

Turkey and the Restoration of the Caliphate

By Janet Levy

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Turkey, the supposed bridge between East and West, was, until recently, showcased as a model democratic and secular exception in the Muslim world. Since the days of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk -- founder of the modern Turkish state in the 1920s -- the Turkish military and courts were assumed to be effectively moderating against the theocratic and ideological hold of Islam evident in Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

However, closer inspection reveals that this has not been the case, especially in the last half century. Instead, what actually exists is the veneer of a democratic republic overlaying an insidious, percolating revival of the Ottoman Empire by way of dormant Islamic fundamentalism and Turkish nationalism. Using financial and political clout on a global scale, Turkey and one of its premier Islamic leaders, Fetullah Gulen, have steadily gathered allies, including even in the United States, to pursue their dream of a global caliphate.

The fight against modernization and secularization never really ended in Turkey, particularly among that country's rural population, according to author and commentator Andrew Bostom. Bostom reviewed the scholarship of former Hebrew University professor Uriel Heyd, PhD. (1913-1968) who 43 years ago wrote regretfully of his belated recognition of Turkey's re-Islamization. Dr. Heyd decried as shortsighted the view that the secular state had expunged Islam as a vital force in Turkish life. He traced re-Islamization efforts to the late 1930s and cited the dramatic rise of religious instruction in schools, the proliferation of mosques, Muslim supremacist views of Turkishness -- only Muslims could be real Turks -- and the return of the five-times-daily public call to prayer in Arabic following the Democratic Party victory in 1950.

Thus, contrary to the current media view, the rise of Islam in Turkey is not a recent phenomenon attributable to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP). But the movement toward an Islamic theocracy has indeed accelerated since the 2002 formation of a single-party government with a two-thirds parliament majority and Erdogan's subsequent election in 2003.

United States and Turkey

Since the end of World War I when the German-allied Ottoman Empire was defeated and the sultanate and caliphate were replaced by the Republic of Turkey, Turkey has been an important U.S. ally because of its size, strategic location and profitable business opportunities for American companies. Although designated a "neutral" country during World War II, Turkey supplied the Germans with substantial quantities of chromites, essential minerals which harden steel for armor. The Turks didn't declare war against Germany until 1945, ostensibly to be a party to final negotiations at war's end. That same year, Turkey became a United Nations charter member and, as part of the U.N. command, participated in the Korean War, thereby earning a much desired place in NATO in 1952. The United States and Turkey enjoyed close bilateral relations through the post-Cold war period.

Today the government in Turkey has moved away from the West, particularly the United States and Israel, and toward Iran and Syria, effectively changing the balance of power in the Middle East and across the globe. Turkey is actively and more openly pushing for Islamization and an expanded role for the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2007 on Turkish television, Erdogan admonished Westerners' use of the term "moderate Islam," by declaring, "These descriptions are very ugly, it is offensive and an insult to our religion. There is no moderate or immoderate Islam. Islam is Islam and that's it."

That should have set off alarms in the West and extinguished any fantasies of Turkey's role as a pillar of "moderate" Islam. Erdogan had made earlier alarming statements, similarly ignored as in 1994, while mayor of Istanbul, when he avowed, "Thank God Almighty, I am a servant of the Shariah." Further confirming his strategy in 1996 after he was dismissed as mayor, the future Prime Minister stated, "Democracy is like a streetcar. You ride it until you arrive at your destination and then you step off." Since 2002, the Turkish government has been pursuing a version of Islam closely aligned with the Wahhabi extremist Islam of the Saudis.

Islamization and Turkey

The Erdogan government publicly claims to be democratizing Turkey but has curtailed freedom of the press, jailed and sued journalists for criticizing the government and confiscated newspapers and sold them to AKP sympathizers. AKP supporters have infiltrated the military and are suspected of wiretapping and evidence fabrication against retired military officers. Erdogan lowered the age for judgeships in order to replace nearly half of all judges with his younger AKP sympathizers. He also removed banking regulatory board members and replaced them with Islamic banking officials and is reported to have received significant financing from Saudi Arabia, including a known Al Qaeda financier.

Anti-Semitism and attacks against Christians and Catholics have increased in Turkey. Expressions of Armenian heritage and culture have been denied, church property has been confiscated, Armenian instruction has been limited to two hours per week (although Sunni Islam classes are required in Turkish public schools) and it is illegal to discuss the Armenian Genocide. Although Turkey previously enjoyed good relations with Israel, the Jewish state is now declared an enemy of Turkey and the media has promoted an anti-Semitic TV series and several anti-Semitic films. Last year, instead of sending aid through legal channels to Gaza and despite Israel's appeals to the government to stop the action, AKP officials openly supported the Gaza flotilla in partnership with the Global Muslim Brotherhood network. Turkey facilitated the purchase and departure from Turkish ports of the lead flotilla ship, the MV Mavi Marmara. Further, the AKP is closely tied to the Muslim Brotherhood whose spiritual leader -- Yusuf al-Qaradawi -- calls for Islamic domination of Europe. That Turkey, a NATO member, should have such alliances is quite concerning.

In 2010, Erdogan received a human rights award from Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and recently refused to impose sanctions on Gaddafi's regime, even as Gaddafi has used fighter jets to kill his own people.

Just this past week, Erdogan visited Germany and told an audience of 10,000 Turkish Germans (of three million in Germany) not to assimilate but to remain part of Turkey. Turkey has used Germany as a strategic base in Europe and sends young Turks, who have fulfilled their military service, into Germany through the extremist Islamic Society of Milli Gorus (IGMG). IGMG members with German-born daughters are encouraged to marry off their daughter to these Turkish males so that they can obtain permanent residency status and create a fifth column of Turkish Islamists. Trade between Turkey and Iran increased by more than 86% last year and Turkey has been supplying Iran's missile program. In return, Iran has agreed to contribute \$25 million to the AKP for the upcoming election in June.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai recently announced in a joint press conference with Turkish President Abdullah Gul and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari that he would be pleased to see Taliban officials setting up an office in Turkey as part of a "new phase" of building bridges and integrating the extremist group.

Fetullah Gulen and Turkey

A significant component and AKP ally in the changing face of Turkey has been the influential Gulenist Movement led by Fetullah Gulen, a powerful force in Turkey for over four decades. Gulen began a grassroots movement in the 1970's with the Islamist political party, Milli Gorus, a worldwide Islamist movement with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. AKP emerged from Milli Gorus to restore Islamic religion and culture.

The foundation of Gulen's teachings is that state and religion should be reconnected and the country re-emerge as part of a pan-Turkic regional power. A 2009 article in the Middle East Quarterly by Rachel Sharon-Krespin titled "Fethullah Gulen's Grand Ambition" quotes sermons delivered by Gulen on Turkish television in 1999 which provide insights into his methods.

"You must move in the arteries of the system without anyone noticing your existence until you reach all the power centers ... until the conditions are ripe, they [the followers] must continue like this. If they do something prematurely, the world will crush our heads, and Muslims will suffer everywhere, like in the tragedies in Algeria, like in 1982 [in] Syria ... like in the yearly disasters and tragedies in Egypt. The time is not yet right. You must wait for the time when you are complete and conditions are ripe, until we can shoulder the entire world and carry it ... You must wait 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 ... 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. 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 must discard the thoughts and the feelings that I expressed here."

Beginning in the 1970's, Gulen began establishing a worldwide network to promote Islam and Turkish nationalism. His followers have since established hundreds of schools in over 110 countries. Gulenists operate an Islamic bank with over \$5 billion in assets and own significant print and broadcast media properties, NGOs, think tanks and a publishing

company. Gulen recruits Turkish youth by providing housing and education and grooms them for careers in the legal, political and academic professions. In recent years, the AKP passed legislation allowing graduates of Islamic high schools entry into Turkey's universities, guaranteeing Islamist leadership in the future. Gulen controls the majority of schools, universities and dormitories throughout Turkey. His followers remain loyal and donate up to one-third of their income to the movement. In Turkey, Gulen and the AKP together control the police, the intelligence services and the media and actively recruit diplomats for their utility as foreign intelligence satellites. Overall, the holdings are valued at up to \$50 billion.

Members of the Gulen movement extend Turkey's influence across the globe and occupy important positions running several media outlets and controlling multiple organizations that facilitate the dissemination of their message worldwide. A visit to a Gulen interfaith and cultural center in Houston illustrates the politically attuned nature of the movement. Signed photographs of local and state politicians and other prominent people are strategically placed at the building's entry way, implying acceptance of the center's activities and giving the impression that the center is an integral and respectable part of the community.

In 1998, Gulen was convicted (since acquitted in 2006 by Erdogan's AKP government) by the Turkish government for "trying to undermine the country's secular institutions, concealing his methods behind a democratic and moderate image" and went into voluntary exile in the United States. Outside of Turkey, Gulen's goal has been to educate a foreign leadership sympathetic to an Islamist Turkey. But his schools are prohibited in Russia and Uzbekistan banned his madrasas and arrested eight Gulenist journalists for involvement in extremist organizations. In the Netherlands, the movement is being investigated for suspicion of being an Islamist fundamentalist network.

Gulen, Turkey and the United States

In the United States, Gulen operates the largest charter school network in America and enjoys the cooperation and protection of the U.S. government. His schools stress intercultural dialogue and tolerance. They include a curriculum that teaches the Golden Age of Turkey or the period of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish language, dance, culture, cooking and Islam, all financed by American taxpayers.

Meanwhile, his worldwide network reaches into U.S. politics through aggressive lobbying, political donations and paid trips to Turkey for members of Congress and their staffs. The Gulen Movement in the United States represents itself as a multi-faith global organization designed to bring together businesses, educators, religious leaders, journalists and others. Gulen has placed many of his followers in large U.S. engineering firms, NASA, the White House, universities and Hollywood. Through his U.S. State Department contacts, he has procured H1-B visas to staff his schools with Turkish followers.

Turkey through Gulen wields considerable power in American politics and is actively involved in lobbying Congress to promote its interests in Washington. Gulen was recently honored under Texas State Resolution No. 85, which recognized his contributions and promotion of world peace, with the Texas legislature describing the

Gulen movement as fostering intercultural understanding and tolerance. During the 2008 election cycle, a Turkish-American couple, Yalcin and Serpil Ayasli -- founders of Hittite Microwave, a U.S. military contractor -- gave more money, \$424,050, to politicians and political action groups than anyone else in the United States. In subsequent years, the Ayaslis have ranked among the country's top 20 donors. The couple's donations have been geared specifically toward advancing U.S. relations with Turkey and promoting Turkish interests, including stopping the Armenian Genocide Resolution. On this issue alone, "Foreign Lobbying Influence Tracker", a service that tracks lobbyist interactions with government officials, reported that Turkey lobbied Congress on the Armenian Genocide Resolution and hired foreign agents to work with influential people outside of the government, spending \$3.5 million and logging over 2,200 total contacts, including 100 with the executive branch.

Until recently, Turkey presented its foreign policy as pro-Western. Before the 2002 elections in Turkey, Gulen secured an invitation for Erdogan to the White House, which was construed by the Turkish electorate as a U.S. endorsement. Although the United States has an air base in the country, in 2003, Turkey blocked the use of its bases for U.S. ground troops in the lead up to the war in Iraq.

In 2005, Turkey became the General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a 57 shariah law-endorsing permanent delegation to the U.N. whose mission is to safeguard the interests of the Muslim world. This OIC post strengthened Turkey's Islamic agenda as well as the AKP's stature. Assumption of anti-U.S. and anti-Israel positions has increased Turkey's credibility and stature in the Arab Muslim world as it has moved closer to Syria and Iran.

In 2009, Erdogan visited Iran and voiced support for Tehran's nuclear program and refused to support economic sanctions imposed by the West. The Turkish-Iranian-Syrian alliance provides a hedge against the possibility of an independent Kurdish state, offers significant economic opportunities, enhances Iran's power in the region, empowers Hezbollah and Hamas, puts pressure on pro-Western Arab countries and represents a serious threat to Israel.

Current Middle East Turmoil and Turkey

The current Middle East turmoil is an opportunity for Turkey and Iran to shift the region toward radical Islamist rule and elevate Turkey's role as a regional power. The AKP government expects to play a significant role in the evolving Middle East political re-orientation. Turkey was one of the first countries to advise Mubarak to step down and world leaders, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, are turning to Turkish leadership to assist the transitional government. Recently, Hamad Al Khalifa, the prince of Bahrain, sought Turkish intervention with Iran. The Muslim Brotherhood has extolled the virtues of Turkey providing the AKP with leverage in the Egyptian situation.

When the Islamist AKP took over the Turkish government, the Saudis, who were fearful of the threat presented by Iran and mindful of their own lack of power, saw an opportunity to exert influence on the new government and to revive the caliphate. President Gul had worked at the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Saudi Arabia for eight years in preparation for the Islamization of Turkey under the Wahhabis. In 1991,

he was sent back to Turkey to launch the Islamist movement under Necmettin Erbakan (1926 - 2011), Turkey's first Islamist prime minister, and, later, the AKP.

Under the Ottomans, Muslim power reached its zenith and the Caliph was transferred from Mecca to Istanbul, home of the Holy Relics and Caliphate Seal today, coveted by the Wahhabis since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. As Turkey is strong militarily, economically and its people are more nationalistic than Arab Muslim countries, the Saudis believed they could benefit from the alliance. With 100 million Islamicized Turks and Saudi funding of aggressive mosque building and dawa (proselytizing) in Europe, the resurgence of the caliphate could be a reality. The Saudis, who are motivated by the resurgence of the Sunni Caliphate, have played a significant role in Turkey's rise in the Muslim world.

Erdogan in partnership with Fetullah Gulen has made a concerted effort to target the military, take control of the media and stack the courts in order to realize the dream of Neo-Ottomanism -- a return to Turkey's Muslim imperialist past. In their long-term campaign to subordinate the army, the guardian of Turkey's secular democracy, show trials have been held in which high-ranking military officers and political opponents have been arrested and detained without bail. The defendants stand accused of attempting to overthrow the AKP government. The AKP instigated demands by the European Left to curtail military activity as a condition for Turkey's E.U. membership, although there is speculation that this was just a pretext for weakening the military and Turkey does not intend to join the E.U. Academics and journalists are also on trial for trying to bring down the government. In 2003, Erdogan used a constitutional amendment to target the courts and the military and secure the AKP's rule in the country. Erdogan then selected Islamist judge replacements and President Gul appointed pro-Islamic generals and military officers.

Turkey's move away from the West, its renewed alliances with Islamist regimes and its disavowal of secular reforms in favor of theocratic rule under shariah could precipitate a precarious shift in the balance of power in the world. A portentous event could have been when Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad last month hosted Nureddin Surin, a Hizbollah-activist and the delegation leader of the MV Mavi Marmara, the Turkish ship captured by Israeli as it tried to run the Gaza blockade. Surin used the occasion to declare, "We are here today with the longing and the determination to build a Middle East without Israel and America, and to refresh our pledge to continue on the path of the Mavi Marmara shahids (martyrs)....."

The Iranian Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, took the opportunity to thank the Turkish Muslims for their fight on behalf of Islam. Given the strength of this alliance combined with Saudi largesse and a changing picture in the Middle East, a global caliphate under shariah law could become a reality.

http://www.americanthinker.com/2011/03/turkey_and_the_restoration_of.html