

EXHIBIT 1

Turkey's July 15th Coup

What Happened and Why

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“Woe to Him, for How He Schemed”: Fethullah Gülen, the U.S., and the Damaging of Turkish Democracy

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On July 15, 2016, elements of the Turkish Armed Forces attempted to overthrow the elected government of Turkey and to capture or kill its president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.¹ Calling themselves the Council for Peace at Home (Yurtta Sulh Konseyi), the mutineers moved into action just after 10:00 p.m. They deployed tanks and infantry on key bridges in Istanbul; seized the state television channel TRT; took the chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Hulusi Akar, hostage in Ankara; dispatched a unit to hunt down Turkey's president in the resort town of Marmaris; and employed fighter jets and attack helicopters to strike government targets, including the Turkish Parliament, the Special Operations Command, the General Security Directorate, and the headquarters of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization among others.

The rebels failed, however, to paralyze the government or Turkish society, and opposition swiftly emerged. Just a little over an hour after the operation began, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım appeared on television to inform the Turkish public that some sort of illegal intervention was underway and would be resisted. General Akar's steadfast refusal to go along with the mutiny blocked the rebels from securing the passive support of the armed forces, and some loyal units in the armed forces and the police resisted outright. At roughly half past midnight, a visibly shaken but coherent President Erdoğan spoke through a smart-phone video link on live television as he flew to Istanbul and called on the Turkish people to pour into the streets in protest against the putsch. The state Directorate of Religion played a notable role in this effort to rally support for the

government by instructing Turkey's 110,000 imams to use their minarets to broadcast a rarely used prayer.² Indeed, the notion of defending Islam motivated many of those in the streets, although it should be noted that opposition to the coup attempt spanned virtually the entirety of Turkey's otherwise fractious political spectrum.³

Loyal units ultimately suppressed the coup attempt but not before much blood had been shed. Fighting lasted over the course of several hours and resulted in the deaths of 272 people, including 171 civilians, 63 police officers, 4 soldiers, and 34 rebels. Government authorities arrested or detained 17,184 military personnel, 6,066 police officers, 4,757 prosecutors, and 782 civilians.⁴ That this failed putsch amounted to a critical episode in Turkish history goes without saying. At the same time, by reflexively framing the mutiny within the Turkish Republic's long history of military interventions—the country witnessed four successful and three failed military interventions between 1960 and 1997—analysts in the United States and elsewhere have greatly underestimated its significance for Turkey, its neighbors, and the U.S. The defeat of the putsch gives cause for only modest relief.

Contrary to what many early accounts in the West intimated, the plotters mobilized over ten thousand armed men and demonstrated a chilling willingness to kill for their cause by opening fire on crowds, executing resisters, and mounting airstrikes on multiple targets. They were nothing like the feeble-hearted Communists who mounted a putsch against Gorbachev twenty-five years earlier. Nor, however, was the Turkish population willing this time to sit passively. Tens of thousands took to the streets of Ankara and Istanbul. They were predominantly men, and, as noted, more often than not steeled themselves with a vision of religious struggle.

Had the mutineers succeeded in capturing or killing Erdoğan, winning over the Turkish military, and toppling the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or AK Party), the result would not have followed the pattern of earlier coups in Turkey where a quick consolidation of military rule inaugurates a brief period of military governance followed by voluntary transition back to democratic civilian governance. Instead, a successful putsch would almost certainly have triggered a civil war, one that would have likely acquired a religious dimension. Turkey is already embroiled in a chronic and increasingly bitter struggle with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê or PKK) and another escalating fight against the Islamic State. Civil war

would have converted Turkey from a buffer against refugee flows—Turkey hosts nearly 3 million refugees from Syria alone—to an exporter of refugees. This would have had dire consequences for the political stability of a Europe already grappling with a reeling European Union and surging populism.

Most significantly, the July 15 putsch did not represent a “routine” attempt by a secular Turkish officer corps to forcibly reset their country’s politics to a previous status quo. The putschists’ assumed name notwithstanding—“Peace at Home” comes from one of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s signature aphorisms—their bid for power represented the latest battle in what has emerged as a fierce struggle for dominance between two rival wings of Turkey’s Islamists.

The Turkish government calls the organization behind the failed mutiny the Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization (Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü or FETÖ). The label is unfortunate for two reasons. First, FETÖ bears no resemblance to any conventional terrorist organization insofar as up until July 15, it had not, to the best of my knowledge, employed violence as a means to affect or to sway public opinion along the lines of a typical terrorist organization like al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. It has not conducted bombings, public assassinations, or hostage-takings.

Second, FETÖ, arguably, threatens the integrity of the Turkish state and the health of Turkish democracy more insidiously than any terrorist group could hope. Whereas terrorists strike at the state from the outside with intent to disorient and delegitimize, FETÖ penetrated the state from the inside and managed to take control of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and revenue agencies, among others. With total contempt for the law, the Gülenists abused their positions and power in the state to destroy their enemies and any who would stand in their way.

FETÖ is named after Fethullah Gülen, a Turk and religious figure who presides over a network of schools, test centers, media outlets, banks, and businesses that spans five continents. Gülen has resided in the U.S. since 1999. Here, his followers run, among other enterprises, approximately 140 charter schools that bring in an estimated annual income of \$500 million from American taxpayers. As the *New York Times* and other newspapers have documented, Gülen’s schools in the U.S. have been subjects of repeated scandal and FBI investigations into visa abuse, kickback schemes, test fraud, and other alleged crimes and violations in numerous states including Texas,⁵ Pennsylvania,⁶ Georgia,⁷ Virginia,⁸ and Ohio.⁹ Indeed, these schools had grown so notorious for deceit and wrongdoing

that the agenda-setting national television news program *60 Minutes* aired an exposé on them in May 2012.¹⁰

Turkish officials accuse Gülen of far more than systematic deception. They contend that FETÖ is nothing short of a “parallel state” that has been subverting the Turkish Republic toward the goal of overthrowing the elected government. The attempted putsch of July 15, 2016, was only its most recent and violent effort. For nearly the past three years, Ankara has made crushing FETÖ its top priority, even above defeating the Kurdistan Workers’ Party or the Islamic State. Toward that end, it has dismissed, detained, and arrested tens of thousands of individuals; shut down Gülen-affiliated schools, businesses, and organizations; and seized their property. The government has undoubtedly crippled the Gülen network, but Ankara has yet to achieve a decisive victory, primarily because the leader and center of the movement, Mr. Gülen, resides safely in the U.S. beyond the reach of Turkish law.

Belief that Gülen stands behind the July 15 putsch is by no means a personal obsession of a paranoid President Erdoğan. It is a conviction shared across the political spectrum in Turkey, even by many of Erdoğan’s critics, some of whom have been warning for years that Gülen and his movement constitute an imminent threat to Turkish democracy. It is surely a great irony—or tragedy—that the United States, a country that ostensibly had made the promotion of democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere a primary objective of its foreign policy, may not merely have failed to spread democratic rule in the greater Middle East but may actually have helped subvert and weaken the most important democracy in the Middle East.

THE RELIGIOUS-SECULAR DIVIDE AND THE RISE OF THE PARALLEL STATE

In the spring of 1999, I was in Istanbul conversing with a Chechen friend whom I’ll call Hamza. He was a student at Istanbul University and had been living in Turkey for five years. We were discussing Turkey and its future, and I was unusually interested in his opinions. In addition to being of high intelligence and a speaker of flawless Turkish, Hamza was a devout Muslim. The question of religion in Turkey was especially fraught in those years, and Turks on both sides of the divide found it difficult to discuss the issue with detachment. Tensions were rising between the secular Kemalist elites who had dominated the Republic since its inception in

1923 and the self-described religious. Unlike the American understanding of secularism, the Turkish understanding of secularism laid down by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk holds not that religion should be free of the state, but instead, that it should be tightly supervised by the state.

Many Turks believed that it should be Islam guiding the state rather than the state corralling Islam. These Turks, hereafter known as "Islamists," had been gaining strength over the decades, despite efforts by the ruling elites to block them at the ballot box and even keep them out of politics altogether. Just three years earlier, in 1996, an Islamist Party, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), had managed to enter the ruling government through a coalition in an unprecedented achievement. Shortly thereafter, in 1997, however, the Turkish General Staff, the self-appointed guardians of Kemalist secularism and nationalism, warned that if the Welfare Party was not ejected from the government they might intervene. It was no idle threat: Turkish military officers had overthrown the government on three earlier occasions. The warning proved sufficient to bring down the government and trigger the banishment of the Welfare Party and its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, from politics. Banishment had become a routine experience for Turkey's Islamists, and so a number of Erbakan's followers, including the promising former mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, opted to try another strategy. In 2001, they established a political party that formally disowned any programmatic Islamist vision, the AK Party.

Since Hamza moved among religious Turks, I asked him how he saw the religious-political divide in the country. The divide was real, he explained, and it was widening. Even in the army, the fortress of Kemalist power and discipline, the divide could be felt. Pious conscripts went off to the army determined to assert their religiosity. For example, he said, in an act of defiance against their officers, they would shout "Allahu akbar!" on training exercises. As a foreigner, of course, Hamza had not witnessed such disobedience, and what he heard may have been exaggerated. Even as staunch secularists, many Turkish military officers identified proudly as Muslims. The Turkish Armed Forces formally always regarded their country's Islamic heritage as a positive resource for cultivating martial spirit among their soldiers. In the right context, they would heartily approve a shout of "God is great!" from their soldiers, but Hamza's interlocutors were describing something different: a creeping and conscious insubordination within the ranks. Hamza believed that unless there was a change in Turkey's politics, a civil war between the Islamists and Kemalists within the next decade was likely.

To forestall such a possibility and to maintain the unity of the armed forces, the Turkish officer corps rigorously scrutinizes their own for any hints of ideological deviance from Kemalism. The process starts with extensive screening of school-age officer candidates. Those from overtly religious or Kurdish families, for example, are excluded. The scrutiny continues throughout an officer's career. The behavior of officers and even their family members is monitored. An officer's scrupulous avoidance of alcohol would raise suspicions. A wife who took to wearing a headscarf would end her husband's career. At its annual review every August, the Supreme Military Council (Yüksek Askeri Şura or YAŞ) promotes trustworthy officers and expels those who have given cause for doubt. Hamza had heard that with the officer corps closed off to them, Turkish Islamists had instead begun joining the ranks of the national police.

"So, by taking over the police, the Muslims,"—for Hamza, Muslim and Islamist were synonyms—"will at least have some weapons and organized units on their side in case it comes to war?" I asked.

"Yes, apparently that is the idea."

"That is better than nothing, I suppose, but the police will be no match for the army in pitched battles."

"But don't forget the conscripts. They won't all obey their officers," Hamza parried.

I never forgot that conversation, particularly the claim about Islamist penetration of the police. Lightly armed police would be no match for an army in pitched battle, but what neither Hamza nor I grasped at the time was that outside of war an army is no match for police. While armies are unsurpassed in employing mass violence, in peacetime the police hold a monopoly on investigations, detainments, and arrests and are thus the decisive instrument of power.

There is perhaps no better illustration of the peacetime superiority of the police over the military than the wave of investigations, arrests, trials, and convictions that struck the officer corps of the Turkish Armed Forces and other Kemalist cadres beginning in 2007. A stunned population looked on in horror and fascination, exhilaration and confusion as police officers and detectives detained and prosecutors jailed over 300 senior military officers, opposition lawmakers, journalists, prominent academics, and others on charges of involvement in a massive conspiracy to destabilize Turkey and to overthrow the ruling government.

The notion that some conspiratorial network, or, as the Turks call it, the "deep state" (*derin devlet*), composed of select senior military officers, police chiefs, intelligence operatives, and crime bosses might be

influencing Turkish politics was familiar. The Susurluk Scandal of 1996 in which a parliamentarian and Kurdish militia head, a police chief, an ultranationalist crime boss, and a beauty queen were riding together in a car until it crashed and killed the latter three had haunted Turkish politics ever since. It demonstrated conclusively that elements of the police, politicians, and organized crime were in fact collaborating. Many Turks wondered how much more was going on that was not publicly known.

Still, no one in 2007 could have imagined a network as large and as diabolical as what police and prosecutors were then claiming to have found. Breaking many of the news stories about the investigations was a newly founded newspaper, *Taraf*. Its financing was cloudy, but its journalistic staff had impeccable liberal credentials. The allegations it began reporting were fantastical.

Investigators were alleging that a deep state network known as Ergenekon was preparing to agitate and to manipulate the Turkish public by bombing mosques, assassinating politicians and celebrities, and even downing Turkish air force jets—all to create a climate of panic and fear to justify overthrow of the government. Moreover, officials asserted, Ergenekon had for years been orchestrating terror campaigns on all sides of the political spectrum, from the Kurdish left to the ultranationalist Turkish right and everywhere in between. Prosecutors placed over 274 individuals on trial for alleged ties to this network. In 2010, Turkish officials opened a similar investigation that charged over 300 people with involvement in another, related antigovernment plot codenamed Sledgehammer (Balyoz).

The reason why Turkish citizens in 2007 could not have anticipated the existence of a network quite so large and so complex, however, was not lack of imagination. Rather, it was because the investigations were shams. The impossibly gargantuan scale of the alleged Ergenekon conspiracy alone should have provoked skepticism. But those prosecuting the investigation and sympathetic media outlets played on the suspicions, hostility, and prejudices that Turkey's Islamists shared with Turkish liberals, leftists, and human rights activists against their country's nationalist secular establishment.¹¹ Western journalists were only slightly less credulous. Following the cues of their liberal interlocutors in Turkey, those journalists refrained from sharply questioning the narrative of an out-of-control ultranationalist and secularist establishment illegally undermining the elected AK Party government.

Not everyone, however, was taken in. One notable exception was Gareth Jenkins, an analyst of Turkish politics who early on noted the

multiple irregularities in the investigations.¹² Another observer who raised fundamental questions about the trials was the Harvard academic Dani Rodrik. Although not a student of Turkish politics by profession but an economist and scholar of global investment and trade, Rodrik took an interest in the trials because his father-in-law, General Çetin Doğan, had become one of their major suspects. Casting a critical eye on the trial proceedings, Rodrik, together with his wife Pinar Doğan, recognized that multiple pieces of evidence presented at the trial were bogus. Independent forensic experts later established that, indeed, much of the evidence used at the trials consisted of blatant—and sloppy—forgeries. Documents that prosecutors claimed had been created by members of the Ergenekon network were riddled with anachronisms that conclusively and indisputably betrayed their fraudulent nature. For example, alleged Ergenekon documents presented in trial as evidence referenced organizations that came into existence years after the documents' alleged date of creation. Further, they were printed in fonts that had been invented only several years after their purported composition or were drafted using software versions that were introduced much later than the alleged date of creation.¹³

Such barefaced falsification notwithstanding, the trials concluded in the conviction and sentencing of over 500 individuals.¹⁴ Since virtually all those charged and later convicted had been lifelong opponents of Islamism, they found little to no sympathy among AK Party members, many of whom had throughout their political careers chafed under laws that restricted the use of religion in politics and any challenge to secularism. Erdoğan himself had served time in prison for reciting poetry with religious imagery to mobilize his followers, an act that authorities judged inflammatory. The failure of the AK Party government and its liberal allies to step outside their prejudices and question the egregious abuses of the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer investigations dealt a severe blow to the rule of law in Turkey.

Matters changed radically, however, when investigators began turning to Erdoğan and those around him. In February 2012, a special prosecutor summoned the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı), Hakan Fidan, for questioning about his participation in peace talks with the Kurdistan Workers Party. Rumors of Fidan's impending arrest began to fly. The summons was a bold challenge to Erdoğan, who had handpicked Fidan for this sensitive post and subsequently tasked him to lead secret and highly delicate talks with the Kurdistan Workers' Party in the hopes of ending that organization's nearly

four-decade-long insurrection and resolving Turkey's gnawing "Kurdish Question."¹⁵

At this point, Erdoğan and his circle began to fear that what they described as a "parallel state" was moving to bring them down, just as it had brought down the senior military leadership and other prominent Kemalists in the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials. By a "parallel state," what they meant was a network of officials inside the state who were obedient not to the elected government or the laws of the state but instead were loyal only to themselves and their leader and were abusing their positions to pursue their own agenda. Indeed, through blatantly unethical and illegal stratagems, such as manipulating duty assignments and promotion rosters and leaking the answers for entrance and qualifying examinations to favored applicants, a parallel state organization was packing institutions with loyalists and pushing aside and excluding those who were not their own. This parallel state was not merely subverting the elected government, it was taking over the state itself.

THE RISE OF THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT

The locus of this parallel state group's loyalty was a soft-spoken spiritual figure who had lived since 1999 in the Pocono Mountains of eastern Pennsylvania. To foreigners, the charge rings outlandish, even delusional. Americans, in particular, find the mere notion of something nefarious in a place like the Poconos almost laughable. It is, by no means, however, the product of Erdoğan's imagination. That spiritual leader, Fethullah Gülen, left Turkey in 1999 in order to avoid arrest. Turkey's General Staff strongly suspected Gülen of seeking to undermine the secular order by, among other things, insinuating his followers into the officer corps. That charge, at the time, sounded exaggerated to many and the product of an intolerant, even paranoid, mindset.

Gülen was born in 1941 in the province of Erzurum, a region with a culture distinctive even in Turkey for its masculinity and sober piety. He followed in his father's footsteps to become an imam. In 1966, he took a position at a mosque in the Aegean port city of Izmir. Early in his career, he demonstrated ambitions beyond the conventional role of imam. He acquired renown as an effective and charismatic imam and began to build a following. Gülen's public persona was not that of a fire-and-brimstone preacher but quite the opposite: a soft-spoken, somewhat emotional, occasionally mawkish cleric who sometimes wept during his sermons.

Turks who preferred their Islam a bit sterner ridiculed Gülen—and often his followers—as effete and even effeminate.

Not content with exhorting his congregants merely to observe the ritual laws and moral strictures of Islam, Gülen urged them to pursue collaborative projects in fields outside the narrowly religious. He placed a special emphasis on education. Turkey, he argued, was in greater need of schools than mosques. He called upon his businessmen followers to pool their resources and build schools, and he encouraged young men to become teachers to staff the schools and to teach the new generations.

Over the course of the next four decades, Gülen and his followers built a network of well over 1,000 schools, from preschools to universities, in over 150 countries, together with countless test-prep centers, charitable organizations, and businesses ranging from school and stationery supplies through major media companies to large financial houses. From interviews with Gülen's followers in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and several other locations in Turkey in 2004, I came away especially impressed by the way his organizations tied together Turks of all classes from the most impoverished and defenseless, such as orphans and abandoned children, up to some of Turkey's wealthiest individuals.

During the course of the interviews, it became clear that the center or heart of the movement was Gülen himself. Members spoke of him with reverence and affection calling him "Master Teacher" (*hocaefendi*). It was his personality much more than simply his ideas that attracted and motivated so many. Given Gülen's central role, the movement has often been described as a "cult." Some of his followers believe that the Hocaefendi is also the Mahdi, or messiah-like figure in Islam who will come at the end times.¹⁶

The movement, which, at that time already controlled many hundreds of schools, universities, newspapers, journals, radio and television stations, and much else in Turkey and around the globe, had two pillars. One was its legions of businessmen—small, middling, and large-scale. These were men—and they were virtually all men although the movement in other fields did mobilize women—who were pragmatic and successful but also well meaning and eager to do works benefiting their communities and others. Private philanthropy was not well developed in Turkey, where the idea of the state as all-powerful guardian and provider was strong. Gülen provided an outlet for their philanthropic instincts (as well as connections and more opportunities for business), and his stress on modern education resonated with them. By making regular donations

and tying their businesses to the movement's projects, businessmen provided tremendous financial power.¹⁷

The other pillar was the teachers, educated and talented young men. The Gülen schools placed a large emphasis on teaching English and the sciences. With their skills, these men could easily have embarked on remunerative careers in the rapidly growing Turkish economy. Instead, motivated by their belief in Islam and inspired by Gülen, they willingly worked long hours for miserly salaries.¹⁸

Gülen's enthusiasm for education was not original. An emphasis on the need for Muslims to engage with modern education and master the natural sciences, in particular, has been a hallmark of modernist Islamist movements from the nineteenth century onward. The most influential Islamic thinker in Turkey in the twentieth century, Bediüzzaman Said Nursî (1876–1960), was an ardent advocate of combining modern scientific education with religious instruction. Only by recovering their lost tradition of scholarship and scientific inquiry, Nursî argued, could Muslims regain the prosperity and security they had enjoyed earlier in history. Nursî's teachings helped shape Gülen's worldview.

A GOLDEN GENERATION TO SAVE TURKS FROM THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

Gülen, however, placed a far greater emphasis than Nursî on action and on changing the public sphere.¹⁹ Thus, he had another, more instrumental, interest in schooling. A fundamental and consistent goal of Gülen's has been to raise a Golden Generation (*Altın Nesil*), a generation of ethically pure and devout youth who would restore the spiritual values that Turkish society has lost. Like many religious Turks, Gülen attached a special significance to the Ottoman Empire, regarding it as a major chapter in both Islamic history and the history of the Turks. In his view, Turkish civilization peaked with the Ottomans in the sixteenth century. As he told his followers, in the four centuries since that time, "we [Turks] have left nothing but rot." He cast a skeptical eye on the achievements of Mustafa Kemal and the founders of the Turkish Republic. Although these men may have salvaged a sovereign Turkish state from the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and avoided direct colonization by Europe, they adopted too much from the West: "We saved our material [possessions], we saved our bodies, but our hearts remained in someone else's hand."²⁰

To reverse this course of events, Gülen wants his followers to become a "savior generation" (*kurtarıcı nesil*). They are not to wait for passive redemption, but are to go forth to "conquer" both what is inside and what is outside of them.²¹ To create that generation, Gülen, early on, decided to invest in education. Outside of the family, schools are perhaps the most powerful institutions that mold and shape young human beings. They are also ideal venues for recruiting talented youth and reaching their families. Moreover, and not least important, in modern societies, schools, tests, and examinations act as critical gateways and sorting mechanisms, defining who can and cannot enter professions, bureaucracies, and circles of influence. If, as Stalin proclaimed, "Cadres decide everything!" then schools and exams decide the cadres.

In order to comply with Turkish laws and regulations on secularism, Gülen's schools disavowed proselytization in the classroom. When I asked whether a movement so fired by the message of an imam could be so indifferent to the religious and moral formation of the students in its schools, Gülen school administrators and teachers acknowledged that they do aspire to give such formation. They explained that the examples set by the teachers—upright and clean-living men dedicated to their students—served as the primary means of moral instruction to students and parents alike. I have no doubt that this is very true. Conversations with former students, however, revealed that the process of religious formation was often not quite so hands-off. Outside of the classroom, after hours, or in the quarters where students stayed, teachers or more senior students would organize prayer circles and monitor the activities and preferences of students, discouraging them from reading harmful books or wasting time on idle pursuits. Gülen-run dormitories, known as light-houses (*ışık evleri*) around Turkish universities, operated similarly.²²

This regulation of behavior was not unusual. Other religious organizations in Turkey also offer what is effectively subsidized housing in exchange for extramural religious study and adopting approved patterns of behavior. Nor, for that matter, is it exclusive to religious organizations, either inside Turkey or outside. The movement does seek to inculcate in its more core members a profound reverence for Gülen, a belief in the sacred nature of the movement, and an intense in-group loyalty. One former high-ranking member explained in 2009, well before the break with the AK Party, that the movement's ethos of internal obedience and sacred purpose bred in its members a powerful self-righteousness and a habit of distrusting and dismissing external criticism as the product of

either ignorance or malevolence. "And amid this detachment" from outside views and opinions, he warned, "the movement justifies any conduct to achieve its ends at any cost."²³

During most of its existence, the Gülen movement eschewed referring to itself as a collective entity for much the same reason as Gülen's routine disavowal of any active leadership: to put outsiders at ease. Members would describe their entrance into the movement as the time when they entered "service" (*hizmet*). Several years ago, when the extent of their network became impossible to deny, they began referring to themselves as the Hizmet Movement or simply Hizmet.

But it was Gülen's leadership and his followers' boundless energy and devotion that brought the movement astounding success in managing its schools, media operations, and businesses interests and in going global. The movement's structure has been described as "a graduated network of affiliation" with a hierarchical core community, an "expansive loose network of 'friends,'" and an outer ring of sympathizers.²⁴ Given the variation in degrees of association, estimates of membership are inherently inexact, but the figure of 5 million is a fair one.²⁵ The movement has built a worldwide network of schools from pre-kindergarten to universities and a business empire that is worth between \$20 and \$50 billion (U.S.).²⁶

When Gülen and his followers embarked on expansion within Turkey, they sought to allay Kemalist anxieties by explaining that their version of Islam was a peculiarly "Turkic" form of Islam rooted in mysticism and Turkic traditions. They presented it as both alien to "Arab" Islam and as a natural buttress to Turkish nationalism and anti-Communism. Fortuitously, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 allowed the movement to conduct its initial major expansion abroad in the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union. As the movement expanded beyond Turkic countries and restrictions on Islamic activism at home disappeared, it dropped the pretense that its fundamental goal was to promote a uniquely Turkic understanding of Islam.

Wherever the movement established schools, it established business ties as well. Where the teachers were to make sacrifices, businessmen affiliated with the movement were to make profits and plow some of them right back into the movement. Taking advantage of the economic liberalization begun under Turkish prime minister and later president Turgut Özal, Gülen's organization began to grow rapidly in the 1980s. It did not ignore the media and acquired a full-spectrum media presence in radio

and television stations alongside print media in- and outside Turkey. The flagship of its media effort was the newspaper *Zaman*. Established in 1986, within twenty years *Zaman* became Turkey's largest daily. It had a formidable presence on the web and was published in eleven different countries.

The Gülen movement strives to project an anodyne and nonthreatening image. As part of its public relations campaign, the organization makes heavy, saccharine use of inoffensive buzzwords such as "harmony," "coexistence," "peace," and "dialogue." This public image both helped to deflect critics and attract allies, particularly liberals for whom such words and concepts were like catnip. The movement eagerly brought Turkish liberals aboard its media operation, giving them platforms from which they could criticize Turkey's military and the secular establishment. This was highly unusual for an Islamist movement. In exchange for associating itself with liberals, the movement secured significant levels of credibility and trust from Turkish and Western observers.

A decade ago, the movement was justifiably proud of its achievements. It was also eager to show them off to researchers, like me, or to others who might one day wield influence in Turkey or abroad. The dedication, intelligence, and energy of movement members and fellow travelers at all levels were palpably genuine. But their willingness to share information had definite limits. Questions about decision-making, the movement's internal structure, or financing were met with defensive silence. That did not entirely surprise me. I expected that any independent, faith-based organization in Turkey would have cultivated a preference for some secrecy and discretion toward outsiders, given the history of antagonistic relations between the state and religious groups. But with the electoral triumphs of the AK Party in 2002 and 2007, the pious no longer needed to fear the scrutiny of secularists. Moreover, with the Gülen movement having grown into a global educational, media, and business empire, an embrace of greater transparency might have been expected.

Concerns about such secrecy were not unique to academic researchers. In 2009, conversing with a member of Azerbaijan's State Committee on Relations with Religious Organizations, I asked for his thoughts on the Gülen movement. Azerbaijan faces unique challenges in the sphere of religion. It is a secular republic recovering from the Soviet suppression of religion and a Eurasian country with a mixed Sunni and Shia population sandwiched between the Islamic Republic of Iran to the south

and Dagestan, the epicenter of Sunni extremism in Russia, to the north. Azerbaijan is a neighbor of Turkey and shares close linguistic and cultural ties. Hizmet began operating there right after the fall of the U.S.S.R. and was quite active there, running its own university and publishing a local edition of *Zaman*. After first explaining that he believed the Gülen personnel—with their emphasis on personal morality and social harmony and activities in the fields of education and philanthropy—were exemplary, the official confessed that he found their penchant for secrecy worrying.

The Azerbaijani official was hardly alone. Inside Turkey, officials had been sounding alarms. The movement's efforts to infiltrate the state date at least to 1986, when the military expelled sixty-six cadets from three military high schools under suspicion that they were followers of a religious brotherhood: Gülen's. The cadets, between the ages of 14 and 16, had been instructed by their spiritual mentors, "Until you become a staff officer, keep your mouth closed and do not reveal yourself. Pray with your eyes [i.e., not with the full body as normally required by Islam]. We will take Turkey in the 2000s." The incident revealed key characteristics of the Gülenists' *modus operandi*. Using their network of test-prep centers and schools as recruitment nodes, they identified promising young students. They then cultivated these students by assigning each an "elder brother" (or "sister" in the case of girls) who would oversee their spiritual development outside of class. Free tutoring for university entrance exams and free tuition were among the incentives. To the families of talented but impoverished students, they could supply more direct material assistance.²⁷ They were careful, however, to leaven their religious lessons and indoctrination with activities like picnics, screening of karate films, and other events that would appeal to young boys.²⁸ After university, the movement would provide its graduates with jobs in the private sector or in government bureaucracies.

The Turkish military watched the growth of Gülen's movement with unease and began to suspect a link between Gülen and the United States. According to one American, a private citizen advising the Turkish military on financial matters during the mid-1990s, Turkish generals repeatedly and indignantly complained to him that Gülen was "America's Frankenstein." But while the military maintained a wary eye on Gülen and blocked most of his efforts to penetrate their ranks, Turkish police formations proved easier targets. By the late 1980s and early 1990s the movement was successfully placing its members into the police.²⁹

It seems likely that Turkish authorities did not watch passively but in turn made their own efforts to penetrate the movement. In 1999, a recording of Gülen openly explaining to his followers how they must infiltrate the state surfaced. In the now infamous video, Gülen instructed his followers to move unnoticed throughout the state until the right time. If they acted prematurely, he warned, they risked repeating the mistake of the Muslims in Algeria in the 1990s, in Syria in 1982, and in Egypt every year. By coming out and challenging the state before they were ready, these Muslims met with defeat and tragedy.

You must move in the arteries of the system without anyone noticing your existence until you reach all the centers of power... until the conditions are ripe, they [Gülen's followers] must continue like this. If they do something prematurely, the world will crush their heads, and the Muslims will suffer an experience like that in Algeria. They will bring about a calamity like Syria in 1982. They will bring about a disaster and calamity like the disasters and calamities that happen in Egypt every year. The time is not yet right. You must wait for the time when you are complete and conditions are ripe, until you can shoulder the entire world and carry it... Until such time as you have gotten all the state power, until you have brought to your side all the power of the constitutional institutions in Turkey, every step is premature... Until that time, any step taken would be too early—like breaking an egg without waiting the full forty days for it to hatch. It would be like killing the chick inside. The work to be done is in confronting the world on a small scale... Now, I have expressed my feelings and thoughts to you all—in confidence... trusting your loyalty and secrecy. I know that when you leave here—[just] as you discard your empty juice boxes, you will discard the thoughts that I expressed here.³⁰

Gülen's supporters protested that the video had been doctored, although they offered no evidence of how they knew this. Since the failed 2016 putsch, two other highly compromising videos of Gülen have emerged. Both are of uncertain provenance. In one, he boasts haughtily that he had begun planning to overcome the Turkish state at age twenty and that such a task is child's play for someone like him.³¹ In the second, apparently shot shortly after the putsch, he mocks those Turks who took to the streets in opposition as a "herd of jackasses" and vows that Erdoğan "will pass into the sewers like the others."³²

GÜLEN FLEES TO AMERICA

Fearing that the military was determined to get him and that arrest was imminent, Gülen fled Turkey for the United States in 1999. America, it might seem, would be an unlikely place for a Muslim revivalist with a global presence, but Gülen was no typical revivalist. The brand of Islam that he advertised to outsiders—with its emphasis on morality over ritual, harmony and tolerance over doctrinal purity, knowledge of the English language and natural sciences over rote recitation of the Quran—and his ostensibly prodemocratic stance was all too seductive for a number of American policymakers and analysts. It was like something out of their dreams: an interpretation of Islam that was evolving on its own to become “moderate,” pro-Western, prodemocratic.

During the Cold War, the U.S. had enjoyed some success in mobilizing Islam against Soviet-backed socialist movements—most famously in Afghanistan, but also in Turkey and elsewhere. Graham Fuller, who served as CIA station chief in Afghanistan from 1975 to 1978, wanted to serve there because, in his own words, he was “interested in understanding the soft underbelly of the Soviet Union.”³³ Fuller studied under Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor under President Jimmy Carter. About Afghanistan, Brzezinski boasted of “drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap” and dismissed concerns about arming and aiding Islamists fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan, asking, “What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?”³⁴

The American success with Islamism in Afghanistan was, in fact, modest—a tactical alliance dependent on a shared antagonism to materialist communism more than a mutual commitment to any values. Upon the evaporation of the Communist threat, the Americans found their influence on Muslim movements fading. Gülen stood out as a major exception. He desired to come to the U.S. and had a huge following in the geopolitical linchpin that is Turkey as well as a growing global presence. Fuller, the author of several books about Turkey, Islam, and Middle Eastern geopolitics, has highlighted the importance of Gülen in Turkey and the broader Muslim world.³⁵ Together with another former CIA officer, George Fidas, and a former American ambassador to Turkey, Morton Abramowitz, he lent his backing to Gülen’s application for residency. Although the courts rejected the application in 2006 and again in 2008,

Gülen managed eventually to obtain permission to continue residing in the United States.

Following the rise of the AK Party in 2002, the Gülen movement’s room for maneuver inside Turkey widened enormously. Most of the AK Party leadership, including Erdoğan, got their start in the so-called National Vision movement under Erbakan and thus espoused a more conventional Islamist program with greater stress on the desirability of applying Islamic law and greater suspicion of the West. Yet in the context of Turkish politics, Hizmet and the AK Party were ideological allies joined by a common commitment to the restoration of Islamic values to Turkish society. Moreover, they complemented each other functionally. The Gülenists provided cadres of nominally reliable technocrats and educated personnel that a new outsider party like the AK Party needed to staff the bureaucracies. In turn, the AK Party gave political cover to the Gülenists. Although they are now loath to admit it, Erdoğan and the AK Party leadership eagerly staffed the government with Gülenists.

With the AK Party in power, Gülen’s people no longer had to infiltrate the state through stealth. They controlled the gates and wasted little time to exploit their advantage. Within the police and other bureaucracies, they worked to accelerate the rise of their people by manipulating assignments and appointment rosters while recruiting ambitious colleagues. Serving police officers quickly came to understand that their careers depended on their willingness to observe communal religious obligations, such as ritual prayer and fasting, and to collaborate with Hizmet.³⁶ To stack future cohorts with their loyalists, Gülenists rigged civil service examinations and language tests, including TOEFL tests by feeding the answer-keys to fellow Hizmet members.³⁷

That the victory of the AK Party in 2002 deeply worried Turkey’s hardcore secularists is no secret. But even the more paranoid among the officer corps and Kemalist civil servants probably never knew what hit them when the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer investigations were launched in 2008 and 2010. Although Gülen had regarded the 1980 military coup with favor, he and his followers saw the staunchly secularist General Staff as opponents and were determined to neutralize them as political actors. The so-called “soft” or “post-modern” coup of 1997, when a warning from the General Staff forced the Islamist Welfare Party out of the government and set in motion the party’s closure, had a catalyzing effect on Turkey’s Islamists. As noted, it propelled a so-called “reformist wing” of former Welfare Party members under Erdoğan to break

ranks and found the AK Party. Gülen's followers used the soft coup as a touchstone for a popular television drama series that depicted Turkey as a country in the grip of a conspiratorial alliance of unprincipled military officers, Kemalist bureaucrats, crime figures, and others—the Turkish “deep State.”³⁸ In retrospect, one cannot help but think that the series was set to prime the Turkish public for the impending scandals. Life imitates art, or, as now seems likely, life was being made to imitate art.

As mentioned, Gareth Jenkins and Dani Rodrik were among the first outside observers to sound the alarm about the Gülenists' subversion of the law. In Turkey an especially powerful exposé of Gülenist activities came from a career police chief named Hanefi Avcı. Notably, Avcı was not a Kemalist, but a conservative Muslim. His 2010 book, *The Simons Who Live Along the Golden Horn* (*Haliçte Yaşayan Simonlar*),³⁹ provided an insider's account of how the Gülenists were organizing within the police to secure control and engaging in unauthorized wiretapping and surveillance, among other illegal activities. Reaction was swift. If Avcı thought his whistleblowing would win him a hero's welcome, he was woefully mistaken. The Gülen machine turned on him, and he found himself arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced in 2013 to fifteen years in prison.

Nor was Avcı's fate unique. In 2010, two journalists, Ahmet Şık and Ertuğrul Mavioglu, were indicted for publishing a two-volume work that was critical of the Ergenekon investigation. Prosecutors charged Şık and Mavioglu with “breaching confidentiality” and requested jail terms of four-and-a-half years, despite the fact that the material in the book was already publicly available.

In March 2011, police again arrested Şık. This time, they charged him with being a member of Ergenekon but made sure to confiscate the manuscript for a new book to be titled *The Imam's Army* (*İmamın Ordusu*) and slated for publication within a month. In it, Şık sought to explain how Gülen's followers had come to dominate the Turkish Directorate of Security. To ensure that his findings reached the public, Şık released the manuscript in digital format on the Internet under the title *oooBook—The One Who Touches, Burns* (*oooKitap—Dokunan Yanar*). One hundred twenty-five other journalists, academics, and activists attached their names as editors of the book in an act of solidarity. The first part of the title underscored the book's status as an unfinished draft; the second part referred to Gülen and the implicit threat of Hizmet: whoever dared touch the subject of Gülen would get burned. Şık uttered those words as the police took him away.

Although the courts eventually cleared Şık and Mavioglu in May 2011 of the charges levied against them regarding their first book, the authorities held Şık until March 2012.⁴⁰ Upon his release, he fielded questions from the press and predicted, “The police, prosecutors, and judges who plotted and executed this conspiracy will enter this prison.” Construing those words as defamation and threat of civil servants, prosecutors in July of that year again indicted him. In response, Şık castigated the Gülenist police officials for abusing their powers and the AK Party for silence in the face of such abuse.⁴¹

The trials and travails of Avcı and Şık aroused substantial interest among the Turkish public. *The Imam's Army* was downloaded over 100,000 times and was later published in hard copy.⁴² Notably, however, Gülen media outlets offered not a single word in the defense of the two journalists. When sociologist Binnaz Toprak published research that called into question the way the Gülen movement regulated the daily lives of its followers, Gülenist media made no attempt to engage directly but instead mounted a sustained campaign to discredit her. As the respected journalist Ruşen Çakır has noted, the experiences of Avcı, Şık, and Toprak revealed that behind its rhetoric of tolerance, dialogue, and harmony, the Gülen movement operated as a fearsome organization that answered to no one and would not hesitate to bully, intimidate, and crush its critics, dispatching them to jail on manufactured charges.⁴³ As the *New York Times* put it, the movement had created a “climate of fear” around it in Turkey.⁴⁴

The Gülen movement did indeed appear unstoppable, and perhaps, its members felt that way. For reasons that remain unknown, tensions between it and Erdoğan grew, and it turned against him. The aforementioned summons issued to Intelligence Chief Hakan Fidan was one harbinger. Initially, Erdoğan's team ridiculed rumors that Gülenists were taking control of the state.⁴⁵ However, in 2013, when Erdoğan proposed outlawing university test-prep centers and cram schools, it was clear that the battle had been joined. Such centers were both a critical vehicle for recruitment of talented youths and lucrative sources of revenue. Closure would cripple the movement.

Gülen's followers struck back hard. In December 2013, police arrested twenty-four men for involvement in a major corruption ring. Among those arrested were the sons of three cabinet ministers. The ministers resigned, but Erdoğan and other AK Party figures accused “dark forces” and “an illegal organization formed within the state” of waging “deliberate psychological warfare” against the government and vowed to fight

back.⁴⁶ Erdoğan fired or reassigned hundreds of judges, prosecutors, and police officers. Although no one doubted that Gülenists were again behind the corruption investigations, some AK Party supporters still found it difficult to believe that their former ally could have turned against the government, surmising instead that rogue elements inside the movement were at work. Rüşen Çakır, however, concluded at the time that it was quite clear that Gülen was in firm control of the antigovernment campaign.⁴⁷

With Erdoğan still unfazed and now determined to uproot the movement, Gülen's people wheeled in their heavy artillery to attack the prime minister himself. In February 2014, someone using the name Chief Thief (Başçalan) uploaded recordings to YouTube of telephone conversations wherein Erdoğan warns his son that the police are about to raid their home and that he should move the stored cash immediately. The son, in turn, complains that there is too much money—tens of millions of Euros—to move so quickly.⁴⁸ The incident did tremendous damage to Erdoğan's already tarnished image but failed to topple him. Erdoğan stood firmly unrepentant, dismissing the recording as a montage. Although he presented no real evidence to indicate that it was a fabrication, his electoral base remained solidly behind him.

GÜLEN IN THE U.S.

With the conflict now direct and personal, Erdoğan was determined more than ever to uproot and destroy the "parallel state." Infuriated but wily, Erdoğan sought to turn the conflict to his advantage. On the campaign trail, he pointed to the specter of a conspiracy inside the state run by foreigners, repeating the exotic-sounding word "Pen-seel-van-ya," drawing out its pronunciation and using it as shorthand to underscore both the nefarious essence and foreign ties of Gülen. To Americans, the Poconos call up images of hokey vacation fun, but to Turkish ears, "Pennsylvania" rings more like "Transylvania"—dark, foreign, and foreboding.

The question of why Gülen is in America has confounded Turks since well before July 15, 2016. Although his arrival in the U.S. shortly preceded his indictment in Turkey in 1999, Gülen and his followers insisted that the fragile state of his health necessitated relocation to the United States. They further depicted his exile as unfortunate and undesired. Just five years into that exile, Gülen was already describing those years as the most "bitter" of his life. Yet in an interview in 2005, Gülen acknowledged that

politics, not medicine, kept him out of Turkey and that his exile was not compulsory. His return to his homeland might be politically destabilizing, and so he believed it better to wait.⁴⁹ Even after a Turkish court in 2006 acquitted him of all charges, he continued to pursue permanent resident status in the U.S.

Gülen's residence application was controversial. It claimed he qualified for residency... as an "alien of extraordinary ability" in the field of education. This was despite the fact that he had earlier repeatedly disavowed playing any direct role in the establishment or management of schools, slyly averring that he may only have "inspired" certain people to establish schools. The U.S. government's Center for Immigration Services found this wholly unpersuasive and categorically rejected it. As lawyers representing the Office of Homeland Security observed, Gülen has no degree or training in education and had authored no scholarly works. To the contrary, they argued, "The evidence submitted by plaintiff [Gülen] indicates that, far from being an academic, plaintiff seeks to cloak himself with academic status by commissioning academics to write about him and paying for conferences at which his work is studied."⁵⁰ It was an accurate assessment. Gülen, however, had influential backers. Among those who endorsed Gülen's petition were, as previously mentioned, two former CIA officers and a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey. His application ultimately won approval.⁵¹

Journalists routinely describe Gülen's compound in the Poconos as "secluded." An equally accurate but more informative description might be "conveniently located." Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania is close to the New York–Washington D.C. corridor. By placing his compound there, Gülen has put himself in a location that both shields him from Turkish authorities and is well suited to managing a global network of schools, businesses, and faith organizations.

The allure of Gülen to U.S. policymakers is easy to understand. In spite of maintaining a close—and mutually beneficial—relationship since the end of World War II, America and Turkey have never enjoyed warm relations. The reasons for this are manifold and are found on both sides, but among them is the persistence of anti-Americanism across the Turkish political spectrum including the military. As heirs to Mustafa Kemal, the latter have been zealous defenders of Turkey's sovereignty and have habitually regarded the U.S., like other great powers, with wariness and even suspicion. Gülen, who combined an authentic Turkish Muslim identity with ostensible pro-Western credentials, offered a beguiling

alternative. Assisting him in facilitating the ascendance of a more pliable and pro-American elite in Turkey likely appeared an attractive policy option—even a no-brainer. Moreover, at a time when the United States is mired in armed conflicts throughout the Muslim world, the idea that America could host the leader of a dynamic and growing global network of pro-Western, pro-democracy Islamists verges on the fantastic in its appeal. If Gülen could succeed in convincing fellow Islamists in his own country of his reliability and utility, how much easier would it have been to do the same to Americans?

GÜLEN AND THE CRISIS IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

To what extent Gülen's presence in the U.S. reflects a clear policy preference or just a general sympathy for "moderate" Muslims cannot be known outside the offices that authorized and sustain Gülen's relocation to the U.S. What can be said with certainty is that his presence massively complicates American relations with Turkey. Ankara demands his extradition and threatens a rupture in relations if the U.S. does not follow through. This insistence is not a matter of Erdoğan's or anyone else's personal pique. A stunning 81.5 percent of Turks want him to be returned, and nearly as many—77.7 percent—regard Gülen and his sympathizers as a threat to the present order and future of Turkey.⁵² Gülen is in disfavor not because he is a dissident but because the great majority of Turks believe he has been subverting their state, played a key role in a violent attempt to overthrow their government, and is a tool of foreign interests. In the face of such an overwhelming public consensus on a matter of such magnitude, it will be very difficult for Washington over the long term to sustain the status quo in its relationship with its fellow NATO member. Moreover, it is worth remembering that Turkish-American tensions are not limited to the case of Gülen. American military cooperation in Syria with a subsidiary militia of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—The Kurdish People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel or YPG)—an existential threat to Turkey, constitutes another combustible issue.

Erdoğan, for numerous reasons, is unpopular in Washington, where he is seen as an ungrateful and unhelpful ally and an overbearing authoritarian. Indeed, so low is Erdoğan's favor in Washington that some Americans in the immediate wake of the coup suggested he might have engineered the coup himself to justify eliminating his rivals. Notably,

Fethullah Gülen was already making the same claim hours after the coup failed.⁵³ The idea that Erdoğan or anyone else could stage-manage an armed uprising that included pitched gun battles and the deaths of several hundred individuals reveals a faith in human capacity beyond that of all but the most dedicated conspiracy theorists. Similarly, the suggestion that the rapidity with which the government sacked so many people must reveal prior planning rests on unfamiliarity with recent Turkish politics.

The Turkish government has been locked in battle with Gülen and his followers for over three years. Officials were already working to identify and expel Gülenists from state offices well before the coup. Indeed, credible rumors that the General Staff was preparing to dismiss a large cohort of Gülenist officers at the upcoming annual meeting of the Supreme Military Council likely prompted the July 15 putsch as a desperate, last-ditch effort to preserve the Gülenists' remaining presence in the security apparatus.

Technology also assisted the government in identifying likely Gülenists. A smartphone encryption app known as ByLock was reportedly especially popular among Gülenists. By exploiting a flaw in its software, police were able to identify within two weeks tens of thousands of users and take measures against them ranging from dismissal to arrest.⁵⁴

Rhetoric coming from U.S. and European officials and observers in the wake of the coup was, at best, inept. The plea that American President Barack Obama uttered during the putsch for "all sides to act within the rule of law" not only sounded hopelessly silly—imploping violent mutineers to obey the law!—but its neutrality and implicit recognition of the mutineers as a party no less legitimate than the elected government they were seeking to overthrow came across as sly, even sinister.⁵⁵

Protests by the commander of U.S. Central Command General Joe Votel and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper that key American interlocutors in the Turkish military were among those purged or arrested were no less softheaded and revealing, for they implicitly suggested that the preferences of American military and intelligence officials should take precedence over the physical security of the Turkish government and population. Their words not only projected heedless arrogance, but, unfortunately, also bolstered suspicions that Washington did indeed harbor sympathies for the putschists.⁵⁶

The mix of adjurations and warnings from Americans and Europeans to President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım to restrain the purges of suspected Gülenists were worse than useless. Aside from their

poor timing and careless phrasing, they were based on two false premises. The first is that the post-putsch crackdown amounts to a witch hunt—a search for a foe who exists only in the imagination. If there is one thing that the putsch made clear, it is that organized underground forces really do exist and are ready and willing to use violence and illegal means to overthrow the government. The most immediate lesson Erdoğan and others in the government can take from the failed coup attempt is not that they should ease up and err on the side of leniency and grant suspects the benefit of the doubt but precisely the opposite: they have been too gentle with the Gülenists, and it nearly cost them their lives.

It should be emphasized that this is *not* the sole lesson that the government can or should take from the putsch. Perhaps the prime lesson the AK Party (as well as their quondam liberal and other allies) should take is that their past collusion with Hizmet in subverting the law and the legal processes weakened and fractured the Turkish state and thereby left all exposed and vulnerable. Former Chief of the General Staff İlker Başbuğ had warned Erdoğan that Hizmet would come after him, but Erdoğan brushed off his warnings.⁵⁷

In its current crackdown, the government stands a good chance of replicating and compounding its earlier errors. Gülen's movement is a large and sprawling network built over the course of four decades with a major presence in multiple fields, including, but not limited to, education, media, and banking. The crackdown is significantly smaller than that which followed the 1980 military coup, when the government arrested 650,000, put on trial 230,000, sentenced 517 to death, executed 50 by hanging, and tortured to death no fewer than 171 people.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the scale of the current crackdown, with close to 100,000 people affected, is excessive. Only the inner circles of the movement and select followers could have had knowledge of the putsch. The majority of Gülen affiliates, such as the teachers and students in test-prep centers, are likely guilty of nothing more than having had the desire to improve their personal spiritual and material conditions. Indeed, the revelations of the movement's subversive and malevolently duplicitous behavior have, according to one long-time observer of the movement, disillusioned many of Gülen's close followers and provoked internal dissension and turmoil.⁵⁹

To be sure, there is always the possibility that the movement could in the future tap into the residual loyalties of members in influential or critical positions. But with the movement now crippled, albeit not

vanquished, the greater danger in any effort to root out Gülen affiliates entirely is to entrench alienation. As Hanefti Avcı, cited above and one of the Gülenists' most vigilant critics, now warns, punishing people on the margins of the movement will breed unnecessary bitterness and resentment and, still worse, further sunder what little trust remains in a fractured and polarized Turkish society.⁶⁰ Among these affiliates are journalists such as Şahin Alpay, Ali Bulaş, and Nazlı Ilıcak, who wrote for Gülen-funded publications, but are not Gülenists. Even less defensible have been the warrants and dismissals issued for others who have no association with Hizmet but are sharply critical of the AK Party. These include journalists Yavuz Baydar and Can Dündar and historian Candan Badem.⁶¹

Although it is politically expedient for Erdoğan and the AK Party to blame the U.S. for the rise of Gülen, no amount of deflection can erase the truth that they themselves played the largest role in elevating Hizmet within the Turkish state. A recent report issued by the opposition Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi or CHP) in September 2016 on the crackdown makes precisely these points: the AK Party helped bring on its own fate and now risks repeating some of its previous mistakes.⁶²

Yet American policymakers are hardly in a position to lecture Ankara. At a minimum, they are guilty of negligence for not investigating and monitoring the activities of Gülen more thoroughly before and during his residence in the U.S. That Gülen was a man of immense influence and that some Turks for decades had been sounding alarms about him and his agenda were facts known to all. Indeed, they were precisely why the U.S. government granted Gülen residence.

Ankara has formally requested Gülen's extradition. But before U.S. officials can hand him over, there are a number of conditions that American law requires to be fulfilled. Ultimately, the decision will lie with the American judiciary.⁶³

Nonetheless, the President and State Department play critical roles in the process. Although it is still far from clear how exactly the coup was planned or who led it, there is virtually no doubt of Gülenists involvement. As former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey James Jeffrey explained, the putsch attempt represented a sophisticated plot requiring "a very well organized, disciplined, ideologically based group in the military. The only group that meets those criteria that I can think of would be Gülenists."⁶⁴ Dexter Filkins, a staff writer for the *New Yorker* and regarded as one of

America's best foreign correspondents, suggested in a detailed and extended profile in 2016 that Gülen likely was behind the putsch.⁶⁵

Since then, more evidence implicating the Gülen movement has emerged, such as the documented presence of two close Gülen associates, Kemal Batmaz and Adil Öksüz, inside Akıncılar airbase on the night of the coup. Neither Batmaz nor Öksüz are military personnel. The former is an executive from a Gülen holding company, and the latter is a theology professor. Both have been involved with Gülen for decades. The two men flew together from Ankara to New York on July 11 and returned to Ankara on July 13, again on the same flight. Just two days later, on July 15–16, they were again together, this time inside the main airbase of the putschists. Video recording shows Batmaz freely moving and interacting with putschists in the airbase corridors through the night.⁶⁶

It is certainly possible that these and other Gülenists might have acted without Gülen's knowledge or direction, but in such a grave matter as a coup it is highly improbable. Yet despite the availability of such evidence, Gülen's extradition seems unlikely at the time of writing. One reason is that the Turkish government has reportedly not submitted a convincing extradition request. Indeed, thus far government authorities have provided precious little information on the attempted putsch and how it was organized and executed. The relentless accusations against the Gülen movement grow weaker, not stronger, over time in the absence of new evidence, and reinforce a suspicion that the government may be more concerned with keeping its critics as well as its enemies confined than it is with shedding light on the putsch. Moreover, the facts that Washington and Ankara have been and remain at odds over Syria and related issues and that the government crackdown has targeted many who have little or even no connection with the Gülen movement mean that in Washington there is very little sympathy for Erdoğan in particular and the AK Party and Ankara more generally.

An experienced British observer of Turkey recently described the Gülen movement as a "movement defined, if such is possible, by obfuscation."⁶⁷ Such colossal obfuscation notwithstanding, the Gülen movement has left behind a documented record of subterfuge and criminality in Turkey, the U.S., and other locations. The damage Gülen's followers did to Turkish democracy and rule of law in the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer investigations alone is staggering. Never did Gülen chastise his followers for their deception or attacks on their critics, nor did he or his followers apologize for their wrongdoing. As his remarks on clandestine

videos reveal, for decades Gülen has cultivated a mindset and *modus operandi* that is contemptuous of the law and people alike. Finally, and not least important, Gülen and many of his followers shamefully repaid the hospitality shown to them by breaking U.S. laws and regulations not once or twice, but systematically in one state after another. The American people owe nothing to Gülen.

Fears that extraditing Gülen will strengthen Erdoğan, promote authoritarianism, and thereby undermine what remains of Turkish democracy are among the reasons for a notable lack of enthusiasm in Washington for extradition. Officials in Washington would do well to reflect on the fact that, by harboring Gülen in support of "moderate Muslim democrats," America has already inflicted substantial, albeit inadvertent, damage to the leading democracy in the Muslim world and a former, rare pillar of stability in the Middle East. In the meantime, it has entangled itself to an unnecessary degree in a muddy intra-Islamist conflict in which it will always be at a severe disadvantage. The sooner the U.S. drops the pretense that it understands the real interests of Turkey better than the Turkish citizens themselves, the better off we all will be.

NOTES

1. "Woe to him, for how he schemed," is Qur'an 74:19. An earlier version of this article was published on 26 September 2016 with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, under the title, "Damaging Democracy: The U.S., Fethullah Gülen, and Turkey's Upheaval," www.fpri.org/article/2016/09/damaging-democracy-u-s-fethullah-gulen-turkeys-upheaval/, accessed 20 September 2017.
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3. H. Akin Unver and Hassan Alassaad, "How Turks Mobilized Against the Coup: The Power of the Mosque and the Hashtag," *Foreign Affairs*, 14 September 2016.
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