people of Hizmet call Hocaefendi, or honored teacher, put it himself, quoting Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:8 from the

Holy Qur'an: "Let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice."

Or as the gospel song put it, again: "Weeping may endure for a night, keep the faith it will be alright. Troubles don't last always." ▲

Gülen has faced repeated persecutions throughout his life. (Above: Gülen (in the middle) on trial in Izmir, Turkey, in State of Emergency Court after the military intervention in 1971.

“HAVE YOU NO SENSE OF DECENCY?”

An Open Letter to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

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Mr. Erdoğan: I have visited your lovely country no less than five times over the past ten years. On four of these visits, members of the Hizmet movement were my guides. I have also proudly been associated with Hizmet for nearly 15 years. It saddens me deeply to see what has transpired in Turkey during the last few years. Let me be very clear, I can say much the same about my own country and many other countries, as well. But this is not the focus of my message to you today.

Recently, I have been reminded of the now famous words delivered on June 9, 1954, during the Army-McCarthy Hearings in Washington, D.C. On that particular day,

the Special Counsel for the Army, Joseph N. Welch, responded to the accusations against members of the Army by then Senator of Wisconsin, Joseph R. McCarthy, by saying: “Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?”

I would not be at all surprised if you simply dismissed my words without reading any further, if at all. After all, you have demonstrated your disgust of academics by removing thousands of them from their positions and closing many of their schools. Further, I am an American and you have shown your contempt of us by turning your security detail on some of us in our very capital city. Not to mention the fact that I am Jewish and

Çankırı Chief Public Prosecutor Hüsnü Aldemir, recently likened the Gülen movement to a Jewish organization (I happen to identify with both), saying that it is tantamount to hate speech: "This organization is very complex, just like a Jewish organization, everything is planned out. That is why we are investigating it so thoroughly."

I teach religious studies and my focus is on the many similarities the great religious traditions share, rather than on the far fewer differences which the media and others tend to emphasize. Your record likewise indicates an additional aversion to this aspect of my make-up. Let's just agree to say we disagree on many matters.

That being said, where does that leave us? Yes, I have traveled to Turkey with members of the Hizmet movement. My late wife was so moved by your homeland on our very first visit in 2006 she informed me returning there would be the first item on her bucket list upon retirement. Without hesitation, I planned a 15-day return trip through a travel agency (unaffiliated with the Hizmet movement) which I have used in the past for both students and adult travelers. It saddens me deeply returning to Turkey would be nearly impossible for me given the recent appalling events initiated both by you and members of your government.

I learned a few weeks ago one of my guides for a 10-day trip with the Hizmet movement was arrested for his affiliation with the movement. When I saw the picture of him being taken into custody, in the pages of one of the newspapers you currently control, I was completely horrified. I have known this man for years and have never witnessed any suggestion or element of danger, anger, or provocation in his character. His arrest, for no apparent reason, is only one example of the many thousands who have been placed in prison over the past year.

The Economist

JULY 23RD-29TH 2016

A circus arrives in Cleveland

The dirty secret of natural gas

AIDS: down but not out

Six of the best economic ideas

Erdogan's revenge



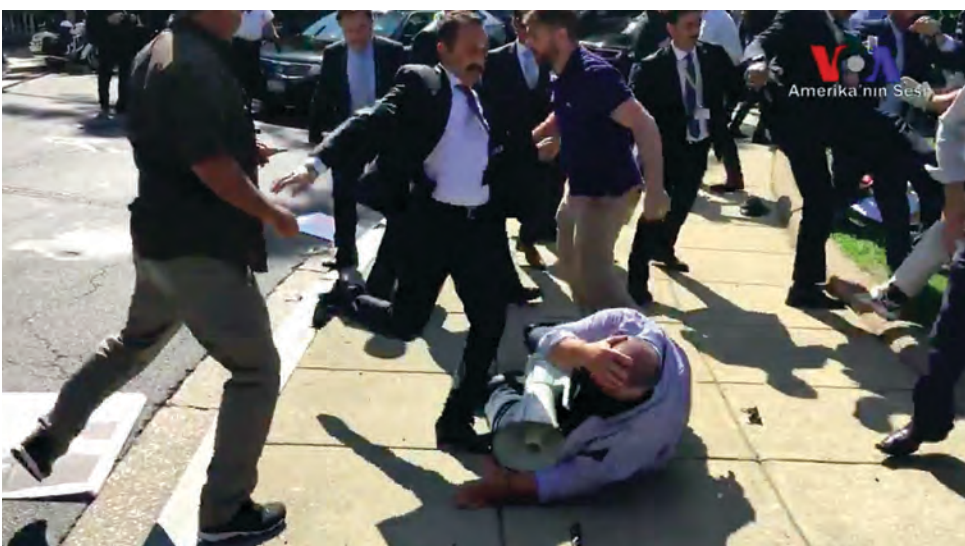
The coup and the crackdown

There is a word my religion uses during the festival of Passover which typifies much of what seems to be occurring under your watch. It is *dayeinu*. Loosely translated it means *would it not be sufficient*. In the context of the Passover Seder, it refers to the ongoing actions of the Lord in freeing the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In your case, I see *dayeinu* referring to the actions you have taken in dismissing and/or arresting (and possibly even torturing) hundreds and thousands of your citizens. When will enough be enough?

Do you wish to be remembered as the Turkish Stalin, the leader who enacted purge upon purge of almost every segment of his people? I am not going to stand in judgment over you; that is neither my intention nor is it my place.

However, I do know your great religious tradition says on Judgment Day Allah will do so. Are you prepared to be held accountable for your actions?

The Qur'an speaks in many places about how one is to treat one's enemies and non-combatants. Yet many women and children are among those being imprisoned for crimes not assigned, since many remain behind bars without having charges brought against them and not being tried in court. I wonder: is this because you have also imprisoned thousands of judges? Are you proud of the fact your country now has the largest number of journalists in prison, more than any other country in the world? For years, Turkey was held up as one of the greatest democratic nations in history.



On May 16, 2017, Erdoğan's security guards, now on the wanted list in the United States, attacked protestors in front of the Turkish Ambassador's residence in Washington D.C., apparently after getting permission from Erdoğan.

What you have done to her and her people is inexcusable.

It is my understanding that the much maligned *Shariah* law was initially established to protect the people from the terrible decrees and reign of tyrants. It may be time for its original intent to be re-examined and your palace and "sultanate" questioned or challenged by those over whom you rule.

History has shown countless examples of how your religion, country, and empire have been exemplars for others to emulate. During the Spanish Inquisition, it was the Ottoman Empire who came to the rescue of generation

upon generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims whose lives were at risk. The Jews and Christians were brought back to live under the protection of the Sultan himself. The "People of the Book" now exist precariously and in fear within your country.

There was a long history of religious dialogue in the Ottoman Empire; today, you condemn such activities, activities which could only serve peaceful ends. Some say over fourteen centuries ago one of your great leaders took the initiative to keep the peace between Christians in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (considered by many to be the

holiest place in Christendom). He sent members of two Muslim families to help mediate the conflict between the different denominations housed in the church. To this day, a member of the same Nuseibeh and Joudeh families still unlocks and locks the doors of the church each and every morning and evening. One could only wonder how you would respond to a similar situation.

Mr. Erdoğan, I implore you to reevaluate your methods and decisions. Your country is suffering, your people are suffering and your economy is suffering. May I reiterate, "You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?" It is not too late to help your people, heal some wounds, and amend your legacy. Your people need you. Just as importantly, the United States needs you and your country's friendship, as does the entire free world, including Israel and many of your Arab, Kurd-ish, and Persian neighbors.

In closing, I consider Turkey and her people to be one of the most beautiful lands in all the world. I have traveled widely over the years and consider Turkey close to being my adopted homeland, with Istanbul my adopted city. I am pained to see the difficulties she is currently enduring and by the fact my university will not allow me to bring students there because of the travel warnings which have been issued by our government. I wish there was something I could do to help alleviate some of the problems; if there is, please let me know.

Very sincerely,
Peter Cohen

P.S. Please accept this letter as a friend addressing another friend. Even Mohandas K. Gandhi in a letter dated December 24, 1940, began with the salutation, "DEAR FRIEND." That particular letter was to Adolph Hitler entreating him to change his ways. ▲

“Nelson Mandela,
now regarded as a
great hero, was on the
terrorist list, too.”*

Noam Chomsky

*Noam Chomsky's response when asked about Fethullah Gülen being called a terrorist in Turkey (Boston, November 14, 2015).

Watch his full comments on YouTube: "Speaking about Gülen, Chomsky: 'Mandela declared as terrorist, too'"



WHAT WENT WRONG?

PURGE, PERSECUTION, AND THE IMPERATIVE TO STAND WITH THE INNOCENT IN TURKEY

SCOTT C. ALEXANDER, PHD

Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

The disturbing meme depicting criminals impaled on hooks with the words “The ideal method of execution for [the members of] the Fethullah Terrorist Organization: The Ottoman Way” is making its way around Turkish social media. Apparently, the image itself - which cannot be published here due to its graphic content - originally comes from a traditional miniature illustration in an Ottoman manuscript and was recently appropriated as the lead image in a similarly titled article published on the pro-government haber7.com media website.¹ This article begins with a note of fond nostalgia for a time when the punishment of rebels against the state could be quick and decisive because governments did not have to worry about the inconvenience of “inquiries” and the “courts.”²

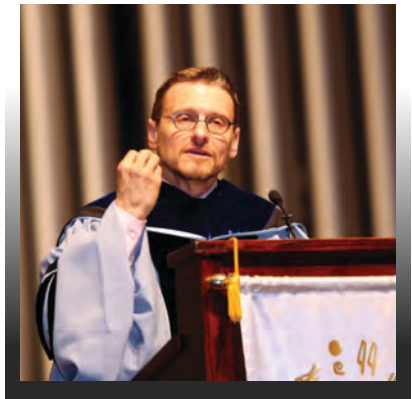
I can remember a time--just a little more than a decade ago--when pride in Selçuk and Ottoman heritage among Turks took the form of everything from celebrating the great mystical poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (depicted just beneath this recent meme), to emphasis on the traditional Ottoman embrace of ethnic, cultural, and even religious heterogeneity, to reveling in the stunning beauty of Ottoman art and architecture. And now, look where we are. Some (certainly not all) are stoking the flames of an

intolerant populist nationalism which takes perverse delight in touting as an Ottoman solution to the current problems of social tension and political unrest in contemporary Turkish society, nothing less than brutality and torture.

What happened?

As many of you know, last year at this time, the lives of so many good, decent, and innocent people were changed forever. A still nebulous group of criminal conspirators staged an attempt to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Before the attempt was completely quelled – and long before any legitimate and lawful investigation could take place – President Erdoğan appeared on national television and accused M. Fethullah Gülen, the widely revered spiritual leader of the global service movement known as Hizmet, of being the mastermind of the coup attempt.

Given that the previous few years were witness to a deterioration in the always cautious but nonetheless impactful mutual affinity between Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party and the Hizmet Movement, Erdoğan’s utterly unfounded accusation was not entirely surprising. Well before the events of July 15, 2016, Erdoğan had been looking either to enlist the unqualified support of the Hizmet Movement in his authoritarian



quest for nearly unlimited executive power, or to demonize them as the ultimate enemy of the Turkish people around which he could rally a new coalition of secularists and Islamists. Since Gülen had already made clear that the commitment to real democracy must supersede loyalty to any one leader – no matter how successful he or she may have been in the past – it was nearly inevitable that Erdoğan would turn against the man and the movement he once rightly per-



ceived as key allies in the common cause of establishing Turkey as a vibrant Euro-Asian Muslim-majority democracy.

As we now know, what ensued the failed coup attempt was not a moment for authentic national celebration, healing, restored unity, and solidarity based on an even more vigorous embrace of the rule of law and an ethos of patriotic inclusivity. Instead, what ensued was a reign of terror in which Erdoğan initiated a now infamous Purge of Turkish governmental and civil institutions. Not only has this Purge done irreparable damage to the lives of countless innocent men, women, and children. Tragically—and ironically—it has also served to enshrine President Erdoğan, a man who many of us once thought might one day be hailed as a “Muslim Mandela,” in the ignominious hall of those many dictators who have hijacked their own peoples’ legitimate aspirations for liberty and prosperity as a means of feeding their own insatiable lust for power.

Among many other human rights violations, Erdoğan’s Purge has resulted in the immoral imprisonment of tens of thousands of loyal Turkish citizens – including kindergarten teachers and elderly grandmothers – whose only crime is their attempt to be better Muslims, indeed better human beings, by following the teachings of a man whom they understand as having the courage to live a life of principle in a world which tends to reward tribalism over morality. To this day, innocents languish in prison, and those who have not yet met this fate, live in fear that they will be stripped of their livelihoods and driven out of their homes as the “terrorists” they have been so absurdly and unjustly branded by this tyrannical regime.

Meanwhile, here in the United States, a few leaders of Muslim civil rights and other civic organizations have engaged in the blatant

hypocrisy of condoning the Purge and even aiding and abetting Mr. Erdoğan in his efforts to crush the movement. They have willingly ceded to members of the Erdogan administration, consular corps, and even Erdoğan family members, key public platforms (such as conferences and Friday Prayer appearances) from which the latter have actually engaged in the essentially Islamophobic practice of branding innocent Muslim Americans as “terrorists” and “cult” members. These few U.S. Muslim leaders feebly attempt to justify this disgraceful behavior by appealing to: Mr. Erdoğan’s many successes in helping to lead a multi-year boom in the Turkish economy during the 2000s; his allegedly tough stance toward Israel and allegedly singular concern among Muslim heads of state for the long-suffering Palestinian people; and his admirable commitment to the millions of refugees of the Syrian civil war who have found safe haven in Turkey. I still am unable to understand why these Muslim Americans cannot give Erdoğan his due while at the very same time stand in unqualified solidarity with all the innocent men and women of Hizmet and others who have been the victims of his ruthless quest to consolidate power.

Similar pro-Erdoğan dynamics are at work in other countries. This is especially the case in certain nation states with Muslim-majority or substantial Muslim populations where the government wishes, for economic and other reasons, to stay on good diplomatic terms with the current Turkish regime, and where there are substantial popular pro-Islamist sentiments which, especially in gloomy fog of the dashed hopes of the so-called “Arab Spring,” have elevated Mr. Erdoğan to the profoundly ironic status as icon of ‘Muslim democracy.’ Governments from Malaysia to Turkmenistan to Nigeria have been pressured by the Turkish government to shutter Hizmet institutions

and extradite countless school teachers, entrepreneurs of social cohesion, business people and aid workers to Turkey for prosecution as criminal insurgents and “terrorists.” In some cases these efforts are still being met with principled resistance. In many cases they have tragically succeeded.

The good news in all of this is that, one full year after the illegal and immoral coup attempt and the equally illegal and immoral Purge, the Hizmet Movement still survives as a testament to the power of a sincere faith in God and human goodness, even in the face of vile oppression.

I humbly implore all who read these words to join me in giving thanks to al-Hafiz (the Divine Protector) for continuing to watch over Mr. Gülen and all the good people of Hizmet. Join me in imploring al-Shafi (the Healer) to bring comfort to all those brave Turkish citizens who lost their lives one year ago and those who continue to suffer the effects of both the criminal coup and the tyrannical Purge. Join me in begging al-Shahid, (the Witness), al-`Adl (the Source of All Justice) to expose the guilt of those truly responsible for the coup as well as the Purge, so that the innocent may at last be set free. Join me in praying to al-Nur (the Light) to illumine the path of all the noble people of Turkey, and all who support them, so that they may find the path to mutual forgiveness and thus come together to forge a more just future for all. ▲

Notes

1. “FETÖ için en ideal infaz yöntemi Osmanlı’da varmış” (“The ideal method of execution for the Fethullah Terrorist Organization is the Ottoman one”) Haber7.com <http://www.haber7.com/gazeteler/haber/2379662-feto-icin-en-ideal-infaz-yontemi-osmanlida-varmis> (accessed 07.19.17).
2. “Devlete başkaldırıp isyan edenler hakkında sorgu, soruşturma, mahkeme vesaire gibi işler ile pek fazla vakit harcanmayıp kararın hemen verildiği günlerden bir infaz örneği.”

Erdoğan's Most Vulnerable Victims: Women and Children

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Human rights violations in Turkey have increased exponentially in the aftermath of the July 15, 2016 attempted coup. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan blamed the plot on the Hizmet (Gülen) movement, and seized the opportunity to throw many of those he considered as opposition in jail. In all, over a hundred thousand people have been arrested, despite a lack of evidence against the vast majority of those detained. The UK Foreign Affairs Committee states there is a lack of credible evidence the movement was behind the coup, and Fethullah Gülen, Hizmet’s founding figure, flatly denies involvement.

Nonetheless, since July 15, women have been subjected to an uptick of a variety of intimidation strategies, including rape, the threat of rape, harassment, and other forms of violence—not only by Erdoğan’s AKP-led (Justice and Development) government, but also by civilians emboldened by the new climate in which macho, hyper-masculinity and misogyny have become widespread. Many women whose families are affiliated with the groups currently targeted by the crackdown (i.e. Hizmet participants, Kurds, Alevi) have reported experiencing psychological trauma. Unsurprisingly, the political turmoil has also negatively affected children in a myriad of ways.

Declaring a “state of emergency” (still in place for an indefinite period of time), and abandoning the European Convention for Human Rights, Erdoğan has also fired thousands of educators, police, judges, prosecutors, journalists, and shut down (or taken over) schools, universities, businesses, and media outlets. On the eve of the one-year anniversary of the attempted coup, he sacked 7,000 more in a single day. This unprecedented onslaught is widely termed

the “purge,” and the Turkish president appears willing to refashion the very fabric of society through oppression and violence. Internationally considered a populist authoritarian, Erdoğan has also incited attacks against those he opposes. Recently, he called for the reinstatement of the death penalty and the beheading of those he deems responsible for the coup.

The Turkish president is also not feminist: he has stated that women who have not chosen to bear at least three children are “deficient” and “incomplete,” and that women have a “delicate nature” and are “unequal” to men. Not long after the putsch attempt, feminists noted an increase in attacks and harassment on the street. Journalist Pinar Ersoy writes that women have been “silenced” during the purge, and that women’s groups have been targeted. A soccer club executive actually tweeted that the wives of any coup plotters should be considered “spoils of war.” The lack of women during street protests also speaks to the heightened climate of fear.

During and after political conflict in general, women and children are the ones most severely afflicted by hardships such as poverty, displacement, insecurity, and sexual and domestic violence. In the aftermath, men tend to attempt to reinstate patriarchal “order,” sometimes through violent means. During the purge in Turkey, women from a variety of marginalized communities (Kurdish, Alevi, Hizmet-affiliated) have been particularly affected by financial difficulties, violence, rape, and demeaning treatment, even during and after childbirth. A forty year-old lawyer, Frank brought his family to the US despite his wife’s reluctance to leave Turkey, when he realized that the government was even “jailing mothers with ten day-old children.” He added, “I couldn’t take this risk.”



Five children left alone in tears in front of Sincan Prison in Ankara after their mother was detained while they were visiting their father in prison. (January 23, 2017)

An estimated 16,000 to 20,000 women are currently held in prison; in some cases, they're being used as hostages to coerce their male relatives to return to Turkey from abroad, and as an intimidation technique intended to silence dissent among their families. Tarik, a fifty year-old man in the construction business from eastern Turkey, fled his homeland but worried about his family being arrested in his place as he is affiliated with the Hizmet movement. He stated, "They also started putting wives in jail if they can't find their husbands. So, my family came to the US in January." In prison, women report being subjected to systematic humiliation, including naked searches by male guards. In a Muslim patriarchal society, a violation of a women's body is a dishonor to her entire family, especially for her male kinfolk who are traditionally responsible for protecting her. An acquaintance in his twenties, affiliated with the Hizmet movement, told me that his fiancé abruptly broke off their engagement after her trauma of spending time in jail.

For many women not jailed or physically hurt, the psychological effects of the purge are nevertheless damaging. Fatma, a forty-two-year-old housewife from Erzurum,

was briefly detained and interrogated about her husband's Hizmet-related activities. After her release, she began having problems with her mental health. She confided, "Because my psychological state was so bad, I took medications. I'm still under this medication." Her eighteen-year-old daughter, Hatice, also suffered from the stigma when her classmates found out about the allegations against her father, and they socially ostracized her.

Children exposed to political conflict are also in danger of suffering from PTSD or anxiety. Cur-

A female protestor hit with a rubber bullet during government takeover of Zaman, once the largest newspaper of Turkey. (March 4, 2016)



rently, over 500 children are being raised in jail by those mothers who are among the imprisoned, or left behind when their mothers are suddenly detained, in one case in a parking lot. Fatma's younger daughter, Elif, 17, expressed frustration with being displaced by the coup. Now attending school in California, she said, "I feel stupid, because I don't speak English. Yes, I cried when I left Turkey, because we were living with our grandparents. I miss all my family members. After we left, our grandmother got paralyzed because of these events."

Tarik also spoke to me about the effect the purge had on his children. He explained, "My kids' psychological well-being was disturbed because every time my car stopped, they worried that the police had stopped us. Police officers with rifles were coming to their schools during school hours, like SWAT teams." When his younger daughter finally arrived in the US, she didn't leave her room for the first two weeks.

Many children affected by the coup also found their education disrupted. A sixteen-year-old boy was stuck in Seattle, having arrived on a trip with friends, right



Fatma, daughter of Ali Fuat Yilmazer, the police chief jailed following corruption probes in late 2013, was arrested on March 17, 2017. Fatma, recently graduated from law school, was defending her father.

Women and children are the unseen victims of Erdoğan's purge, and the effects will doubtless reverberate through Turkish society for decades.

before the events of July 15th. He said that the government had shut his old school down, and that if he returned, he would be assigned to a public school. He was unsure about whether or not he would seek asylum in the US, or return, but he was most distressed about his family still in Turkey. He explained, "I'm sad about my family and their future, and what might happen to them. I'm concerned about their security." Over two thousand educational institutes in Turkey have been closed, and tens of thousands of teachers and professors were fired. Due to the instability caused both by the purge and attacks by the Kurdish PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), intellectuals are fleeing the country, leading to a Turkish "brain drain."

Women and children are the unseen victims of Erdoğan's purge, and the effects will doubtless re-

verberate through Turkish society for decades. Those thousands of women jailed are acutely vulnerable to physical (including sexual), emotional, and psychological abuse. If they have young children, these children are either left behind, or they find themselves also behind bars. Those women at home whose male relatives are incarcerated risk financial hardship, displacement, and lack of physical security. The children at risk face the disruption of their education, as well as anxiety, depression, and PTSD. According to psychologist Jack Saul, survivors of collective trauma may also experience a sense of betrayal and insecurity, shattered relationships, and the inability for adults to effectively care for their children. For the most vulnerable victims, weaving lives back together again, and moving towards healing, will be an immense challenge. ▀

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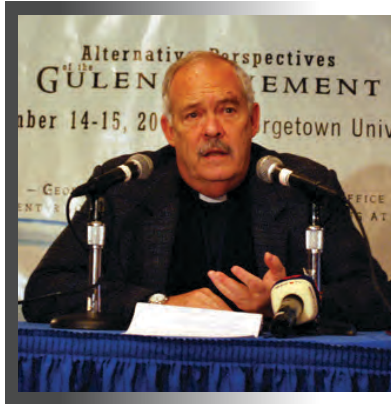
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THE GÜLEN COMMUNITY

WHO TO BELIEVE - POLITICIANS OR ACTIONS?

In the aftermath of the attempted coup on July 15, 2016, Turkish government has launched an unprecedented purge – with no evidence linking a vast majority of those purged to any illegal activity.

On July 15, 2016, while President Erdoğan was vacationing in the Mediterranean coastal town of Marmaris, Istanbul and Ankara were shaken by an attempted coup d'état carried out by certain members of the Turkish armed forces.

About seven years before that, in May 2009, I received an award at the International Turkish Olympiad. The festival was essentially a cultural event consisting of Turkish songs, dances, and poetry recitals performed by students

from Turkish schools around the world. It took place in a modern convention hall in Ankara with thousands of spectators in attendance. The event was sponsored and organized by members of the Hizmet movement, a Muslim community inspired by the preaching and writings of Turkish scholar Fethullah Gülen. When I, together with a handful of other recipients, mounted the stage to accept our awards, there to shake our hands was the smiling Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The incident underlines how less than a decade earlier relations

between Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (known by its acronym, the AKP) and the Hizmet movement guided by Gülen's teaching were characterized by cooperation and respect. Foreign observers in Ankara even referred to Hizmet as "the religious wing of the AKP." Although inaccurate even in those days, such a characterization reflected a commonly held view among Turks and others that there was some kind of ideological link between the AKP and the followers of Gülen.

There is no doubt that the Gülen supporters had great influence



"I greatly admire these Hizmet members, of whom I know hundreds, and many of whom I count among my personal friends. I have been to their annual retreats, where they encourage one another to live up to their lofty Islamic ideals. I have heard the testimony of Catholic leaders in Turkey and Turkish Jews that the Gülen followers are their partners and allies in striving to build a truly inclusive Turkish society."

(Left). International Festival of Language and Culture has been a trademark festival of the Hizmet Movement. (Below) Mehmet Ali Birand, late Turkish journalist, had warned years ago that future politicians would go after the Hizmet movement with a view to annihilating it.

in Turkey. They ran the best high schools and college prep institutions, and students from those schools, year after year, obtained the top scores in the standardized college entrance exams. Hizmet members published *Zaman*, the most widely circulated and highly regarded newspaper in Turkey, referred to by Erdoğan himself as "the guardian of democracy in Turkey." Hizmet members published scores of professional journals and popular magazines. They established associations of medical professionals, teachers, and business leaders. They set up hospitals and clinics, and in Turkey's highly polarized society they conducted national "dialogues" that brought together Turkish thinkers and leaders: Right and Left, Sunni and Alevi, Turk and Kurd, and Muslim, Jewish, and Christian.

However, storm clouds were gathering. Perceptive observers could see trouble ahead. In a prophetic column in the left-center *Hurriyet* newspaper on October 5, 2010, the late political commentator Mehmet Ali Birand noted:

"I don't know whether they are aware of it, but a danger that needs to be taken very seriously awaits the Gülen movement. In the eyes of Turkish society, which believes conspiracy theories, the Gülen movement is mythicized beyond its real dimensions. The power and influence of the Gülen movement is being so exaggerated that if no precautions are taken, this imagined power will one day destroy it... If the cur-



rent trend does not change, future politicians will go after this movement with a view to annihilating it."

Birand, who claimed to be neither a member of Hizmet nor opposed to it, believed that, "The power attributed to the Gülen movement is enormously exaggerated. It does not reflect the truth but the winds of exaggeration..."



The first overt sign of tension between Gülen, who lives in retirement in the United States, and Erdoğan can be dated to the pro-democracy Gezi Park protests of June, 2013, when Gülen criticized the Turkish government's heavy-handed suppression of the protests. The real break came later that year when investigators reportedly associated with Hizmet pursued charges of corruption leveled against the sons of various ministers of the Turkish government, implicating Erdoğan's own son. Since then, Erdoğan (President of the Republic since 2014) has sought to destroy Hizmet and break its influence on Turkish society. After last summer's failed coup, Erdoğan has accused Gülen of masterminding the coup and his followers of carrying it out. The government has undertaken a "McCarthyite" witch-hunt, resulting in the dismissal and arrest of university presidents, police chiefs, military officers, and newspaper editors, and the imprisonment of an estimated 60,000 Turkish citizens.

Erdoğan's anti-Hizmet campaign has even affected U.S.-Turkish relations. The Turkish govern-

Gülen's followers have committed themselves to administering and teaching in schools in places as diverse as Phnom Penh, Brussels, Accra, and inner-city Milwaukee and Cleveland. They are digging wells in Somalia and Mali, and running clinics in Kenya.

ment has demanded Gülen's extradition to Turkey, while Secretary of State under President Obama, John Kerry, noted that the United States does not extradite residents on the basis of unsubstantiated requests, even those made by Heads of State. He noted that the process of extradition must begin with the presentation of hard evidence of wrongdoing and that no evidence of the involvement of Gülen or Hizmet associates in the failed coup attempt has been forthcoming.

Unsatisfied with the Obama administration's refusal to bow under pressure, the Turkish government looked to the future: they discussed, with retired US Army General Michael Flynn, ways that judicial processes might be bypassed in order that Mr. Gülen might be "removed" from the United States and sent to Turkey. The fact that such actions could

violate U.S. laws does not seem to have been a deterrent either to Flynn or to the Turkish authorities concerned. Flynn was at the time an advisor to presidential candidate Donald Trump, and he later briefly served as National Security Advisor to President Trump before being fired for lying about his relations with Russian officials. It is evident that the Turkish government was willing to engage in underhanded and apparently illegal activities to get Gülen extradited from the United States.

Guilty or not guilty?

For those who know Mr. Gülen personally or have had contact with the open-hearted and idealistic members of the Hizmet movement, claims of subversive "terrorism," (in Erdoğan's words) seem incongruous. I have known Mr. Gülen for over 20 years and find the retired, soft-spoken Qur'an-teacher to be preaching and living a par-



ticularly attractive interpretation of Islamic faith. His bedrock concept is that of *ikhlas*, which means doing everything, no matter how modest or unassuming, wholly for God's pleasure. This spiritual principle, which is hardly original or unique to Islam, has motivated Gülen's followers to commit themselves to administering and teaching in schools in places as diverse as Phnom Penh, Brussels, Accra, and inner-city Milwaukee and Cleveland. They are digging wells in Somalia and Mali, running clinics in Kenya, and establishing interreligious dialogue programs in more than 200 locations in the United States.

Many Americans have come to know the Hizmet movement personally through the well-organized cultural trips to Turkey sponsored by these local dialogue associations. For many non-Muslims, the trips are their first direct encounter with an Islamic community devoted to peacebuilding and being a living expression of God's compassion and mercy.

I greatly admire these Hizmet members, of whom I know hundreds, and many of whom I count among my personal friends. I

have been to their annual retreats, where they encourage one another to live up to their lofty Islamic ideals. I have heard the testimony of Catholic leaders in Turkey and Turkish Jews that the Gülen followers are their partners and allies in striving to build a truly inclusive Turkish society. I have talked to Christian students from Mozambique and the Philippines, graduates of Hizmet schools, who are grateful for the excellent educational foundation they received. Could all this good work simply be public posturing, a façade to hide a conspiracy aimed at achieving domination and power? I suppose that it's possible, but it seems pretty far-fetched and unlikely.

One might say that an outside observer's positive opinion of the Hizmet movement begs the question of whether members of the movement, with Fethullah Gülen as mastermind, were in fact behind the July 2016 coup. Despite all his bluster, threats, and posturing, Erdoğan has not been able to produce any credible evidence linking the coup attempt to a Hizmet plot. The most he has been able to offer are a few statements by implicated generals, obtained under duress,

which could be interpreted as suggesting a tenuous link with Gülen. For his part, Mr. Gülen has categorically denied any involvement in the coup, which he condemned, and called for an international impartial investigation into the coup and its background, a suggestion which Mr. Erdoğan has summarily rejected. One must ask which of the two would like to see the truth come out, and which is trying to keep the facts from coming to light.

I originally published a version of this article in *Commonweal* magazine in November 2016. Since then, Mr. Erdoğan has continued to make unsubstantiated claims about Hizmet involvement in the coup. He is not talking about the possible sympathy of one or another military officer toward Fethullah Gülen, but a centralized, organized effort conceived and directed by Gülen and carried out through the institutions and networking of Hizmet members. This scenario has been investigated with the professional expertise of the intelligence services of the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and NATO, who have clearly expressed their views of who they believe to have been behind the coup. None of them has been convinced by Erdoğan's noisy but empty accusations.

I am not alone in asking Mr. Erdoğan, "Please produce evidence, if you have any, for your claims. Otherwise, why should anyone take your word for what appears to be a slander of this conscientious religious leader and a community that is doing much good in the world? Could your anti-Hizmet campaign be an act of revenge for the whistle-blowing against your family members, or a distraction aimed at preventing a continuing investigation of the corruption charges?" ■



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TURKEY'S COUP THAT WAS NEVER A COUP

Note: I first wrote most of the words that follow these in August, 2016, a month after the “coup” in Turkey. Between then and now, things in that splendid country have only gotten worse, and there are places in the following paragraphs where I note such developments...

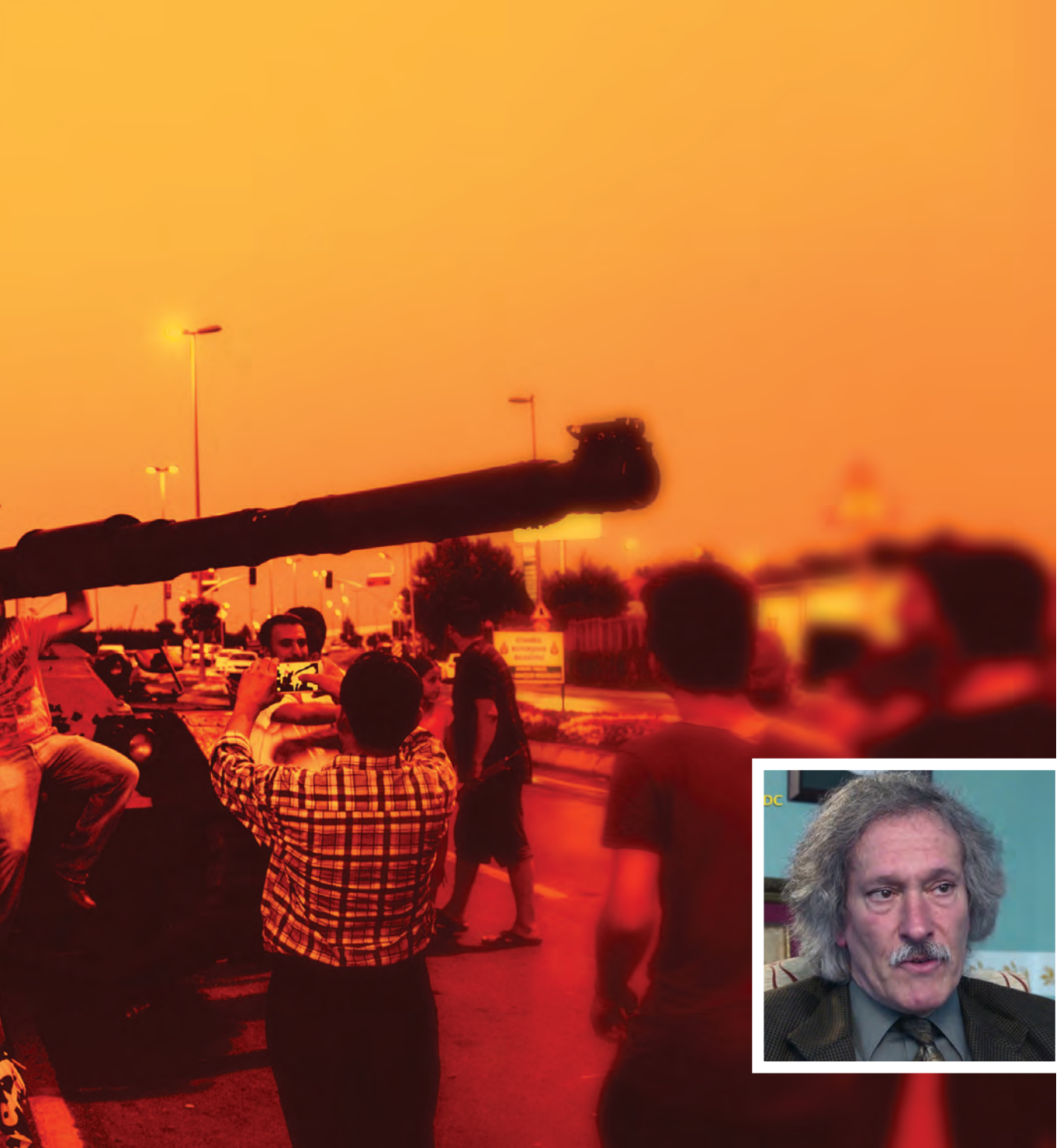
It is hard to believe that anyone who is astute—and certainly anyone who has been watching

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan degenerate into a tyrant over the last several years—could take the story he has been presenting about the recent so-called “coup” attempt seriously. It’s just as difficult to imagine any serious observer believing Fethullah Gülen was in any way, shape, or form behind the failed “coup.”

Mr. Erdoğan first came to power as Prime Minister nearly a decade and a half ago, following a very successful tenure as the mayor of Istanbul—a magnificent, ancient

city that he revitalized in many ways. He was elected after a succession of inept and/or corrupt leaders had pushed Turkey toward social and economic oblivion. He gained the support of Fethullah Gülen, who saw in Erdoğan someone who could help pull the country into the modern era while restoring its sense of an Islamic-based identity.

As Mr. Erdoğan became more comfortable and confident, he saw less and less need for the support of Mr. Gülen and his thousands, per-



haps millions, of followers. By the end of the Prime Minister's third term a clear schism had opened between the two. One of two things seems to have occurred. Either Erdoğan had been clever enough to mask his true intentions and ambitions all along—and if so, then he was engaging in a twisted version of what is referred to in Arabic as *taqiyya* – dissimulation.

Not all Muslims accept *taqiyya* even under circumstances of threat to one's survival—and few

legitimate scholars of Islamic jurisprudence would embrace the sort of dissimulation in which Erdoğan may have been engaged, although he would not be the first individual to pervert the concept. In any case, if he was dissimulating, not only was much of Turkey duped, but so was Gülen—and most of the world, including the United States government—or the power that he achieved gradually corrupted him, breeding an unslakable thirst for *more* power and an increasing dis-

taste for anyone who might stand in the way of its acquisition.

The growing split has led Erdoğan to attack the Hizmet movement in a manner reminiscent of how Hitler targeted the Jews in Germany in 1933-35. He has gone so far as to accuse the group, which he has come to see as the most serious threat to his demagoguery, of seeking to shape a “government within the government.” Among the ironies in this is the fact that Gülen has consistently, for five decades,

I have met scores of individuals affiliated with Hizmet - and unless they are all going to the same acting school, they invariably walk the real walk and don't just talk the talk of seeking a better world, by working across sectarian lines with not merely tolerance but love, and through a consistent stream of projects that serve others.

advocated for social Islam, and never for an Islam to be abused in politics—on the contrary, arguing that his followers should support the government, but if it is lacking, seek to shape societal improvements through education and good works, rather than by attacking the government—which is part of why he had supported Erdoğan in the first place.

At the same time as he began leveling anti-Hizmet accusations, Erdoğan initiated a succession of acts that demonstrate how desperate he had become to assert and maintain his authority. I offer a few instances, large and small. Consider the 2013 corruption scandal—in which he spirited hundreds of millions of dollars into his own pockets, and during which his son was recorded asking his father, by telephone, where to place several million that couldn't be hidden away quickly enough. (Did the funds for the enormous, multi-million-dollar palace that he has built for himself fall from heaven?) Consider the 2014 mining disaster in Eastern Turkey, in which Erdoğan hurried to the area, proceeded not to commiserate with but to lambast the miners. When a relative of one of the deceased miners objected to the then-Prime Minister's cruel rhetoric, Erdoğan slapped the man in the face—a simple but highly symbolic act, accompanied as it was by his assertion that nobody dare criticize the national leader.

In a different arena, President Erdoğan is also known to have played a major role in the Mavi Marmara Gaza flotilla catastrophe of May, 2010, which left ten people

dead and relations between Turkey and Israel in tatters. Indeed, when he reached the end of the permissible term limit (three) for a Prime Minister, Erdoğan manipulated the political system not only to become president, but to elevate that role so that he functionally continues as Prime Minister—a page out of Vladimir Putin's book.

All along the way, while he has subverted the rights of Turkish citizens on the one hand and all but destroyed Turkey's relationship with every country with which it had decent relations in the Middle East on the other, he has very publicly tried to look the part of a pious man, praying where he can be seen, (such displays of false public piety would be labelled *shirk* in Islam) and he has with increasing vehemence continued to attack Fethullah Gülen and anyone believed to be associated with Gülen. He has abrogated Turkish law in order to shut down Hizmet's schools—secular schools, that have always followed government guidelines with regard to curricula and conduct—as well as its newspaper and other media outlets. His government has also, periodically, arrested members of the professional Turkish world who support Hizmet.

Nothing but extermination, however, will apparently satisfy Erdoğan's animosity for a man and a movement that stand for everything he is not. So along comes this “failed coup.” Except that there was apparently no leadership behind it, no organization to it, no substantial numbers who were part of it—the oddest

coup in Turkish history (a country with a history of skilled military coups, nearly one a decade until the advent of Erdoğan) or any other country's history. Surprise! Erdoğan has accused the Hizmet movement of fomenting it!

Hizmet's inspiration, Fethullah Gülen, has been living in eastern Pennsylvania since 1999. He came to the United States to deal with a heart ailment, and also because he was accused of trying to foment a coup against the Turkish government at that time. (Erdoğan was similarly accused at that time!) He was exonerated of all charges by the Turkish courts. And what is it that Gülen is all about? He believes that Turkey lost its soul when it became emphatically secular under Atatürk—but he also believes that the way forward is for a Muslim Turkey to be completely open to other faiths, (including atheism); and that a better future for a more perfect world will come through members of diverse faiths, cultures, and ethnicities engaging in dialogue. He has steadfastly asserted that one must work with and through governments, and must never try to undermine them.

Why do I assert this? I have read most of what Gülen has written and have seen the kinds of prior thinkers who have most strongly influenced him—such as Rumi, the thirteenth-century Sufi poet who, although unequivocally a Muslim, nonetheless wrote eloquently of God's embrace of all faiths; and such as Said Nursi, the early twentieth-century thinker who steadfastly refused a place in Atatürk's government, because of his belief in the need to shape a more effective social, not politically abused Islam. I have met Gülen and spoken with him. The need for the mystic to eliminate his ego in order to be filled with God could not be more evident than in his bearing and his being. I have, by now, met scores of individuals affiliated with Hizmet—and unless

they are all going to the same acting school, they invariably walk the real walk and don't just talk the talk of seeking a better world, by working across sectarian lines with not merely tolerance but love, and through a consistent stream of projects that serve others.

Simply put: these people are the opposite of everything that Erdoğan has come to stand for in his ego-ridden, tyrannical, *crush-anyone-who-disagrees-with-me* manner of being-in-the-world. The Hizmet members I know are far less likely to have had anything to do with the so-called coup attempt than he, who will do anything to expand his control and to destroy those who don't agree with him.

All roads point to this as an action shaped by Erdoğan himself to give him the excuse to arrest Hizmet members and demand Mr. Gülen's extradition from the United States. It is perfect, if we allow ourselves to be duped or blackmailed by him.

Erdoğan arrived too quickly on the scene of the "coup" with too large a list all ready, too soon, of those who needed to be arrested for his assertion to smell of anything less than Hitler's actions after the burning of the Reichstag in 1933, which was accomplished by Hitler's followers so that he could accuse his political opponents of having set the blaze and arrest them. Since July, 2016, Erdoğan

has cleaned out the army, the judiciary, the educational system, and the media, of anybody he deems oppositional—and regardless of their politics, (in other words, including secularists hostile to Mr. Gülen) the nearly 200,000 people (and still counting) stripped of jobs and/or in prison are accused of association with the Hizmet movement. As in the darkest days of Stalin's Russia, people disappear into prisons from which they do not return—or return, marked by the torture to which they have been subject—and someone safe today may suddenly find him or herself in danger tomorrow.

Erdoğan has reached beyond his own borders, feuding with Germany, insulting the EU, and providing economic assistance to organizations he claims to be fighting. Conversely, he has blackmailed poor countries from Nigeria to Pakistan where Hizmet has provided schools and hospitals, all but forcing them to eliminate the very people and institutions such countries so desperately need.

I understand why we may need to pretend—still, a year later?—that Mr. Erdoğan saved the democracy that he has steadily subverted—another famous autocrat, Augustus Caesar, claimed in his *Last Will and Testament* that he had saved the Republic of Rome as he drove the last nails into its coffin (and indeed, the Roman senate still existed—as a rubber stamp for the will of the Emperor). Turkey is, it is true, an essential ally, due to geography and our ongoing struggle with the likes of ISIS. But surely we are clever enough not to believe the tale that is—still—being told, or to succumb to Erdoğan's attempted blackmail of Mr. Gülen and his followers. The assertions of someone who emulates a quadrumvirate of Hitler, Putin, Stalin, and Augustus Caesar should hardly govern our response to this moment in history. ■



WAS TURKEY'S COUP FOR REAL?

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Much speculation exists about the coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016. Some even call it a “false-coup,” which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan organized in order to justify a crackdown against oppositionists. There are many other instances when a military tried to remove the civilian head of government. Case studies suggest a pattern, which can be used to evaluate the events in Turkey one year ago.

When conducting a coup, the first action involves capturing or killing the head of government, in this instance Erdogan.

In parallel to killing or capturing the head of government, loyal military and security units must be immobilized to prevent them from obstructing the coup.

Public information is critical. The putschists typically seize control of media so they can manage the flow of information to the public. Traditional media outlets involve radio and television, both public and private. New media include social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

A head of the putsch presents himself so the public can attach a face to the events and find reassurance. If the public protests the coup, mutinous soldiers use all necessary measures to preserve order.

The following occurred in Turkey.

Erdogan was vacationing in Marmaris on July 15. When mutinous soldiers arrived at his hotel to arrest him, Erdogan had checked out and was on his way to Dalaman airport.



Much speculation exists about the coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016. Some even call it a “false-coup,” which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan organized in order to justify a crackdown against oppositionists. According to US Secretary of State John Kerry, “It does not appear to be a very brilliantly planned or executed event.” Kerry has a knack for understatement. It was a botched coup that showed all the hallmarks of incompetence.



The first inkling of the coup occurred in the early evening when mechanized units used tanks to block the Bosphorus Bridge and the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, crossing from the Asian side to the European side of Istanbul. Land forces on the bridge were joined by the gendarmerie.

Prominent members of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) were arrested. Chairman of the General Staff General Hulusi Akar, and Deputy Chief of Staff Yasar Guler were imprisoned at the Akincilar air base on the outskirts of Ankara. Commander of the Land Forces General Salih Zeki Colak, Gendarmerie Commander Galip Mendi, Commander of the Air Force General Abidin Unal, and Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces Bulent Bostanoglu were also taken into custody. Hakan Fidan, head of the National Intelligence Agency, was rushed to a secure location.

TRT, Turkey’s public television, was taken off the air. Soldiers also seized control of *CNN Turk*, interrupting a live broadcast. No private television channels were affected.

Erdogan disappeared during the coup. In the early hours of the morning, he surfaced to address

the nation using FaceTime. He called on followers to take to the streets in defense of Turkey’s democracy.

Imams echoed Erdogan’s appeal. The chant “Allahu akbar” – God is great – reverberated from the muezzins of mosques. Many thousands of supporters went to Ataturk Airport and Taksim Square in Istanbul. They also gathered outside the presidential palace in Ankara.

F-16s controlled by the putschists allegedly bombed the army headquarters and the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA).

Though Turkey’s military has a reputation for efficiency, its actions were poorly considered and badly executed. The coup fell far short of best practices for military takeovers.

How could mutinous soldiers have been unaware of Erdogan’s plans to leave the hotel? Failing to find him was a major gaff that undermined the coup from the outset.

Why wasn’t Erdogan apprehended on his way to the airport before his presidential plane took off? The coup plotters possessed F-16 fighter jets. Why didn’t they

The Turkish government had already prepared lists of oppositionists. The authorities moved immediately to arrest them. To date, about 50,000 security officers and civil servants have been arrested and another 150,000 dismissed from their jobs.

intercept or shoot down Erdogan's plane?

Members of the Turkish General Staff representing major branches of the Turkish armed forces were detained. Was their arrest part of the coup design or was it intended to prevent them from joining the ranks of mutineers?

MIT's Hakan Fidan, was not apprehended. Of all the members of Turkey's national security establishment, Fidan is closest to Erdogan and best positioned to protect the president. Erdogan once called him his "sır küpü," which means 'jar of secrets'.

The putschists never presented themselves to the public, explaining events and offering reassurance.

Why did the coup plotters fail to take over major private networks that most Turks actually watch? Both *TRT* and *CNN Turk* have relatively small viewing audiences.

And why did the coup plotters allow social media to function? They could have jammed coverage, but didn't. It is ironic that Erdogan addressed the nation using FaceTime, a form of social media he vowed to eliminate.

While imams called Erdogan's supporters to the streets, the putschists issued instructions for people to stay indoors. Allowing Erdogan supporters free reign allowed a groundswell of popular support for the president.

Damage to the TGNA was minimal. Crater analysis suggested that explosives inside the building were used, rather than high impact ordinance of fighter jets.

According to US Secretary of State John Kerry, "It does not appear to be a very brilliantly

planned or executed event." Kerry has a knack for understatement. It was a botched coup that showed all the hallmarks of incompetence.

Would Erdogan be so reckless to stage an event that endangered Turkish citizens, killing 265 people? Another theory exists about Erdogan's complicity.

Rather than organize the coup, Erdogan was either tipped off by members of the putsch or by the intelligence agency of a foreign government. Instead of preventing the coup, Erdogan allowed events to progress just far enough so claims of a coup were credible but not so far as to present any real risk.

In his first public remarks during the early morning of July 16, Erdogan issued a chilling threat: "This latest action is an act of treason. This attempt, this move, is a great gift from God for us. Why? Because the move will allow us to clean up the armed forces, which needs to be completely cleaned." In a rush to judgement, he vowed to purge all state institutions of "the virus" spread by supporters of Fethullah Gülen.

The Turkish government had already prepared lists of oppositionists. The authorities moved immediately to arrest them. To date, about 50,000 security officers and civil servants have been arrested and another 150,000 dismissed from their jobs. Approximately 150 journalists are in jail. Members of parliament, judges, and educators have also been dismissed or arrested. Instead of reconciliation, Erdogan arrested another 7,000 people on the one-year anniversary. Erdogan vows to approve a bill reinstating the death penalty if parliament proposed it.

Some say Erdogan is paranoid. But even paranoid people have enemies.

Erdogan was profoundly aware of potential challenges from the TSK. Turkey has a history of military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997. Erdogan was directly affected by the coup of 1997, which outlawed the Refah Party to which he belonged.

To pre-empt challenges, Erdogan pushed through constitutional reforms affecting the Kemalist judiciary. Pro-government prosecutors conjured fantastical plots, Ergenekon and Operation Sledgehammer, which were used to crack-down on retired and current military officers. Arrests sent shock waves through Turkey's security establishment.

Events in Egypt further exacerbated Erdogan's concerns. Erdogan identified closely with Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi as a kindred spirit and fraternal political ally. Morsi was a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and a known Islamist. When Morsi was overthrown by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in 2013, Erdogan feared something similar. He accused the West of masterminding Morsi's removal.

Erdogan was pro-active to prevent a similar fate. Erdogan's purge is called a "civilian coup" or a "controlled coup," because it pervasively eliminated opposition and generated widespread fear in society and professional ranks. An open-ended state of emergency has been used by Erdogan to eliminate the rule of law and systematize repression.

Secrets are hard to keep. Repression is difficult to maintain. Close to two million people rallied in the Maltepe district of Istanbul on July 8. They demand "adalet" -- justice and the rule of law. They want answers. When Erdogan eventually leaves power, Turks and the world will learn what really happened. The truth will come out. ▀

WHAT HAPPENS TO A PURGED FAMILY?



Thousands of families have been devastated due to the crackdown after the July 15. This diagram is an example of what families go through due to unlawful dismissals, detentions, arrests, and tortures since July 2016.

Turkey: A State Under One-Man Rule

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The July 15, 2016, failed military coup in Turkey, among others, has accelerated and strengthened the Erdoğan regime's authoritarianism (albeit the democratic aspiration reflected in the people's resistance against the coup), a process that was set in motion in the aftermath of the December 2013 corruption revelations about the regime. Turkey has been transformed into a state under one-man rule.

How does one explain Turkey relapsing into an increasing authoritarian polity under the very party (AKP) and regime credited with bringing in, between 2002 and 2011, a model of "Muslim Democracy" combining Islam, secularism, democracy, and economic success? Why does Erdoğan remain highly popular despite undermining Turkey's democratic heritage? What are the implications of a growing Turkish authoritarianism for the



stability of the region and the defeat of ISIS?

There are multiple factors that account for the gradual transformation of Turkey into an authoritarian entity under Erdoğan's leadership.

Weak democratic tradition of Turkey

The first factor is the weak democratic tradition of modern Turkey itself. The modern Kemalist Republic was anything but democratic! The "democratic experiment" was at best a series of piecemeal political reforms—the contraction and expansion of which was guided by the ruling regime's desire for survival. Both Kemalist and now AKP governments partook in this charade. For the political class, democracy, like secularism and nationalism, has been a tool of securing state power.

Given this political tradition, and with successive electoral victories between 2002 and May 2013, at all levels of elections, Erdoğan skillfully navigated the Kemalist-dominated political terrain with a combination of support from his own Anatolian Muslim constituency, the tentative support of the Gülen movement, which favored democratic reforms, and the po-

litical goodwill of the European Union, which desired a democratic Turkey. This enabled the AKP government to weaken Kemalist control over state institutions.

Once he began to consolidate his control over the state, Erdoğan came to view democracy, the Gülen movement, and the European Union as obstacles to his unfettered rule.

However, notwithstanding the growing democracy deficit in political governance, the 'Muslim Turkey' or what is called the Black Turks (representing religious, marginalized and discriminated Turkish Muslims under Kemalist rule), continues to provide crucial support. These voters fear the return of "Secular" Turkey, or "White Turks" as represented by the Kemalists, and when the AKP's voter base was disenfranchised. It is mostly elements of this Muslim support base who were at the forefront of resisting the army coup, given the fact that all previ-



ous military coup in Turkey (1960, 1971, 1980, and 1998) ousted Muslim-friendly governments. The government's allegations that the Gülen movement was behind this coup attempt found a receptive audience with these Muslim voters; since the corruption cases of December 2013, the Erdoğan regime has succeeded in portraying the Gülen movement as part of a Western conspiracy to dislodge the AKP government.

The Gülen Movement

The *second* factor in Turkey's authoritarian transition is that the political tradition of Middle Eastern States, including Turkey, does not tolerate the autonomous existence of any other religious-social movement or organization, lest the latter pose a threat to the regime in the future. The Gülen movement, with its Islamic roots, development, autonomous resources, and global networking and presence, is perceived to be a strong threat to the Erdoğan regime and hence needs to be eliminated at the earliest opportunity and context. The December 2013 corruption cases, which the government called a "civilian coup" and the July 2016 failed military coup provided golden opportunities for the government to eliminate the Gülen movement, resulting in the massive purge of state officials, numbering more than 140,000, and the confiscation of resources worth an estimated \$11 billion.

Statism

Thirdly, the State in Muslim Middle Eastern history, including Turkey, enjoys a very high degree of legitimacy on account of an undifferentiated understanding of the State, nation, and community among vast sections of people. Many citizens view the State as the "Benevolent Father or Guardian," especially as personified in a strong individual. Thus it is statism that strongly overlaps with the idea of nationalism, which, in turn, contributes to the legitimiza-

tion of the authoritarian tendency of the State. A crisis of State then easily becomes a crisis of Islam/community that swings the support of people in favor of the State against the perceived internal or external threat.

Political tradition

Fourth, in its public displays of authoritarianism, the Erdoğan-led AKP is also aided by the tradition of political activism that abuse Islam as well as the political tradition of the Turkish State, which seeks to control and dominate all aspects of national life. Beyond a crude instrumentalization of Islam, Islam's ethical and moral perspectives cease to be a factor in its governance. This partly explains the lack of political flexibility in accommodating dissenting voices, including the Gülen movement.

As Erdoğan has moved along the Islamic path of authoritarianism, and with the political ambition of becoming leader of the Muslim world, it has adversely impacted the stability of Turkey—both internally and externally.

Internally, it has deeply fragmented Turkish society along ethnic, sectarian, and religious lines resulting in Turkish-Kurdish, Sunni-Alevi, and Muslim-secular conflicts, even though it has paid good political dividends for the regime. Second, by crushing the Gülen movement, the AKP undermined the Islamic ideational resources needed most to fight Islamic terrorism. Further, by flushing out state officials and silencing all dissenting voices by linking them with the Gülen movement, the PKK, and terrorism, the Erdoğan regime has crippled its administrative capacity to effectively counter the menace of terrorism. No wonder, since 2013, terrorist attacks from many different groups have hit Turkey with greater frequency.

Externally, as Turkey increasingly became part of the "Sunni axis" with Saudi Arabia and Qatar,



and thanks to its political support of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Palestine's Hamas, Turkey further contributed to the Shia-Sunni conflicts in the region. These two actions in part explains Turkey's reluctance to decisively fight ISIS, but so does the AKP's fear of losing support from a section of Turkish Muslims.

Turkey's military foray into Syria, the Euphrates Shield Operation (which started in August 2016 and continued until March 2017), was intended to prevent a Kurdish state from becoming a reality on Turkey's border with Syria. The AKP government was willing to go to any lengths to stop the forma-



Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, Turkey, July 06, 2013.

tion of a Kurdish state, even if that meant resettling the Syrian Arabs living in Turkey into the Kurdish-dominated areas of Jazeera Kobane, Afrin, Manbij, Al-Bab, and Jarablus. The Turkish government would rather do this than to physically liquidate ISIS. In the past, the Turkish government even indirectly supported ISIS to push a section of Syrian Arabs living within Syria into Kurdish dominated areas to change its demographic structure.

In addition, the operation was also meant to end the increasing Turkish isolation and secure its presence on the table of future international negotiation related

to Syria. The AKP government's hypocritical attitude on Syrian migrants is further exposed when it chooses to remain silent on Arab governments closing their gates to Syrian refugees; while mocking European States and accusing them of racism for refusing to accept the Syrian migrants! As the Turkish government increasingly treated ISIS and refugee issues as bargaining tools with Europe and the US, the latter has increasingly come to view the Erdoğan government as an unreliable partner in the fight against terrorism and the promotion of peace and regional stability. Facing isolation and economic stagnation, the AKP govern-

ment quickly moved to mend its ties with Russia and Israel, partly to revive its tourist industry. But it is too late to stem the economic downturn.

In view of the above factors, Turkey's economic prospects and democratic future appear bleak. Rather, one fears a period of increased terror, given the fact that terror and terrorism often grow in the fertile conditions of political authoritarianism, a lack of democracy, and relative cultural and material deprivation.

An earlier version of this article appeared in DNA (Daily News & Analysis), September 23, 2016. ▀

Civil Liberties in the Throes of Turkish Authoritarianism

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Objectivity in political analysis is a luxury often claimed, but rarely earned. Governments, no matter how responsive to public demands, often fall short of the people's expectations and are, therefore, not immune to criticism by the public, the media, or the venomous stings of their political opponents. This is why our analysis must, of necessity, be prefixed with a philosophical perspective on human nature in governance as we identify the oscillating trends between democracy and authoritarianism in Turkey.

We often act as the defendants of our own actions while constantly judging the deeds of others. This gravitational force results in sanctimonious complacency and, at times, holier-than-thou indignation, keeping our perception fogged and our beliefs befuddled. Occasionally, we inquire within to

see if we have striven enough to meet the ideals of our ideas.

Nuanced poetic parlance refuses to be anchored to syntactical constraints or phonemic formalities. It thus helps us color our reasoned thoughts with intuitions, measuring the severity of the perpetual unfurling of our human tragedy. The wondering soul in search of the self seems lost in the thronged landscape of faces aged by suffering—faces masking identities that can no longer discern and discriminate between reason and rhyme.

We come together to manage our affairs in governance. We bridge the divide between the government and the governed by establishing institutions responsive to common concerns. We add a dash of *demos* to the mix to legitimate our government's claim to representation of being of, for, and, by the people.

But more often than not these structures lose the substance they

were meant to contain. Dramas are staged in the market place of legislated demagoguery where political clowns entertain the perplexed public in the circus of circumstance, where puzzled perceptions result from manufactured consent, and where carefully choreographed chronicles called popular elections allow political pundits to bid on our souls. In astonishment we watch those holding the reins of power exploit the naiveté of the misinformed electorate who willingly renounce their rights and liberties.

In the public eye the strength of a polity is measured by its level of legitimacy and the degree of trust people have placed in their government. For this purpose, governments mobilize their populace around causes of common concern—economic, social, political, and otherwise. In that sense, a government depends on grassroots support to implement policy. Successful leaders always

(Left and below) Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, Turkey, June 1, 2013.



stay just one step ahead of those they lead so their followers can walk in their leader's shadow. The leaders stay connected so they can read the pulse of public approval to make sure they deserve to be followed.

In these trying times, such ideals are frequently perceived more in the realm of a desired dream than in the doldrums of a frustrated lived reality. The world is swept by a plague of super-nationalism, neo-fascism, and culturally cloaked terrorism. It's led by bigots, goofballs, and unashamedly outspoken dictators who have hijacked democracies and religious traditions, or both. In essence, their rise to power questions the validity of cultural and human

evolution as they attempt to normalize the abnormal. As heads of state, they cheerlead crowds to hate the other; misogyny is celebrated, and democratic principles, institutions, and traditions are thrashed to glorify nationalism—a reminder of the days not too long ago when the fever and fervor of fascism bathed the human race in blood.

There are, however, a few bright stars like Justin Pierre James Trudeau of Canada and Angela Merkel of Germany who carry the torch of the likes of José Alberto "Pepe" Mujica Cordano of Uruguay, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela of South Africa, Václav Havel of the Czech Republic, and Óscar Arias Sánchez of Costa Rica. They

help keep our hopes alive for humanity's brighter tomorrows.

And then there is the mixed bag of leaders sitting on the fence and sticking their fingers in the air trying to decide which way to go. A case in point is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey.

In or about 2001, two parallel and positive trendsetters arrived on the political stage of the Turkish polity: one sported the mantle of political authority in the name of the Justice and Development Party or AKP; the other was the spiritually inspired Hizmet movement, which modeled a prophetic tradition of service through social mobilization. Through what could convincingly qualify as a renaiss-

Hizmet launched a global humanitarian service movement by sending teachers, doctors, nurses, consultants, and social workers to more than 150 countries around the world. More importantly, Hizmet volunteers exemplified their dedication to humanity's dire concerns by serving in high-risk war zones and troubled spots around the world.





Hizmet Movement opened thousands of schools around the world and developed projects to promote education, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence.

sance, these two entities, among other informal ones, followed independent, but parallel paths to success.

Domestically, the governing and the governed strove for an even more levelheaded approach in bridging the gap between the rural countryside and urban centers, enabling the Turkish government to reach and relate to the concerns of a broader spectrum of the populace. They made a serious effort to bring ethnic minorities into the fold. The government achieved great economic success in raising the living standards of a wide range of the underprivileged and boasted of persistently impressive GNP growth. The government enjoyed a comfortable lead over the opposition and broadening support among the grassroots. Most importantly it successfully wrestled with authoritarian tendencies in some by putting an end to the sequence and sequel of intermittent military interventions that have dotted Turkey's past. The rule of law and the Constitution were respected. Against all odds, this became the new norm.

Regionally, the AKP as a political party and Hizmet as a spiritually inspired social movement presented a practical post-modern Islamist approach to politics, exemplifying political reform and lessening economic disparities. The AKP presented a successful role model for the neighboring Muslim-majority countries as it championed humanitarian causes and paid heed to the regional concerns of the Muslim *ummah* in general. It pursued a constructive rapprochement with the political power centers in the Muslim world. It showed calculated assertiveness in critical political crises vis-à-vis the West, and it proposed bold initiatives vis-à-vis the European community and Turkey's role and/or prospective membership in it.

In parallel but equally successful steps, Hizmet launched a global humanitarian service movement by sending teachers, doctors, nurses, consultants, and social workers to more than 150 countries around the world. More importantly, Hizmet volunteers exemplified their dedication to

humanity's dire concerns by serving in high-risk war zones and troubled spots around the world. They revamped and enhanced Turkey's Islamic spiritual identity and presented it to the world in a new light.

All of this was achieved by ending the decades-long Kemalist secularist order through an effective mobilization of a wide spectrum of Turkey's political opposition, including the considerably large conservative masses as well as liberals, business owners, and celebrities, but more importantly the faith-based communities, such as the Gülen-inspired Hizmet movement.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's role in this political drama was that of the right man at the right time and place. In 2001, when the country was facing a financial crisis, Erdoğan soared to power on the wings of high expectations for political change that paved the way for the AKP's parliamentary election sweep in 2002. Equally important was Erdoğan's pragmatic approach to the core issues of governance in Turkey, i.e. moderating his previous political Islamist stances and prioritizing Turkey's accession to the European Union.

Unfortunately, this unspoken alliance, or more correctly put, commonality of objectives between AKP and the many liberal sectors of the Turkish polity, including the Hizmet movement, did not last. It is said that in governance sustaining progress is more important than achieving it in the first place. For Prime Minister Erdoğan, the euphoria of a long list of achievements was interrupted by the corruption probes of December 2013, which implicated higher-ups in his inner circle in a money laundering scheme.

When the defiant Erdoğan tried to pull the wool over his critics' eyes, some in the broader collation, including the Hizmet

movement, did not align themselves with his authoritarian tendencies, and an irreparable fissure developed in the upper echelons of Turkish politics. Erdoğan's false sense of indignation targeted Fethullah Gülen and the Hizmet movement, becoming the metaphorical trope of a monster that eats its own children.

Had Prime Minister Erdoğan stayed fully engaged in the pursuit of a broader national agenda rather than gravitating towards party politics, the streak of successes would mostly likely have continued. Needless to say, for the AKP the paradigm of power politics had shifted. The government's defiance began to trend towards systemic power consolidation in the person of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This was institutionalized in several stages:

- Restrictions on term limitations were by-passed through a round of musical chairs, a la Putin's Russia, between the office of the prime minister and that of the president.
- A coup was staged as a media blitz to implicate the government's critic, Fethullah Gülen, and his affiliate, the Hizmet movement.
- These acrobatics were used as a pretext to launch what became known as the Turkish purge, firing some 150,000 allegedly Hizmet-affiliated civil servants, imprisoning nearly 50,000 others, confiscating their properties through the closure of their businesses, schools, media syndicates, and press and publication outlets.
- Erdoğan's propaganda machine and his global intelligence network continued to wreak havoc in Turkish communities at home and abroad.

In this manner Erdoğan began to build the mystique of invulnerability around himself under the pretentious cloak of Islam. He also



Strasbourg, France - June 25, 2016: Members of Turkey's Alevi community protesting Erdoğan

Needless to say, for the AKP the paradigm of power politics had shifted. The government's defiance began to trend towards systemic power consolidation in the person of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

distanced himself from the people and the ideals that helped the AKP rise to power.

Regression in the political evolution of any society is regrettable, but it is even more so in the case of Turkey for the following reasons:

A. Turkey may be seen as a bridge between the East and the West, but recently it has played an

even more significant role in offering an alternative to the regressive and repressive authoritarian regimes in the region that feed on religious fanaticism branded as "Islamic."

B. When the AKP was perceived as able to discern between good and evil, this shattered the stereotype of Islam's in-



compatibility with democracy and modernity.

- C. The failure of this forward-looking, practical, and pragmatic regime may well dash the vested hopes of millions of Muslims who are looking for a modern alternative.
- D. The Hizmet movement offered the world community the true peaceful nature of Islam that was cut from the same scriptural block, but sculpted to face today's revisionist reality while defiantly marching ahead as it shattered stereotypes of cultural relativism. In essence,

Hizmet presented a view from the other side as it harkened to the past glory when Islam was the civil and civilizational alternative instead of the violence-prone monstrosity it is being unfairly associated today due to the deliberately frustrated political and social concerns that remain unaddressed in today's Muslim society.

Turkey as an island of stability could sustain some jolts in the tumultuous political landscape of the Muslim world, but its own struggles could be detrimental to the welfare of millions. By harkening to the vast knowledge and experience of past and present politics in the tradition of Muslim political thinkers such as chronicled in Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasat-namah* or Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali's *Nasihah al-muluk*, the current political impasse in Turkish politics could be resolved, as seen through these snippets:

1. Political repression weakens the state, de-legitimizes political dissent, and often radicalizes a moderate opposition.
2. The inability and unwillingness of a political leadership to reach out to those with whom they differ denies a government viable policy alternatives and drives people to extremism.
3. Denying those who follow the law the opportunity to be involved in politics is a hindrance to the democratization of a society. There are many examples of legitimate, law-abiding organizations that have been unfairly excluded from the political process.
4. Muffling the voices of conscience in the nascent free media in the Muslim world, such as the closure of *Zaman* and the threats to *Al-Jazeera*, takes away alternatives to the dominant corporate Western media.


These miscalculations subject the Muslim world to a double tyranny: the suppression of its own governments and the aggression of a global imperial overreach. It is the radicalized Islam that is often supported, armed, and financed by some powers that welcome every excuse for interference and intervention, with the ultimate goal of war profiteering and wealth accumulation. Thus, corrupt and corrupting leaders, intentionally or otherwise, do the bidding of the global militarism.

The old adage applies here: "When the mirror reflects your flaws, correct your deficiency, but don't break the mirror." In the height of hubris, many leaders lose that capacity and they often undo the many good deeds they've done or still plan to do. Will there be a day when leaders faced with some ugly reality can, through a deeper sense of self-awareness, rectify their own behavior, negotiate the treacherous turns in the uncharted turbulent waters, and navigate their way to safe shores instead of drowning themselves?

Such a wishful hypothetical makes a demand on us to see that a democracy is only as good as the degree of its citizens' awareness. The present reality asks whether we, the citizens of this interconnected global community, can remain fully conscious and aware. The global trend of governments deliberately confusing their citizenry through "fake news" makes our democracies even more fake, along with the governments and those that are at the helm. The 21st century challenge for us is how to outmaneuver the government propaganda and brainwashing intended to make us think that what is good for them is actually good for us, when in reality, the befuddled citizenry often votes against its own interests, undermining the people part of the "of, for, and by" of our democracies. ▲

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE NO MORE

THE STEP-BY-STEP DESTRUCTION OF THE RULE OF LAW IN TURKEY



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Judicial independence in Turkey has been dying for a long time, but it was annihilated after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt. A comprehensive portrait of how the country, once a beacon of democratic hope for the Middle East, lost its rule of law requires revisiting the corruption probe of December 2013. This probe implicated then Prime Minister Erdoğan's family and cabinet members; the evidence clearly revealed a scandal involving bribery, smuggling, and violations of UN sanctions against Iran. Instead of allowing the investigation to proceed, Erdoğan fought back, changing the state structure, especially law enforcement and the judiciary, to avoid prosecution.

Erdoğan has taken many steps to obliterate the rule of law and separation of powers, which are the backbone of any healthy democracy. He has done the most damage to the judiciary. Any judge or prosecutor assigned to a case pitting the government against any opposition groups, but especially against the Hizmet Movement, has faced overwhelming pressure from the executive branch to ignore the rule of law and side with the government, regardless of the evidence. Any judge or prosecutor siding with the opposition groups has been dismissed, and many have been arrested and charged with being members of a terror organization, the so-called FETO, a name constructed after US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen.

This meddling by the government has impacted all levels of the judiciary, from first level judges and public prosecutors to military judges, and from members of the State Council and Supreme Court of Appeal to members of the Supreme Constitutional Court. No judge or prosecutor who has decided in favor of opposition groups, and against government claims, remains unpunished.

This article examines some of the most egregious abuses of power the Turkish president has committed in his brazen efforts to consolidate his authoritarian regime.

Establishing project courts – Penal Courts of Peace

The Turkish government has established new project courts (Pe-

Judicial independence in Turkey has been dying for a long time, but it was annihilated after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt.



nal Courts of Peace) just for the investigations and lawsuits against Kurdish and left-wing opposition groups, and especially for those against the Hizmet Movement, which the government blames not just for the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, but for the December 2013 corruption probe. The judges and prosecutors assigned to these new courts are loyal to the government, not the law. Since the Court of Appeals is another Penal Court of Peace, there is a closed-circuit system. Hizmet has become the main target of these courts, for the media outlets and civil society organizations that were affiliated with Hizmet have criticized the government's illiberal policies, as well as its support of groups like ISIS and Al-Nusra. As a result, Hizmet

members have been harassed, arrested, and had their property illegally seized with the help of these decisions.

Restructuring the HSYK (the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors)

After the December 2013 corruption probe, the government placed great importance on electing the members of the HSYK (the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors). The government supported the establishment of a group called Yargıda Birlik Platformu (YBP – Platform for Unity in the Judiciary) before the 2014 HSYK elections. YBP threatened independent and opposition candidates, including those who joined YARSAV, a rival judiciary platform. In the end, the government-backed group won the elections by around 1,000 votes. Independent candidates and YARSAV members have been profiled and almost all of them were discharged and/or arrested after the coup attempt. No evidence has been provided against them.

While independent judges and prosecutors have been targeted and intimidated by the pro-government media and HSYK collaboration, the government has recruited its proponents as judiciary staff. In order to replace more than 4,000 discharged judges, all the interim judges and prosecutors have been assigned to actual duties, regardless of the minimum required duration of service.

The National Security Council and the Red Book

After being elected President, Erdoğan declared the Hizmet Movement a “terrorist organization” in the National Security Policy Document (also known as MGSB or the “Red Book”), which is a classified document discussed by the National Security Council. On May 12, 2015, the President told reporters, “The judiciary will adjudicate per the Red Book from now on.” This meant the courts

would not adjudicate per the Constitution, the laws, and universal norms, but per what is written inside the Red Book, a classified document which is not accessible by or known to the public. It's also not a legal source for law.

About a month after the President's instructions, on June 23, 2015, the Istanbul 5th Penal Court of Peace issued grounds for arrest to be based on the MGSB. On September 8, 2015, the Istanbul Anatolian 3rd Penal Court of Peace cited these grounds in its decision (2015/2983). Several more examples could be given, and they are clear indicators that the judiciary is taking instructions from the executive branch.

Government pressure on the judiciary

The government publicly intervened when two judges released 63 detainees, mostly law enforcement officers who had been involved in investigating the December 2013 corruption probe. Unhappy with the decision, the HSYK started an investigation of these two judges. Nevertheless, President Erdoğan declared on April 26, 2015, that “the HSYK was too late.” The HSYK Chair of the 2nd Office, Mehmet Yılmaz, publicly apologized for being late. During a rally in Gümüşhane province, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu referred to the adjudications as “coup attempts against the government” and stated that “they will never be allowed to put these decisions into practice.” Because of pressure from the executive branch, the decisions to release the detainees were not put into practice and the two judges were arrested. This is the clearest evidence yet of the executive branch intervening in the judiciary (Ref: Venice Commission Declaration on Interference with judicial independence in Turkey, adopted on June 20, 2015).

On May 12, 2015, the HSYK dismissed four public prosecutors and a judge. These persons were executing the December 2013 cor-

ruption investigation. Then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated, “We have returned (the corruption) case to its owners,” referring to the dismissed prosecutors and judge. This statement shows that the dismissal was not decided by HSYK, but by the Prime Ministry.

On May 29, 2015, Can Dündar, Editor-in-Chief of the government-opposed daily *Cumhuriyet*, reported about an event on January 19, 2014, when MIT (Turkish intelligence agency) trucks were stopped trying to transport weapons to opposition groups, including ISIS, in Syria. The government claimed these trucks were carrying humanitarian aid to Turkomans, but the *Cumhuriyet* report showed evidence of weapons inside the trucks.

Following this report, on May 31, 2015, President Erdoğan declared during a live broadcast on state TV channel TRT-1 that:

These slanders against the intelligence agency, these illegal operations, are sort of acts of espionage. This newspaper is also part of this espionage. They give some numbers; what is the source of these numbers? From whom did you get these numbers? From the “parallel state.” I gave instructions to my lawyer and opened a lawsuit. This is a perception management operation on behalf of certain people. The person who wrote this report, I guess, will heavily pay the price; I will not let him away.

On November 26, 2015, Can Dündar and Erdem Gül, Ankara representative of *Cumhuriyet*, were arrested on the aforementioned accusations (espionage and supporting a terrorist organization/parallel state). No evidence was provided, but Can Dündar and Erdem Gül were detained for 92 days and were released by a decision of

the Supreme Court based on freedom of speech, personal freedom, and the right of security. After their release, the President declared:

This incident has nothing to do with freedom of speech. This is an affair of espionage. For me, media cannot have unlimited freedom... I don't abide by the decision. I don't respect it either. This is a decision of release... These steps taken are not the correct steps.

The lower court that had originally ruled against Dündar and Gül acted on the President's advice and overruled the Supreme Court. They sentenced the journalists to five years in prison.

The Supreme Constitutional Court (AYM) has also been targeted by the President and pro-government media over the incident with the MIT trucks. According to a *Cumhuriyet* report dated April 26, 2016, President Erdoğan had a meeting with AYM members concerning their decision on Can Dündar and Erdem Gül. He rebuked them, saying, “Your decision is wrong. Because that matter (the report on MIT trucks) is a national security matter. We were expecting that you would decide by considering our sensitivities.”

Supreme Court, seized

Dr. Alparslan Altan and Dr. Erdal Tezcan were two members of the Supreme Court who voted that the recently established Penal Courts of Peace were against the Constitution. On August 4, 2016, they were discharged based on Statutory Decree No.667, which was issued during the early days of the State of Emergency established after the coup attempt. The decision was not based on solid evidence but on the opinions of other members and the social circle of the two members. Considering that the Supreme Court discharged its own members based on an unlaw-

ful Statutory Decree, and with no solid evidence, one can conclude that the Supreme Court has lost its independence. From now on, applications to it will be ineffective and a waste of time.

The judiciary, seized

Professor of Constitutional Law Ergun Ozbudun spoke at the conference on the Rule of Law held by the Freedoms Research Association in Istanbul on October 15, 2015. In his talk, he stated:

In recent years, the biggest wounds in our democracy are in the judiciary system, judicial independence, and rule of law... The triggering event for regression and deterioration is the December 2013 corruption investigation. A series of laws intended to cover it up has eliminated judicial independence. The first step was the change of laws on law enforcement. Then, the well-known HSYK Law, followed by the law establishing the Penal Courts of Peace, which, I believe, caused the greatest wound... Finally, laws and regulations changing the structure of higher courts in favor of the executive power filled those courts with government loyalists... the seizure of judicial organs or the creation of a dependent judiciary has been successful to a great extent... The duty of the judiciary is not to work in coherence with the executive and legislative powers but to check them...

These comments can be viewed as a summation of what has happened to the Turkish judicial system over the previous 30 months.

Democracy, no more

On May 13, 2016, Rıza Türmen, representative from the main opposi-

tion-party CHP and former European Commission on Human Rights (ECHR) judge, wrote an article on the T24 internet portal. He said:

There is a consensus both inside and outside Turkey that the regime in Turkey is not a democracy any more. It is impossible not to see that Turkey is being driven off a cliff as there's no independent judiciary; basic human rights like freedom of media and speech, and right of assembly, are constantly violated; every criticism is suppressed under the pretext of a "parallel structure" or the "fight with terrorism"; there is rampant fear and oppression; people are dying in a civil war where we know, from international experiences and our own, there will not be a winner; the cities are evacuated; the country is gradually becoming introverted and buried in its darkness. The ruling party also sees it. But they have a "cause" which is more important than everything else: To establish a new religious-based authoritarian Turkey dependent on a single man...

After the Coup Attempt

Immediately following the coup attempt, 2,745 judges and prosecutors were detained based on charges of allegedly being a member of a "terrorist organization," the so-called FETO/PDY. All these judges and prosecutors were also simultaneously laid off by HSYK. With three HSYK decrees, judges were discharged without any notification or right to defend themselves. Approximately 5,000 judges and prosecutors, including those from the military judiciary, the Supreme Court of Appeals, State Council, Court of Auditors, Supreme Court

and other administrative courts, have been discharged. Almost all of them have been detained, except those who managed to escape the country.

It was immediately clear the lists of purged judges were prepared long before the coup attempt. They included the name of Bandırma province prosecutor, Ahmet Biçer, who actually died two months before the coup attempt. The HSYK had published a letter of condolence on May 24, 2016. It is understood that the HSYK either forgot to update the list or believed the prosecutor was supporting the coup attempt from beyond the grave.

The names of judges Metin Özçelik and Mustafa Başer were also in the list, but they had already been detained on April 30 and May 1, 2015. As described above, these judges had decided to release journalist Hidayet Karaca, head of a Hizmet-affiliated media group, and the police officers in charge of the December 2013 corruption investigation.

Public prosecutors Süleyman Bağrıyanık, Aziz Takçı, Özcan Şişman, and Yaşar Kavacıklıoğlu were also on the list. These prosecutors, who were involved in the investigation into the MIT trucks allegedly carrying weapons to Syria, had already been laid off by the HSYK on January 15, 2015. It is evident that HSYK had forgotten to remove their names from the list.

There are countless more examples – like judge Kemal Karanfil, who had applied to the Supreme Court for the cancellation of the law establishing Penal Courts of Peace based on their violation of the fair trial principle. It is understood that these citizens, and especially public servants, were profiled for years by MIT, and files were prepared on each democratic and liberal judge, prosecutor, academician, and military or civil bureaucrat. The coup provided the pretext for

dismissing opponents of the government.

The Turkish General Staff reported on its website that the coup attempt started on the evening of July 15, 2016, and was not completely suppressed throughout the country until 4 pm on July 17, 2016. If these lists had not been prepared in advance, the HSYK members should explain how they could identify the names of these judges and prosecutors, as well as private information about them, including their addresses and their spouses, by the morning of July 16, 2016, while the coup attempt was still on-going.

Higher courts, seized

Higher courts have also been captured by the government. All the members of the Supreme Court of Appeals and State Council were discharged by a law ratified by the President on July 23, 2016. Afterwards, 25% of the State Council members were appointed by the President and the rest were selected from among pro-government YBP members. In September 2016, the State Council 5th Office was identified as the court overseeing the cases of the dismissed judges and prosecutors. Thus, there is no impartial or independent court left in compliance with European Commission on Human Rights criteria.

Conclusion

All of Turkey's judiciary organs have been captured through the actions of the executive branch, the HSYK, and the media. More than 4,000 judges and public prosecutors have been detained or discharged in the witch hunt following last summer's attempted coup. In such an environment, it is impossible for any judge or prosecutor, including those on the Supreme Court, to decide in favor of defendants in lawsuits related to the Hizmet Movement or other opposition groups. The independent judiciary is dead in Turkey. ▀

Erdoğan's Fight against the Hizmet Movement &

THE DEMISE

OF TURKISH STATE RATIONALITY

SAGE CHEN

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Graft probes in 2013 implicated four top ministers from Erdoğan's inner circle: (front row, from left) Egemen Bağış - Minister of EU Affairs; Muammer Güler - Interior Minister; Erdoğan Bayraktar - Environment Minister; and Zafer Çağlayan - Economy Minister.

Below. Reza Zarrab, the Iranian businessman who is in the center of Turkish graft probes. He is now under arrest in New York.



Since the corruption scandal of December 2013, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has waged an all-out war against the Gülen (or Hizmet) movement. The anti-Gülenist campaign started with the closing of private tutoring centers operated by members of the movement and was followed by the jailing and mistreatment of journalists, bureaucrats, and businessmen who were claimed to have connections with the movement. The operation has become Erdoğan's main source of legitimacy in recent years. Erdoğan has not only utilized the brute force of the state apparatus, but also the soft power of manipulation and propaganda, to suppress and criminalize the movement and tarnish its reputation around the world.

Erdoğan's strategy against the Gülen movement can be characterized by "the Diversionary Theory of War" in political science, according to which leaders generate foreign policy crises to divert the public's attention from discontent with their rule and to bolster their political fortunes through a "rally 'round the flag." By exploiting existing religious and ethnic cleavages and dubbing some civil society organizations, including the Gülen movement, as national

security threats, Erdoğan has long chosen to rule on dissonance and difference and has practiced the Diversionary Theory of War within domestic politics through the demonization of domestic actors.

A prime example of tactic in Erdoğan's policy was his classification of the Gülen movement as a terrorist organization. By equating the movement with radical terrorist organizations such as ISIS [1], he hoped to shatter and alter the favorable global perception of the movement and its activities.

However, this intense psychological and rhetorical warfare did not serve any purpose but to harm the country's credibility abroad, as the categorization of the movement as a terrorist organization was found to be irrational and inconsistent with Erdoğan's former attitudes toward it. His fight against the movement has been perceived as a continuation of his power games and as an indication of his increasing authoritarianism in the country [2].

Erdoğan's diversionary political tactics are also reflected in his portrayal of foreign actors. For example, in order to appeal to his voter base, the conservative and nationalist masses within Turkey, he recently claimed that a new type of crusade has started between Christian Europe and the



Islamic Middle East, between the cross and the crescent [3]. This is both anachronistic and antagonistic that does nothing but consolidate his power through the fictitious creation of an enemy. It undermines the dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Turkey, and between the East and the West in general.

Which Erdoğan is the real Erdoğan? Is it the one expressing this antagonizing and polarizing worldview or the one who founded the alliance of civilizations in 2005, in an effort to defuse the tensions between the Western and Islamic worlds? The answer is neither, for there are various types of Erdoğans, each fitting a different situation. For instance, the Erdoğan of 2005 was a reformist which gained him the support of Liberals and EU advocates. This support translated into electoral victories and prestige abroad. Whereas the Erdoğan of the 2010s has been extremely concerned and worried about his authority and charisma, in part due to the corruption scandals and newly emerged foreign policy issues. The Erdoğan of the 2010s has been adamant and determined to go back to the classical strategy of divide-and-rule.

His rhetoric over the last half decade is a sign of this shift in political stratagems. His language is telling: *“The country is in an all-out war and surrounded by internal and external enemies”*; *“the world is on the verge of a new series of crusades”*; *“the Gülen Movement is the fifth column and the extension of such dark forces that are striving to undermine the state and fabric of Turkish society.”* Erdoğan is the epitome of Machiavelli’s ideal leader as he is, at most, concerned with his own political career and personal image rather than the image of the country in the international arena. He may appear to be subscribing to a Manichean world-



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view where history is perceived as a struggle between good and evil, between the divine and evil forces, but this is a sleight of hand. His nod to this Manichean view of the world is predicated upon his characterization of events, actors, and personalities as either favorable or unfavorable to his political interests. The good is what serves his political interests and the bad is what risks and dooms his political fortunes, a moral approach

that is neither embedded in religious nor secular understandings of morality.

Even though, Erdoğan has been relatively successful delegitimizing and suppressing the Gülen movement within Turkey by sidelining and subjugating the judiciary and state institutions, the dramatic shift in his attitudes towards the movement has confused the international community [4]. Erdoğan’s last visit to



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the United States on May 16, 2017, when he came hoping the U.S. would declare the Gülen movement a terrorist organization, was even more surprising in that regard. His hopes were in vain, however, as President Trump consciously avoided characterizing the organization and its activities as detrimental to American society. This was indicative of the fact that President Erdoğan was having a hard time justifying his enmity towards the movement to others and was losing credibility in the eyes of international actors.

Despite all of this, why does Erdoğan adamantly persist in his global psychological warfare against the movement? The answer is quite simple. He wants neither to win nor lose this psychological battle, but rather wants the Turkish public to believe that he is in an all-out war against the enemies of the state, embodied by the Gülen movement in the form of a so-called parallel state. What Erdoğan means by “the protection of the state” is not the protection of democracy, nor the protection of rule of law, nor the protection of the separation of powers; rather,

he means the protection of his firm monopoly on power.

This manufacturing of pseudo-domestic and foreign enemies, and the promotion of a political culture saturated by existential threat narratives, has disillusioned the public about the meaning of elections in the country. Over the last five years, the public has constantly been under the impression that they were not making a choice between different political parties in the elections, but rather between whether the country would maintain its existence – by providing Erdoğan with another election victory – or submit itself to chaos and destruction. This way of framing the elections, coupled with intense pro-government propaganda and the banning of many liberal and critical newspapers, media outlets, and social media platforms such as Twitter, and even Wikipedia, has left almost no room for political dissent, resistance, and advocacy on the part of civil society.

In a nutshell, Erdoğan's divisive political rhetoric and his attempts to foster anti-Gülenist sentiments have perfectly served his own political interests within the country, but they have not served the country's interests in the international arena, as they raise serious doubts about the credibility and rationality of the state as embodied in Erdoğan's personality. ▲

Notes

1. <http://www.newsweek.com/Erdoğan-says-Gülen-kurds-and-isis-are-preparing-invasion-turkey-487120>
2. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2017-02-01/turkeys-recep-tayyip-Erdoğan-moves-aggressively-against-dissent>
3. <http://www.dw.com/en/Erdoğan-accuses-eu-of-crusade-against-islam/a-37979126>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-eu-headscarf-ban-court-justice-ruling-erdogan-clash-islam-christianity-cross-crescent-a7633276.html>
4. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-germany-idUSKBN16POLQ>

WHAT ON EARTH HAS GONE SO WRONG IN TURKEY?



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One year after the mysterious coup attempt of July 15, the situation in Turkey has become much clearer. Unfortunately, it has also become much darker. In the confusing hours of

that terrible night, President Erdogan's declaration upon landing in Istanbul that, "This uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to cleanse our army," was both enigmatic and foreboding. In the hours that followed, he sought to bring clarity

to the confusion by alleging that a previously consistently pacifist civil society movement was in fact a terrorist organization and had been behind the coup attempt. At that moment, Erdogan had the empathy and attention of not just his nation but the global commu-

nity. No one wants to see a military coup succeed and a democracy toppled – especially not when this democracy represented the hopes of the greater Middle East and entire Muslim world.

Whatever the circumstances of the coup, the president's insistence on needing to root out the shadowy forces behind it were hard to argue with. In the days that followed, however, it quickly became clear that whatever prior knowledge Erdogan might have had of moves against him, he was well prepared with a very long list of people and institutions that, he insisted, needed to be purged.

If his attribution of blame to an unlikely religious civil society network beggared belief, even stranger was the extent and scope of the post-coup purge. Almost half of the military flag officers, the generals and admirals, were purged, along with one third of the judiciary, and thousands of academics, including every single dean and university president. The rate of sackings, detentions, and arrests in the first ten days after the coup attempt was breathtaking. The regime made no pretense of needing to investigate; it simply asserted guilt by association with the "terrorists," and quickly and methodically rounded up "known enemies."

The purges began even as the coup attempt was being squashed, with the president urging crowds to take to the streets and stare-down the opposition. The response quickly took on the character of a witch hunt as neighbors, colleagues, and family members were urged to turn in the guilty, however slender the pretext. The accused were all declared guilty of supporting FETO, the pejorative term used to describe followers of exiled Sufi cleric Fethullah Gülen, even though many of those targeted in the purges, especially in the military, police, judiciary, and media were clearly Kemalist or

leftist secularists with no religious affiliations of any kind. In the months that followed the net was widened to include Kurdish activists and prominent dissidents of all stripes. Guilt simply required being linked, in some way, with the "FETO coup plotters," but no evidence or explanation was given. By year's end, when the parliamentary commission to investigate the events of July 15 would be abruptly disbanded leaving behind many unanswered questions, the contradictions had piled up in accounts from officials of what had occurred.

After a year, the numbers purged are staggering – and are still growing by the week: over 124,000 people have been sacked, and of these, more than 84,000 have been detained. Around 60,000 people have been formally arrested. The number of academics sacked is now around 7,000 and they are joined by over 4,300 judges and prosecutors. Almost all of Turkey's independent media outlets, in excess of 195, have been shut down, and over 200 journalists arrested. More than 2,100 schools, universities and associated colleges and dormitories have been shut down. And over 550 businesses, with tens of billions of dollars in assets, have been seized.

Within days of the coup attempt, the extent to which president Erdogan would "make good" on his "God-given opportunity" to cleanse and purge became clear as he declared emergency rule and suspended parliamentary government. It soon became evident, however, that he was focused not on national security, but on consolidating personal power. A measure of how far Turkey has fallen came on the 21st of October, when the World Justice Project (WJP) *Rule of Law Index 2016* was released. Turkey had plummeted to 108th place out of all 113 countries surveyed in terms of constraints on government powers and fundamental rights.





Erdogan had begun to act in a more overtly authoritarian fashion after the Gezi Park protests of mid-2013 and the corruption allegations against him which surfaced in December 2013.

By November, all hope for a quick return to democracy was lost. On the 4th of November, nine parliamentarians from Turkey's third largest political party, the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), were arrested in the wake of a series of purges against ethnic Kurdish organizations. Across the country, access to social media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp – was blocked, and in the Kurdish southeast access to the internet as a whole was cut-off.

On the 8th of November, President Erdogan and his increasingly authoritarian and Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) lodged criminal complaints against Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the country's second largest party, the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), as well as other senior MPs. They were accused of making gross insults against the president. In a statement the previous day that had triggered the legal action the CHP said that, "Turkey is now going through a dark and authoritarian coup staged by the presidential palace." The hitherto compliant

left-of-center CHP issued the statement after an emergency party meeting called in response to the arrest of the HDP MPs and the October 31st detention of the editor-in-chief and eight other senior journalists of the sole remaining significant opposition newspaper, *Cumhuriyet* (the *Republic* – a paper closely aligned with the CHP). The statement added, "The current political situation poses a serious threat against the freedom of our people and future of our country."

On the same day, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn said of the purges, "These are methods, one must say this bluntly, that were used during Nazi rule. And there has been a really, really bad evolution in Turkey since July that we as the European Union cannot simply accept."

Even before these events, on November 1st, the *New York Times* editorial team was sufficiently concerned about the situation in Turkey to write that, "The United States and Europe are horrified that Mr. Erdogan has strayed so completely from the track he was on when he first became the Turkish prime minister

in 2003 and was hailed for building a model Muslim democracy." In the eyes of one of the world's most respected newspapers, the situation was unambiguous:

"What is unnerving in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's march to authoritarianism is how dismally familiar it is: the coup that becomes a pretext for a massive roundup of real and imagined enemies; the claims to be the one man who can withstand the onslaught of foreign foes; the invocation of purported historical slights; the silencing of the news media. The world has seen this before in other countries. The pattern is tried and true; the tough question is how to break it."

At the same time, German Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth said his country would willingly accept asylum requests from Turks. He said Germany is "open to all those politically persecuted as a matter of principle."

Finally, in its November 12th issue, *The Economist* published an article entitled 'While you were watching Trump...Turkey locks up dissidents: President Erdogan keeps on purging.' The article concluded with the line, "Turkey's democracy is on life support. Mr. Erdogan is holding the plug."

What was happening in Turkey was not lost upon friendly governments. Even as the coup-attempt was unfolding, there were reports of international intelligence agencies intercepting transmissions which suggested that the coup-attempt was being seized upon to consolidate the president's authority.

This was not entirely unexpected. Erdogan had for some years begun to act in a more overtly authoritarian fashion. The decline began with the Gezi Park protests of mid-2013 and the serious corruption allegations against Erdogan and his family which surfaced in December 2013.

In August 2014 Erdogan had transitioned from the office of

prime minister, where he had substantial formal authority, to the office of president, where his formal authority was largely symbolic and insubstantial. From the outset he made it clear that he intended to push through a constitutional referendum that would confer upon the office of president extensive executive authority. Achieving this required the AKP to perform strongly in the 2015 general election, held in June.

Despite Erdogan's creeping authoritarianism, as recently as these elections, most observers inside and outside of Turkey were optimistic that Turkey's democratic cultural institutions would overcome the turbulence caused by one man's ambitions, and would self-correct. Unfortunately for Erdogan – and, it turned out, Turkey – the June 2015 election results saw the AKP losing support and dropping to just 40% of the popular vote, whilst at the same time the HDP Kurdish party finally crossed the 10% threshold required to take seats in parliament.

Tensions between the government and the large Kurdish minority were already high. On June 5th, just two days before the election, four people were killed and dozens injured when twin bomb blasts rocked a HDP election rally in Diyarbakir in Turkey's Kurdish southeast. No actor claimed credit for the attacks but suspicions fell on both the PKK and ISIS. The next day, a young Kurd, Orhan Gonder, was arrested. He was from the southern Turkish town of Adiyaman, less than 200 km north of the ISIS capital of Raqqa. Later reports confirmed that he, like many in Adiyaman, had been recruited by ISIS, and, after spending months with terrorist group in Syria, had been sent back to carry out the bombing of the HDP rally. Erdogan responded to the provocation of the Diyarbakir attack by resuming hostilities against the PKK, as ISIS had hoped that he would do. The



Erdogan locked up many dissidents from all fronts, including members of parliament. Selahattin Demirtaş, the co-chair of the Kurdish People's Democratic Party and MP, is behind bars since November 4, 2016. More recently, Enis Berberoğlu, MP from the CHP party, and Celal Çelik, the attorney of CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, have been arrested.

resumption of open violence between the Republic and the Kurdistan workers party (PKK) was a clear harbinger of trouble to come.

When a coalition government couldn't be formed – this “failure” was demanded by Erdogan – snap parliamentary elections were set for November 1st, 2015. This vote was marred by irregularities and threats to free expression. The results, however, were very mixed for the AKP government. On the one hand, it succeeded in getting its popular vote back to almost 50%, where it had been at the height of its powers. On the other hand, the HDP, which the government accused of being closely linked with the PKK, managed to remain above the 10% threshold required to keep its parliamentarians in office. This meant that the path to a referendum that would confer upon Erdogan true executive powers continued to be blocked. It is not surprising then that the first half of 2016 witnessed a steady slide towards authoritarianism,

with major media outlets such as *Zaman* newspaper and *Samanyolu* television being seized by the government, while trustees were being assigned to schools and businesses. Many of the media outlets and schools were supposedly linked to the Hizmet movement, inspired by Fethullah Gülen, which Erdogan accused of trying to overthrow his government even before the coup attempt. By now it was very clear the Turkish democracy was ailing as Erdogan was determined to let nothing stop on his way. The crack-down on schools and businesses linked to the Gülen Hizmet movement surprised outside observers who simplistically described Gülen as “a former ally” of Erdogan sympathetic to his Islamist politics. In reality, Gülen was never close to Erdogan and resisted Erdogan's attempts to co-opt his support. He also rejected Islamism and advocated democracy as being more true to Islamic values.

Erdogan recognized that the Hizmet was far and away Turkey's

largest civil society movement and that respect for Gülen’s religious authority unparalleled. He was desperate for Gülen’s public support but knew that Gülen’s sufistic, apolitical orientation was at odds with his own fundamentalist, Islamist convictions. Nevertheless, Erdogan’s AKP attracted many of the same small-town conservative, religious Turks that were drawn to the Hizmet. And throughout its first decade of the AKP government benefited from strong support from the broader Hizmet community, who saw in it Turkey’s best hope for reform as well as respect for religious values.

The simmering tensions between the Hizmet and the AKP, which finally erupted in 2013 with the Gezi Park protests, came not from the grass-roots but from the highly educated intellectuals who served in Hizmet-linked universities, civil society organizations and media outlets. For ten years, they had uncritically promoted the AKP government but slowly came to recognize that it fell short of the commitment to clean government and democratic reform that they had projected on to it. As they began to speak out tensions gave way to open confrontation.

At the end of 2013 Erdogan was rocked by a ten-billion-dollar “gas for gold” scandal. On December 17, whilst the prime minister was on a state visit to Pakistan, 52 colleagues and associates were arrested, accused of assisting Iranian businessman Reza Zarrab in exchanging Iranian natural gas with gold bullion, in contravention of international sanctions. Four days later 14 further arrests were made and eventually a total of 91 were taken into detention. Prime Minister Erdogan, already smarting from critical reporting over the Gezi Park protests, was incensed by “treasonous” reporting on the corruption investigations by *Zaman* and *Samanyolu*. He responded by declaring the



Placard depicts Erdoğan allowing ISIS terrorists through Turkish borders to fight against Kurds in Syria.

corruption investigation to be a “judicial coup” and ordered the issuing of government decree on January 7 that saw 350 investigating police officers purged. He accused Fethullah Gülen and “international conspirators” of being a nefarious plot to destabilize his government.

Subsequent allegations of supplying weapons to jihadi fighters in Syria and of buying ISIS oil were also met with harsh crackdowns on the media outlets and journalists responsible. In 2015 it was the secular *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) newspaper that broke the news of the Turkish intelligence agency MIT being involved in the supply of weapons to jihadi militia in Syria.

Even without the “gift from God” that was the July 15th coup-attempt, President Erdogan had no trouble steadily consolidating his

power. His Western allies, though deeply concerned, had little choice but to watch on quietly and say little. The Turkish military, after all, was the second largest military in the NATO alliance – and this alliance was facing one of its greatest challenges in modern times, as it dealt with the horror of the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS in northern Syria and Iraq. Turkey was viewed as an important bulwark against the terrorist group.

This conflict, of course, not only saw hundreds of thousands of lives lost, but five million Syrians forced out of their homes. Turkey, to its credit, accommodated almost three million of these refugees. Nevertheless, many sought to find asylum in Europe, and Turkey became the key to regulating the flow of asylum seekers flooding across the continent.



At the same time, Russia, which had severed ties with Turkey over the shooting down of a Sukhoi Su-24M ground attack jet, by Turkish F16s above the Turkish-Syrian border on the 24th of November 2015, had begun to make overtures of rapprochement. In the wake of the July 15th coup attempt, Vladimir Putin reached out to Erdogan offering solidarity and practical friendship in the midst of trials. Suddenly, the prospect of Turkey turning its back upon Europe and the West became an immediate reality. The fact that most of the long serving Turkish generals working in NATO headquarters became victims of the purge along with fellow Western orientated generals back at home raises the real possibility that Turkey might even withdraw from NATO.

Given this precarious predicament, Turkey's Western allies have

been mostly muted in their criticism of the developments in Turkey – doing their utmost to keep the NATO alliance intact and to prevent everything from unraveling. By November, however, even this dynamic was not sufficient to mute the expressions of deep concern. The scale and nature of the purge was such that European officials began to draw parallels between what was happening in Turkey in 2016 and what had happened in Germany 80 years earlier.

When the civil war in Syria broke out in 2011, and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) transitioned into the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Erdogan chose to turn a blind eye to the thousands of foreign terror fighters flooding through Turkey into Syria, believing that support for ISIS and other radical Islamist militia was the lesser of the evils so long as Bashar al-Assad, his erstwhile friend, refused to take his advice and step aside.

Under strong pressure from NATO partners, Turkey reversed its position in early 2015 and began to strongly oppose ISIS. Then, in mid-2016, Turkey swung again and aligned with Russia against the Salafi Jihadi militia in East Aleppo. This development in the second half of last year angered many in Turkey and appears to have been the motivation behind the December 19th assassination of the Russian ambassador to Turkey by a young police officer who reportedly had strong connections to Erdogan's AKP party and had worked on numerous occasions in the president's security detail. The incongruity of this is partly explained by the fact that even as Erdogan turned away from supporting Islamist extremists in Syria, he continued to use the rhetoric of Islamist extremism to bolster domestic support against those he accused of being behind the attempted coup.

This shooting wasn't the only attack, as the last year has seen

dozens of shootings and bombings committed by both ISIS and the PKK. Such attacks have been more frequent due to the shakeups in the Turkish military and police forces. The practical implication of these crackdowns has been that just as Turkey faces its severest challenges from both Kurdish and Islamist terrorist networks, it is at its weakest point in terms of capacity for counterterrorism.

This goes some way to explaining how the gunman at the Reina nightclub was able to not only shoot his way into the club and murder dozens, but was then able to make his escape and disappear before being confronted by police. The ruthless efficiency of this killing spree meant that he was in-and-out in 10 minutes. It suggests that the gunman likely had back-up support and almost certainly had combat experience.

On this occasion, and during the nine attacks previously thought to have been the work of ISIS, the primary victims were not from the more religious half of Turkish society that strongly supports AKP and Erdogan. Indeed, the first attack in June 2015 was on ethnic Kurds campaigning for the June elections and appears to have been designed to restart open conflict with the PKK.

There is every indication that Erdogan has used these attacks to justify his demand to be given strong executive powers, which he obtained with the referendum in April 2016. The media blackout that came immediately after this and previous attacks suggests that he would rather not confront the problem of radical Islamism. But if he thinks that ISIS can be contained and controlled, then he, and Turkey, are in for a year of further nasty surprises. The sad reality in Turkey today is that the collapse of democratic good-governance has made Turkey more vulnerable than ever to threats that even strong democracies struggle to contain. ▀

NO RETURN FROM DEMOCRACY

Democracy in the Thought of Gülen and Erdoğan's Politics

FARUK MERCAN

Turkish journalist and writer

Many countries around the world are facing a crisis of democracy. With authoritarianism on the rise, countries from Asia to Europe to the Americas are grappling with critical choices about government, minority rights, and the rule of law.

Foremost among these countries is Turkey. Once a shining example of a democracy in the Islamic world, recent years have seen Turkey fall further and further into authoritarianism. As it has happened, many people have turned to the renowned Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen for his insights into his native country. In *No Return from Democracy*, a recently published book, Gülen's thoughts on countless issues – from *Islam and Democracy* to *Minorities and Their Rights*, and *Terrorism and Jihad* to *Dialogue and Coexistence* – have been gathered together in one place. His insightful, urgent analyses address both global problems and schisms unique to Tur-

key, such as *The Kurdish Question* and the *Alevi-Sunni Divide*.

No Return from Democracy was first published in its Turkish edition in February 2016. The purpose was to reflect Fethullah Gülen's views on diverse topics, including Islam and democracy, politics, terrorism, jihad, Western civilization, women and human rights in Islam. What did Gülen say on some of the crucial issues in his interviews that spanned 25 years? The book was supposed to present a survey of his thoughts and highlight their importance in relevance to the time he voiced his ideas.

Five months after the book was published, a coup attempt took place in Turkey on the night of July 15, 2016. Only three hours later the incident started, President Erdoğan claimed it was Gülen who was behind the coup. The following days, Fethullah Gülen had multiple press conferences in Pennsylvania and wrote op-eds for many newspapers from around the world. Gülen answered claims about the coup and



explained the background to his dispute with Erdoğan. He asked for an international committee to investigate who really were behind this coup attempt. He said he would comply with the decision of such a committee. Gülen said he was always harmed by all the four military coups in the past, and that he always stood against such interventions.

In 1994, when Gülen had said that there was no going back from democracy, politically active radical groups targeted him to the point of excommunicating him from Islam. In the same period, when Erdoğan was the mayor of Istanbul, he openly opposed the European Union, and said, "Democracy is like a streetcar. When we come to our stop, we get off. Democracy is not a purpose; it is an instrument" [1].

In 2017, Erdoğan is accusing Gülen of toppling democracy.

Who is right?

Gülen said, Erdoğan does not believe in democracy, destroyed all democratic progress of Turkey, and staged this coup to consolidate his oppressive regime in Turkey. In his interview with Fareed Zakaria, Gülen reminded that Erdoğan defined the coup attempt as "a gift of God":

"It looks more like a Hollywood movie than a military coup. It seems something like a staged scenario. It is understood from what it is seen that they have prepared the ground to realize what they have already planned."

Gülen told Fareed Zakaria his firm stance against military interventions:

"In every coup d'état, I the poor have been adversely affected. I have always been against coups, since I have spent my entire life with coups and pressures. I have the opinion that nothing good will come out of coups. Coups will divide, separate, disintegrate and make people the enemy of each

other. This animosity will also affect future generations, just like it is in Turkey now. In this regard, as the common sense requires, I have always been against coups, and I curse them. I would curse people who resort to coups against democracy, liberty, republic. This is my general opinion."

In almost all interviews, Gülen was asked about his past relationship with Erdoğan:

"Is it true that you and President Erdoğan were once friends and allies? If so, what caused the tensions between you that have led to this situation today?" Gülen's response to this question by *Politico*, a journal published in the US, is as follows:

"Many observers called our relationship an alliance but in truth, we were never very close. I met him two or three times, all before he ran for elections. When his party ran for elections I was already here (US), so I could not vote anyway, but Hizmet sympathizers supported his party through their votes and their voices in the media. The reason for this support is not complicated. In going into elections in 2002 they [Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party] promised moving Turkey forward in its bid for European Union membership by implementing democratic reforms; enhancing human rights and freedoms; better integrating Turkey with the world; ending public corruption, and government's political profiling of people and their discriminatory measures. I and my friends supported them for these promises. Leading into elections in 2011, they prom-

ised a democratic constitution that would be drafted by civilians without fear of military generals. But after winning that election they began to reverse every democratic reform they implemented before. The democratic constitution was first conditioned upon the inclusion of executive presidency and then completely forgotten." (September 9, 2016, *Politico*, Fethullah Gülen: "I don't have any regrets").

In his interview with *Politico*, Gülen pointed to another major reason for the dispute he was having with Erdoğan was the executive presidency system the latter was trying to bring to the country. For Gülen, this was something like a "sultan regime."

"In the past, I did support the idea of a presidential system if it is to be modeled after the U.S. or France or other countries where there are checks and balances against the president. But Erdoğan's proposal was akin to a sultan regime. I could not support such a system with a clear conscience. Erdoğan put pressure on me and Hizmet sympathizers to publicly support his idea of a presidential system. He increased the pressure by supporting government-funded alternatives to Hizmet institutions and then began threatening to close them down. If we complied with his demand and became loyalists, we would be enjoying the Turkish government's favors now. But we declined and we have been facing their wrath for the last three years. This might be called the price of independence. It is a heavy price indeed but I don't have any regrets and I don't believe

In 1994, when Gülen had said that there was no going back from democracy, radical groups targeted him to the point of excommunicating him from Islam. In the same period, when Erdoğan was the mayor of Istanbul, he openly opposed the European Union, and said, "Democracy is like a streetcar. When we come to our stop, we get off. Democracy is not a purpose; it is an instrument."

any of my friends have any regrets. My only sorrow is that the country continues to suffer because nobody can stand against his uninhibited ambitions.” (September 9, 2016, *Politico*, Fethullah Gülen: ‘I don’t have any regrets).

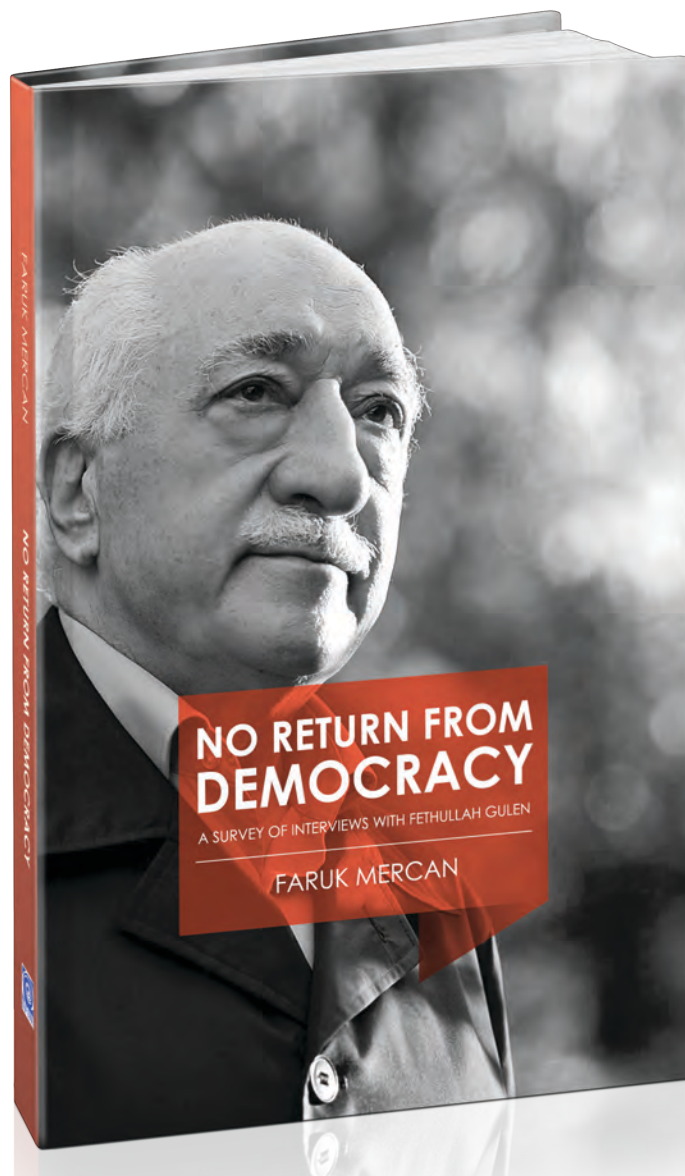
Erdoğan’s u-turn from democracy since 2011 was perhaps best illustrated on the cover of *The Economist* (June 8, 2013), which was featuring Erdoğan wearing the robe of a Sultan and the title read: Democrat or Sultan? Those were the days when a huge protest was underway against Erdoğan for his plan to build a shopping center on one of the symbolic parks in the very heart of Istanbul, known as Gezi Park. The brutal police intervention left behind 6 dead, 10 lost sight, 7,500 wounded. 5 thousand people were detained [2].

It appears that the international community are putting side by side both Gülen’s and Erdoğan’s track records on democracy. When in 1990s political radicals considered discussions of democracy forbidden, Gülen argued that Islam and democracy were compatible, and there was no return from democracy. Gülen’s consistency in his views over time certainly must have a positive effect in his record.

Gülen’s views on Islam and democracy are the cornerstone of *No Return from Democracy*. Other topics discussed portray his thoughts on modernism, laicism, Western civilization and values, politics, fundamental human rights and freedoms, Islam and women, dialogue and coexistence, terrorism and jihad, the Kurdish issue, Alevism and Sunnism, minorities and their rights.

Gülen’s comments around these topics also shed light on two things: What kind of a world does Gülen desire? Why does Erdoğan want to annihilate Gülen and the Hizmet Movement he represents?

For example, in 1997, Gülen expressed his views on religion and



politics. “The politicization of religion is dangerous, but it is much more dangerous for religion than it is for the regime, as it means sully-ing the spirit of religion.”

After the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when many looked to the Islamic world for a voice of peace, Gülen said “A Muslim cannot be a terrorist and a terrorist cannot be a Muslim. A person cannot go to heaven by killing a person.”

A required reading for those interested in the plight of modern Turkey or seeking solutions to the world’s seemingly intractable problems, this book invites the reader to a journey through the horizons of all that Gülen has said in relation to these issues for more

than two decades. Readers looking for hope will find solace in Gülen’s faith in democracy, the rule of law, and universal human rights. Gülen has never stopped believing that the way forward is not through violence and division, but through love, respect, and dialogue. If humanity adheres to these timeless values, then there truly will be *No Return from Democracy*. ▲

Notes

1. Interview with Erdoğan on July 14, 1996, *Milliyet* newspaper.
2. Four years later, on April 15, 2017, *The Economist* was published with a new cover: “Turkey’s slide into dictatorship.” Sultan Erdoğan was on his path to become a dictator.

REPORTS ON THE COUP ATTEMPT AND THE PERSECUTION IN TURKEY

The following reports by various international organizations reveal the level of persecution and the mass purges that have been underway since the coup attempt in July 2016. According to these reports, there are serious violations of human rights in Turkey under the state of emergency and the main targets are groups like the Hizmet Movement, Kurdish people, and individuals who have been critical of Erdoğan and the AKP government. These reports do not only cover the purge, but they also question the credibility of the government's coup narrative and the baseless charges brought against tens of thousands of people.

In addition to the special issue in your hands, researchers who seek detailed information by independent sources may find these reports useful. Please go to the website of Alliance for Shared Values and you will find web links to these reports under www.afsv.org/reports.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TURKEY
2016/2017 REPORT



WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT – RULE OF LAW INDEX 2016



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION (ABA) RESOLUTION



UN HUMAN RIGHTS (GENEVA)



REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS
2017 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER - BEYOND THE MYTH OF PARTNERSHIP: RETHINKING U.S. POLICY TOWARD TURKEY



HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH:
A BLANK CHECK



US DEPARTMENT OF STATE - TURKEY
HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT 2016



HOUSE OF COMMONS FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE - THE UK'S RELATIONS WITH TURKEY



EU PARLIAMENT 2016
COMMISSION REPORT ON TURKEY

ALLIANCE FOR SHARED VALUES



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN
TURKEY ON JULY 15,
2016?



THE FAILED MILITARY
COUP IN TURKEY &
THE MASS PURGES
A CIVIL SOCIETY
PERSPECTIVE

JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS FOUNDATION STOCKHOLM CENTER FOR FREEDOM



WOMEN'S RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK IN TURKEY



ASSAULT ON EDUCATION IN TURKEY AND ABROAD



STATE OF EMERGENCY, TORTURE AND IMPUNITY



JULY 15 ERDOĞAN'S COUP


*“Ours is not a
caravan of despair”*

THE HIZMET MOVEMENT OF FETHULLAH GÜLEN AND THE COMMON GOOD
A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UK

IAN WILLIAMS, PHD

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The Hizmet (service, in Turkish) movement associated with the Turkish teacher Fethullah Gülen [b. 1941] is part of the emerging “European Islam” which has its own diversity in the expression of Turkish-Muslim identity. The movement is active globally in education, media, inter-religious dialogue, finance, and relief work. In Britain, Hizmet has been particularly active in education and interfaith dialogue, and has made a significant contribution to the common good over the past twenty years. Hizmet is a living expression of Mevlana Rumi’s assertion that faith in the One God is far from being “... a Caravan of Despair” (Citlak & Bingul 2004, 8).

This article is being written at a time of national stress in the UK and Turkey. In the latter, following the July, 2016, coup attempt, Hizmet followers have faced extraordinary pressure, most of it illegal, from the ruling AKP government. Without providing any

evidence, the government has claimed Hizmet – a hitherto benign, pro-social, pro-democratic, and apolitical movement – plotted and carried out the coup attempt. Thousands of citizens suspected of association with the Hizmet movement have been imprisoned, exiled, or dismissed from their professions by the AKP government. A critical analysis of such hostility is essential.

In the UK, the same time period has been marked by a divisive Referendum on the nation’s membership in the European Union, four terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, and a housing tower block fire in London, which claimed over 80 lives, including those of many immigrants.

When looking at the UK, one must examine the key role faith communities such as Hizmet have played in uniting divided societies over racism, Islamophobia, economic inequalities, and weakening public services. Christian, Muslim, and Jewish national and local leaders have come together

to establish a common platform of accord and mutual respect. Hizmet, with its educational and inter-faith dialogue centres in major English cities such as London, Birmingham, and Manchester, has offered both spaces and opportunities for mutual engagement, as well as Qur’anicly based understandings of the dynamics of successful religio-socially plural national cultures.

Islam, a rich and strong tradition that thrives across many diverse societies, is both a living faith and has enabled generations of Muslims to address social developments, justice, and both corporate and individual questions of identity and ethics. Drawing on the Qur’an, Hadith, Sunnah, and fiqh, new Islamic social movements have constantly formed fresh public spaces in which new identities and lifestyles could emerge, not least in the UK.

Some of the finest expressions of Islam have occurred under the most pluralist, religio-social circumstances, where intellectual



discourse, educational achievements, and social harmony have flourished. Amongst contemporary Islamic thinkers who are professedly concerned with interpreting historical sources and practicing their faith in an “Islamically correct” manner, Fethullah Gülen is the spiritual father of what is probably the most active Turkish-Islamic movement of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

In considering Hizmet, one soon realizes that Fethullah Gülen is neither an innovator with a new and unique theology nor a revolutionary. His understanding of Islam is oriented within the conservative mainstream, and his arguments are rooted in the traditional sources of Islam. They stand in a lineage represented through al-Ghazali, Mevlana Jalal ud-Din Rumi, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, and in company with Muhammad Asad and Muhammad Naquib Syed Al-Attas, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

This movement – one amongst many on a spectrum which verges from pro-social civic based groups to aggressive factions – is distinctive in emphasizing high quality educational institutions, both in Turkey and internationally. Schools have been founded and staffed by Turkish nationals

in developing states as well as in powerful, economically developed countries such as the USA and the UK. Hizmet members have also organized many academic conferences throughout the last 20 years, drawing international panels of academics and researchers to explore issues of human exploration and co-operation.

While Hizmet members have been organizing these schools and conferences, the current AKP government has adopted an aggressive version of political activism abusive of Islamic faith, which brooks no contrasting expressions of a benign Islam, asserting its autocratic style by dismissing academics, teachers, judges, public servants, and military officers, amongst others, in an effort to consolidate its power over the Turkish state. This has led to a “state in exile” for many suspected of association with the Hizmet approach.

What, however, mechanisms have allowed these extremist elements to emerge and seize such power? It’s worth examining, so we can fully understand the value Hizmet brings to the world.

Defensiveness is pathogenic

In today’s complex and globalized world, migration and interculturalism have become the norm. In many countries there is

no official, shared, “public” religion.

In a sociological analysis of why high rates of strict religion for developed countries such as the UK and other European states, Steve Bruce formulated the concept of “cultural transition and defence,” explaining how defensiveness can bolster extreme types of religiosity, including those that advocate violence (Bruce 1996, p. 165, 197). A significant issue here is lack of a *Western* center of Islam that makes it necessary for Muslims to study abroad. Cesari and Ramadan assert strongly that an independent Western Islam must emerge in order to solve problems associated with radicalization (Cesari 2004, and Ramadan 2004). The Hizmet movement is in prime position to offer such a model of Islam.

The central majority of a religion often used social pressure to control extremists. If the central mass of believers dwindles in numbers, the growth of literalist and extremist factions will likely continue unchecked.

Sectarian literalism

Historically, there has always been a contention between monotheistic traditions and other traditions of faith, just as that contention has existed among themselves. While the Abrahamic religions affirm monotheism, resist deviation, and oppose constructed deities, their core values emphasize openness to diversity. Textual literalism, however, has made the new monotheism politically sectarian, schismatic and aggressive, while social and moral laws have been deemed inferior by this new emphasis. This development has heralded a new type of political order inevitably hostile to all other civic ideals (Fenn 2009, 135). This irrationality has had, and does have, serious and deadly consequences.

Typically, uncritical literalists aim to cleanse “false believers” from their midst, or to separate



Hizmet-affiliated institutions organize meetings and friendship dinners to bring people from different walks of life around the same table.

themselves from them. This is why literalism can lead to violence and usually leads to schisms (Harris 2004, 409). To be a literalist is to destroy the majority of depth and emotion of any written religion. The only advantage of the literalist's uncritical attitude to scripture is that it caters to the simplistic mind craving order. Such is the strategy and mindset of the AKP leadership and its persecution of devout people influenced by Hizmet and Fethullah Gülen.

Disdaining pluralism

Extremists enforce strict moral codes in accordance with their beliefs, and sometimes, such as during the Christian Medieval periods, they violently suppress dissent. They disdain pluralism as abnormal: *cuius regio, eius religio*.

During such times, minority religious groups have no choice but to argue for religious plurality as a matter of self-survival. But even during less stressful times it is critical to value pluralism, which lifts up minority voices and ensures a diverse society, where different voices and beliefs are given equal footing.

When a singular political ideology such as the AKP's that abuses religion becomes entrenched and encroaches upon the arenas of public education and politics, a dangerous possibility emerges: its leaders, comfortable in power, will no longer see the need for pluralism, which is the seed-bed of a healthy normal society. Such an order needs to be reminded of a possible new dark age.

The need for fixed stars, for certainty in the midst of our tenuous lives on an unpredictable planet, is real and understandable. Political and religious leaders who can package and deliver absolute truths find receptive audiences, but do not create healthy societies. A movement such as Hizmet, with its openness to contemporary human enterprise, research, education, democracy, and diversity, threatens such rigidities. We need to think of such an expression of Islam as the Hizmet movement does: with support for a full menu of pluralism, democratic and constitutional freedoms, universal human rights, and religious diversity.

These beliefs are exemplified by Hizmet, a de-centralized poly-

morphic social movement, which in less than thirty years has made significant contributions to inter-communal and national peace, inter-religious dialogue, economic development, and education. These contributions are evident in the Movement's activities, research, platforms, and creative influence in the UK and around the globe. In a time of anxiety and despondency, Hizmet represents a "Caravan of Hope" rather than a train of despair. ▲

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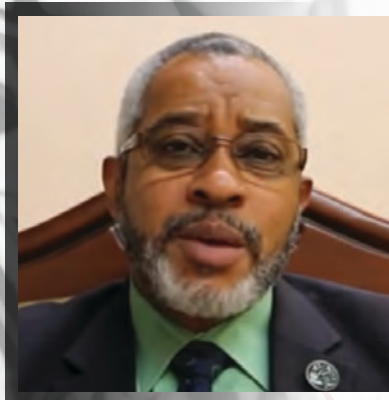
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MAKING A POSITIVE, WONDERFUL DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD,

HIZMET **EMBRACES** THE ENTIRE HUMAN FAMILY

IMAM OMAR SHAKIR

Resident Imam at Masjid Bilal ibn Rabah of San Antonio, Texas



This is a transcript of a video by Spectra Media
(January 26, 2017). Published with permission.

I'm saddened to hear that the Hizmet Movement here is being categorized as a terror group.

I've been working with them now for the past eight years. I've had an opportunity to work closely with them and to travel with them overseas, and I see no foundation for this.

As a matter of fact, when I look at their zeal and their enthusiasm for the religion, and I look at how they practice the Qur'an and the life example of Muhammad the Prophet (upon him be peace), I'm inspired by what they do.

And they not only focus and center upon Muslims, they have great relationships with the non-Muslim community. And I would consider them to be like ambassadors for Islam.

They share Ramadan, they share neighborly needs, etc.

Muhammad the Prophet (upon him be peace) said he was one time talking with one of his companions, and he asked them if he knew one of the brothers. And then, he said, "Yes, I know so and so."

And then the Prophet (upon him be peace) said, "Well, let me ask you something about him. Have you worked with him?"

He said, "No."

"Have you traveled with him?"

He said, "No."

Then the Prophet (upon him be peace) said, "Well, then you don't know him."

I'm pleased to say that I've worked with our brothers, and I

have traveled with them. And I know them well.

And to classify them as terrorists in any form is a great misrepresentation.

The other thing that I want to say is that they are very loyal and very patriotic to this nation. They work to support the good works in this nation.

They also work with all people, faith or no faith, and they show by example what the Prophet Muhammad (upon him be peace) taught us.

Some of us read books, some of us talk, but they actually do. And I consider it a privilege and an honor to be associated with them and to be part of the brotherhood.

I see them as wonderful human beings and as true Muslims, and I can say this as one that has studied the religion and been a leader in the religion for over 25 years. I can say this.

Also, what I want to say to you is that when people try to come against them – because some Muslims don't know about them and their movement and the good that they do in the world – I would tell them not to worry about that.

I would tell them to continue to model and be an excellent example of this religion and also build on the relationships you already have.

Myself, as one of your brothers and friends: if I know other Muslims don't know you, I'm happy to take you with me and introduce you to them and let them get to

know you so they can form their own opinions.

And I have no doubt that once they get to know you and get to know your leadership, I have no doubt that they will no longer believe these outrageous allegations against you.

Muhammad the Prophet (upon him be peace) made education a top priority. You all make education a top priority.

He told us that we should be kind and considerate and respectful and hospitable to our neighbor. You all demonstrate that. You host iftars, you host various events during the month of Ramadan to educate the people.

So the Hizmet Movement is, I think, vital to the Muslim community, and they are also showing us how to apply the wonderful, universal, timeless concepts of Islam in the 21st century.

My imam, my teacher, taught me that you never change the principles. You never change the logic in Islam.

He said, but it's OK to change the way you express the logic. And we have to look at our current set of circumstances and our reality here in the West and apply the best application of this faith.

I see them doing that, and I see them embracing the entire human family and making a positive, wonderful difference in the world.

They're a benefit to the Muslim community and humanity as a whole. ▀

FETHULLAH GÜLEN
IS ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED
ISLAMIC SCHOLARS OF OUR CENTURY



SHAYKH MUHAMMAD FATHI HIJAZI

Al-Azhar University, Egypt

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said, “Scholars are heirs of the prophets.”

The Islamic intellectual, the honorable Fethullah Gülen, is one of the distinguished scholars of our century. He is one of Allah’s blessings for us. When we look at his personal life, his social life, and his services to the Islamic world, we only see his good deeds. With his notion of service, which hasn’t only been restricted to the Islamic world but has spread to 160 countries, Mr. Gülen has had an extraordinarily positive impact.

We’ve read Mr. Gülen’s books and have gotten to know him through his friends and his followers. As opposed to what some people keep repeating, we have not seen anything even hinting at terrorism in any part of his life.

This man lives a life – alhamdulillah - in close connection with Allah, which leads to a reconcilia-

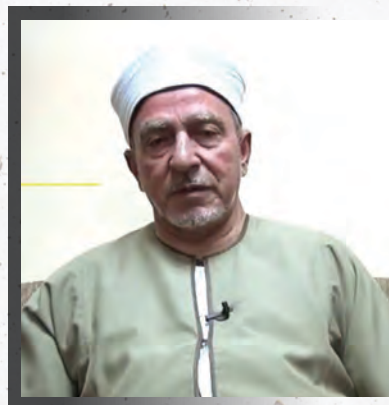
tion with the hearts of the people surrounding him.

When hearts are reconciled and gathered around the love of Allah, people will be honored with Allah’s gratification and blessing, and they will start doing everything for the sake of Allah.

When we look at the people around him, the scholars, tradesmen, and people from different levels of life, we see them live their lives according to our Prophet’s Sunnah and life.

As I mentioned earlier, we have never seen or known anything about Mr. Gülen except for the way he has helped people grow closer to Allah. All we have seen is how he reconciles hearts and helps them prepare to appear before Allah.

This is how we know Mr. Gülen. And we’ve never seen any single indication of terrorism in any of his books. Such an allegation cannot be true for him or people around him.



This is a transcript of a video by Spectra Media [December 6, 2015]. Published with permission.


This is my testimony about Mr. Gülen. May Allah help us, may He bestow comprehension and understanding on all who accuse him. I pray Allah that my testimony will be considered among my and Mr. Gülen’s good deeds on the Day of Judgment.

Mr. Gülen sees the whole of humanity – Muslims and non-Muslims – as his children, and he works to reconcile hearts, trying to bring together all humanity as humble servants to Allah.

I have seen him in Turkey. He was preaching as he was crying and saying, “Some people are claiming that I will found a state and I am after a sultanate.” But then he added, “Who am I to do these things? These are untrue claims. My life is evident.”

We know Mr. Gülen’s life itself has ruled out these claims.

To be clear, he put forward his beliefs with his deeds. May Allah’s help and assistance be with him. ▀



Hizmet

is a true embodiment
of the Islamic ideals of love
and service to the other

AHMED REHAB

CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations), Chicago



This is a transcript of a video by Spectra Media
(January 4, 2017). Published with permission.

I have seen many un-Islamic cults play out in the world today: ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, al-Shabab. Hizmet is not an un-Islamic cult. From my interaction with the volunteers, it is anything but.

Hizmet is a group of people that I have observed carry out the best of Islamic ideals: kindness, hospitality, love, selfless service. They are mainstream in their creed, as far as the Sunni Islamic school of thought goes. They read the Qur'an; they pray five times a day; they fast. They're very spiritual people. They don't push their beliefs, their Islamic beliefs, on non-Muslims. That's not what they're out to do. They're out to serve the world, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. So in terms of being an "un-Islamic cult," Hizmet is anything but. What they really are, in my opinion, is a true embodiment of the Islamic ideals of love and service to the other. And I've never seen anything to suggest otherwise.

I'm a civil rights activist, a human rights activist; I don't take my marching orders from demagogues whether they are domestic or foreign, whether they are elected or dictators. What I look at is the process, and what troubles me in today's Turkey is the process. Due process is the arbiter between those who accuse and those who defend. It's absent in contemporary Turkey. And there has to be independent judiciary; it has to be judges and a court that is not in anybody's corner. What we're seeing in Turkey, unfortunately, is a situation where government is essentially run by one party that acts as both the accuser/the prosecutor, the judge and the executioner. And those who are accused don't really have any leeway in the system to defend themselves.

Those who know Hizmet, who have interacted with Hizmet, know

Hizmet is the farthest thing from violence. They've never promoted violence; they've never accepted violence; they've been the first to condemn violence, including a violent overtake of a Republic, a coup. They've condemned this coup, and they've never promoted anything close to it. They've never been involved in anything that is violent in nature.

Now that the accusation is there, we have to ask for proof. And, even if there are individuals who may be associated with the Hizmet who were involved in one crime or another, including a coup, the question becomes: at what point do you incriminate an entire movement of millions of people, volunteers who want to serve humanity through their Islamic ideals? Can we condemn a teacher, a 24-year-old woman serving in some remote part of Turkey, Pakistan, or Kazakhstan, or anywhere in the world where they build schools in areas of underserved, underprivileged communities? How are these souls devoted to service affiliated or associated with that particular crime?

What you look at here is a witch hunt; it is "guilt by association." These are not in the tradition of liberal justice, liberal values that democracies espouse.

And it's exactly what is happening around the world when people in power want to shut out those who are not in their pockets, those they can't control, or those whom they don't like.

When a government is moving towards autocracy, when you're becoming a demagogue, when you become the "state" (*l'état, c'est moi*) and when you shut out opposition, shut down media, imprison journalists, and declare organizations, schools, mosques, or associations or universities or charities, as terrorist organizations just by a signature, then I have to say, that

is incorrect, and that is problematic, and that is unjust!

And I'll raise my voice, as a Muslim, as a human being, but also as a civil rights and human rights activist, because civil rights and human rights are not piecemeal. They cannot be divided; they cannot be allocated to one group and then denied to another. I believe that ideals are only good and are only meaningful if they apply to all human beings. It's a belief in blind due process, a blind independent judiciary, and having the procedures and the processes of justice apply everywhere, equally, to all people.

When I read the news that [Hizmet] schools were being shut down in Pakistan, it hurt, because Pakistan is in need of good schools, it's in need of education. We hear about radicalization, we hear about illiteracy, we hear about the lack of education in parts of the country – same in the United States, same in the world. And anyone who is putting themselves into service to build schools and educate young people is doing good in the world. As someone who built an organization, I understand how much effort this takes. I understand every wall that is painted, every nail that is hammered into that wall, every computer that is bought and connected, every chair and every table, and then all of the content that comes along with a good education. It takes so much to build a single classroom, let alone a whole organization. And here you have a school of many classrooms, and then you have a movement of many schools. One signature, for political pressure or for personal gain, shuts it all down.

It's so hard to build. It's so easy to destroy. And we, Muslim-Americans and people of conscience, have to raise our voices and say, "We don't stand for that!" ▲

PERSECUTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN



Fadime Günay



Yasemin Özkul



Havva Haman



After the failed coup, one major group of victims have been mothers and children. Their alleged crimes range from fundraising for students to subscribing to a newspaper, organizing reading clubs, being a wife to a suspect who is not found, or having a copy of Fethullah Gülen's books. Among them are many new mothers who are being rounded up in the delivery rooms of hospitals.

668

infants

17000

women arrested



ncioğlu



Yasemin Yılmaz



Aysun Aydemir

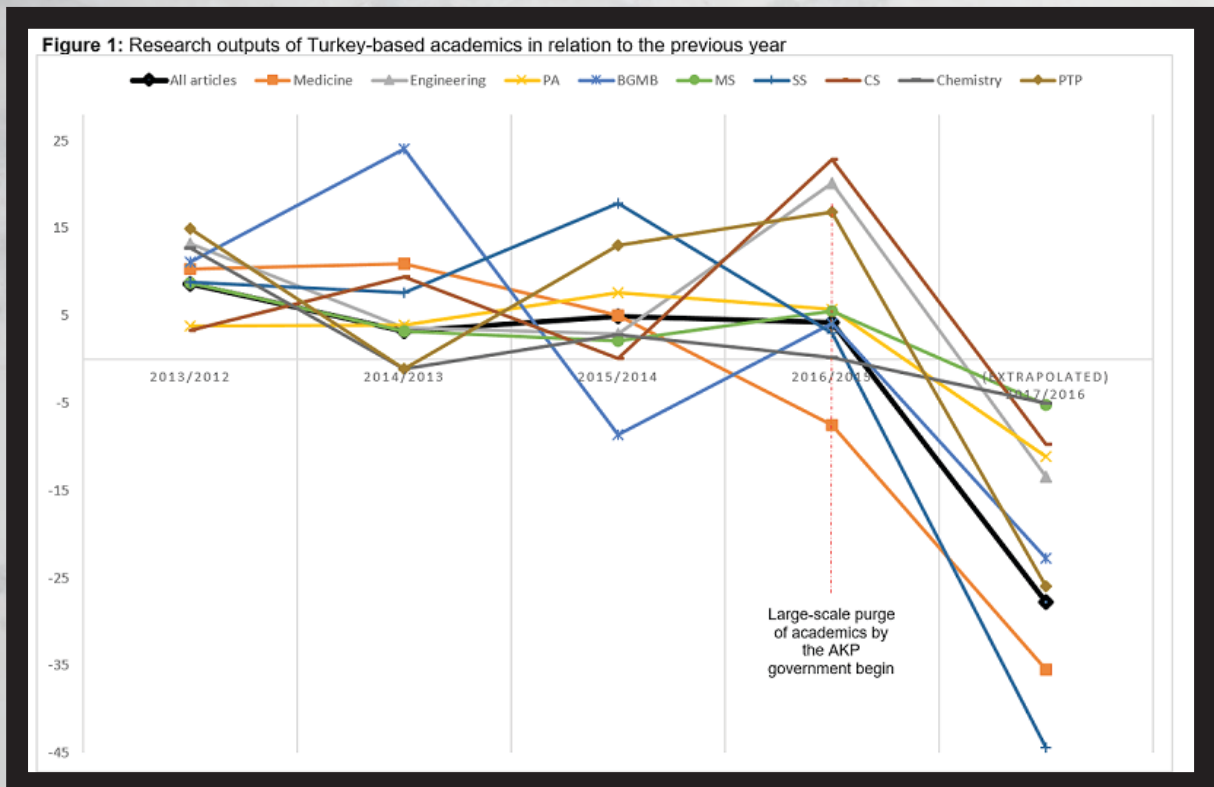


Ayşe Kaya



PERSECUTION IN EDUCATION

The Turkish government has sacked more than 8,000 academics after the failed coup. A report released by the Freedom for Academia, a London-based research group, has shown that the research outputs of Turkey-based academics have significantly dropped (~28% on average) in all fields.



Dismissed and arrested
Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça, two academics dismissed after the coup, have been on hunger strike to be returned to their jobs for over 100 days. They were arrested in June 2017 on terror charges.



2099

schools, dormitories,
universities shut down

8573

academics sacked



Brute ignorance vs education

Yamanlar, one of the top-notch private schools with outstanding academic achievements, was shut down after the coup. The brutal pulling down of the school's sign reflects the ugly face of hatred that roams in Turkey today.

Tortured teacher died under custody

History teacher Gökhan Açıkkollu died under custody after being detained and tortured as part of a post-coup investigation into the Gülen movement.



PERSECUTION IN MEDIA



Turkey has never been at ease with freedom of speech. But after the coup attempt, Turkey has become the top jailer of journalists in the world.

274

journalists arrested



While media outlets sympathetic to the Hizmet movement have been brutally raided and taken over by the government before the coup attempt, hundreds of newspapers and magazines representing different ideologies and worldviews were also shut down after July 15.

PERSECUTION IN MEDIA



184

media outlets shutdown



PERSECUTION OF FAMILY

Born a crime!

Family members of many individuals who are accused by the Erdoğan government are also suffering from harassment, detention, and arrest simply for their association. Children of police chiefs Ali Fuat Yılmaz and Anadolu Atayün (below left - Fatma Yılmaz; below right Yasemin Atayün) who were involved in the graft probe against Erdoğan government were arrested after their fathers. The government unlawfully confiscated all the businesses of Akın İpek (below left). Erdoğan's wrath against Mr. İpek did not only remain there; his brother Cafer Tekin İpek was also arrested. Former striker Hakan Şükür, who is by far the top athlete in Turkish soccer, is also one of the victims of Erdoğan regime. Since he is abroad, the government detained his father, Sermet Şükür, instead.



CNN Sports + Live TV

Enes Kanter's father detained in Turkey

By Jill Martin, CNN
 Updated 7:30 PM ET, Fri June 2, 2017

Source: CNN

NBA star says he was detained overseas 01:20

Story highlights

Mehmet Kanter is detained by security forces in Istanbul, his son Enes says

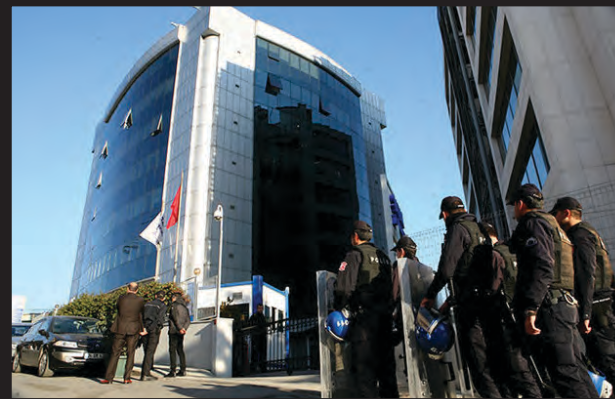
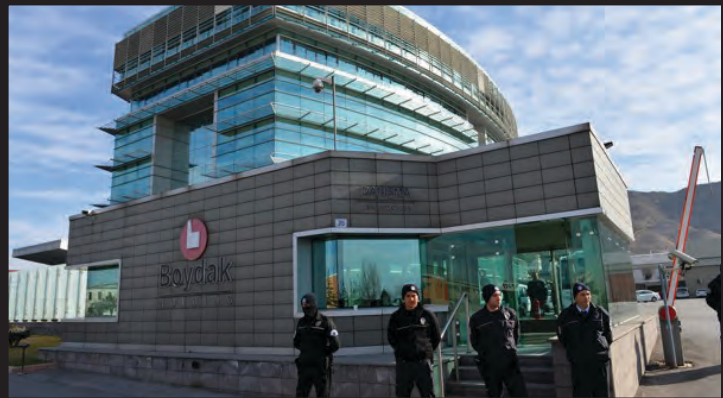
(CNN) — The father of Turkish NBA player Enes Kanter has been



Substituted for the son!

Enes Kanter, Oklahoma Thunder's Turkish star and an outspoken critic of Erdoğan's persecution, had the risk of being deported to his home country Turkey to be arrested by Erdoğan regime. As Turkish authorities cancelled his passport, he got stranded in Romania for a few hours and then released. Unable to arrest him, the Turkish government took revenge by detaining his father Mehmet Kanter, a professor of medicine.

PERSECUTION IN BUSINESS



Once called "Anatolian tigers," many businesses that helped boost Turkey's economy during AKP era have been confiscated for their sponsorship in education, health, media, and relief work. Over 950 companies usurped by the government are worth at least \$11 billion. Businesses range from the biggest publishing corporations to gold miners, baklava and furniture producers.

950

companies seized

\$11 billion

assets usurped



STEP-BY-STEP TO THE PURGE

The fake coup attempt on July 15th was not an overnight event. Nor is "the purge" that has been taking place since then.



01

CAUGHT RED-HANDED IN CORRUPTION

Stepping stones that paved the way to this attempt were laid a few years ago when Erdoğan's government was shook by serious graft probes. The size of corruption was measured by billions of dollars, and violation of UN sanctions against Iran was also a part of the investigations. Implicating Erdoğan, his son, and members of his cabinet who conspired with an Iranian businessman, Reza Zarrab, the probes were the starting point for what has become "the purge" in Turkey today.



THE JUDICIARY AND THE POLICE DISMISSED

To avoid prosecution, Erdoğan wreaked havoc in the entire bureaucracy, but especially in the judiciary and police force. Initially, he dismissed the police chiefs and prosecutors who were involved in his corruption cases. Then, he replaced them with his loyalists.



02

03

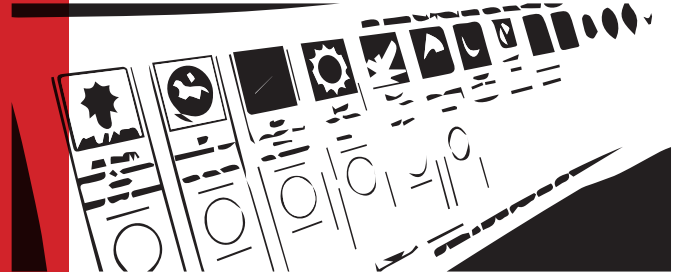
MEDIA CRACKDOWN

Erdoğan has built a monopoly in the media over the years. After the graft probes, he started harassing critical media and threatened their owners not to cover these investigations. He took over few remaining independent media outlets by illegally assigning trustees and then finally shutting them completely after the coup attempt. Erdoğan has also unplugged social media many times.

ELECTION FRAUD

Since 2002, Erdoğan's AKP party has filled the vacuum of former center-right parties, which used to have the highest voting bloc in Turkey. However, none of the elections in the last few years have gone without any doubts in mind about how fair the elections were. There have been serious allegations of fraud and international observers reported that many indications showed elections were not fair.

04



05

CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY

Even before the coup, Erdoğan silenced opposition by confiscating their press, shutting down their businesses, and starting investigations against their organizations. Before the coup, these illegal confiscations were taking place at least under some legally-formulated packages. However, after the coup, the government conducts a brutal and voluntary form of law and does not even bother themselves to invent an outward legal formula for the crackdown.

JULY 15 COUP

Erdoğan was never fully satisfied with the "revenge" war he was conducting since the graft probes. He wanted every individual affiliated with the Hizmet Movement preferably to be locked up, or suffer in one way or another. A false military coup attempt would serve best for such a purpose. Erdoğan declared state of emergency, which still continues after one year and which gives him an illegitimate immunity from the unlawful witch-hunt and all the unfair detentions, arrests, and tortures against tens of thousands of Hizmet sympathizers or participants.

06



LIFE IS A BOOK TO READ

ÇAĞLAYAN
5 AYLIK İLİM VE KÜLTÜR DERGİSİ

THE Fountain
ON LIFE, KNOWLEDGE, AND BELIEF

Come read with us with your mind and heart,
in dialogue and peace.

There is a temporary solar eclipse, but our
journey continues in the light of truth.



The Fountain and Çağlayan (in Turkish) are published and distributed by Blue Dome Press.



TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S MASS CRACKDOWN IN NUMBERS

145,711

GOT SACKED*

124,257

DETAINED

57,885

ARRESTED

2,099

**SCHOOLS,
DORMITORIES AND
UNIVERSITIES
SHUT DOWN**

8,573

**ACADEMICS LOST
JOBS**

4,424

**JUDGES,
PROSECUTORS
DISMISSED****

184

**MEDIA OUTLETS
SHUT DOWN**

274

**JOURNALISTS
ARRESTED*****

44,385

**DISMISSED FROM
THE MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION**

SINCE JULY 15, 2016

*This number includes (1) state officials, teachers, bureaucrats, and academics who were dismissed by gov't decrees, No. 667 issued on July 23, No.668 issued on July 25, No.669 issued on July 31, No. 672 issued on Sept. 1, No.675 issued on Oct. 29, No. 677/678 issued on Nov. 22, 2016, No.679/680/681 issued on Jan. 6, 2017, No.682/683/684/685 issued on Jan 23, 2017, and No.689 issued on April 29, 2017, No.692 issued on July 14, 2017; (2) academics who lost their jobs by gov't decrees, No. 677 issued on July 23, No.675 issued on Oct. 29, 2016, and No.689 issued on April 29, 2017; (3) teachers whose licenses were revoked by Turkey's Education Ministry on July 19, 2016; (4) and dismissed military personnel [6,511 officers and 16,409 cadets]. For detailed information, please visit: turkeypurge.com/purge-in-numbers and turkeypurge.com/academics-sacked-from-positions.

**Constitutional Court general assembly resolution 2016/49158 on June 26, 2017, paragraph 19.

***Data compiled from PEN International, Platform for Independent Journalism (P24), Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF), Journalists' Union of Turkey (TGS), Progressive Journalists Association (ÇGD), and Bianet online news portal. For detailed information, please visit: <https://turkeypurge.com/journalism-in-jail>.