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Recep Doğan, *Political Islamists in Turkey and the Gülen Movement*

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The following review concerns the most recent publication of Recep Doğan titled *Political Islamists in Turkey and the Gülen Movement*, published in 2020 by Palgrave Macmillan. The author of the reviewed book is a researcher and Senior Lecturer of Islamic Studies at Wisdom College of Australia. It is worth to mention, present publication is just a part of the series "Middle East Today", which focuses on general topics such as turmoil, war and revolution, international relations, occupation, radicalism, democracy, human rights, and Islam as a political force in the context of the modern Middle East.

As the author of the book emphasized in the introduction, this publication primarily aims to examine the ideology of political Islamists and its effects on the religion and social life of modern Turkey. Moreover, it seeks to explain how and why the positive image of the Gülen movement has been changed from a respected faith-inspired community to an "enemy number 1" by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his ruling party, the AKP. The publication consists of eight chapters, including an introduction and general conclusions. A summary of the main topics and dimensions is presented below.

Recep Doğan decided to open the analysis with a broad theoretical explanation of political Islam – definitions, a brief history, and types of this ideology since

political Islam is a particular interpretation of Islam based on certain doctrines, beliefs, and values as the foundation of a political structure, including some general concepts from Islam history such as Islamic State, Caliphate, and the Sharia to constitute their doctrines. What is more essential for this academic discussion, the second chapter presents the case study of the rise of political Islam in Turkey, focusing on the state-controlled model of this ideology. The beginning of this process is linked to the reforms undertaken in the late Ottoman era, followed by the establishment of the new modern state by Kemal Atatürk who aggressively tried to condemn Ottoman tradition, including the vital religious spirit of the society. In consequence, the Islamic world developed some strategies to restore Islamic life in society and politics. Since then, occasionally, Islam was used by the Turkish state to maintain cohesiveness at times of political and social conflict. Simultaneously, religious groups and movements within civil society were expressing the need to be represented in the political arena consistently. This was one of the reasons for the success of Erdoğan's AKP in general elections in 2002 who declared Islam as an element of their political program. In turn, the current Turkish form of political Islam is controlled and disseminated by the state. Thus, the government aims to create the Turkish-Islamic synthesis in the public area first and then in politics later by various means and reforms elaborated broadly by the author.

The third chapter is dedicated to the Gülen Movement (*Hizmet, Cemaat*) itself. The author presents the definition of *Hizmet* widely including the main objectives, characteristics, structure, and brief history of this organization. It is highly important to mention that this organization has varied definitions due to its different functions. In consequence, from a religious point of view is described as focused on individual transformation and religious practices, from a social perspective as engaged in education, health care, and media and finally from a political angle as a non-official part of major government and military institutions. The movement is inspired by certain universal values such as love, respect for others, honesty, integrity, justice, equity, the rule of law, constitutional and participatory democracy, compassion, and human rights. Although he teaches Islamic values, Gülen does not seek to establish an Islamic state as a political entity that would lead to a unified Muslim community.

The next part of the book titled "From a Strategic Alliance to a Terrorist Organization" focuses on the history of the relationship between AKP and the Gülen Movement from 2001 to 2019. It covers the first era of strong beneficial relations between these two groups and its symbiotic coexistence describing in detail the most important common projects and cooperation concerning political and social reforms. The chapter puts a strong emphasis on conditions and reasons that caused the first wave of tensions and, eventually, a radical split between them after 2011. The author refers to the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* trials – one of the longest-running and peculiar events in the recent political history of Turkey. Since 2007, prosecutors claimed a secretive, ultra-secular, ultra-nationalist organization had been carrying out terrorist attacks and manipulating events behind the scenes, at the same time planning the military coup against Erdoğan and his government. Moreover, the recent events of 2016 were briefly described – actual but failed military rebellion carried out by a faction within the Turkish Armed Forces who tried to seize control over

Ankara, Istanbul, and Marmaris to enforce AKP to resign. Both events are linked by one common element – the afterword's accusation that Gülen and its followers were ringleaders or even perpetrators of these violent and anti-government operations. In general, the Gülen movement became the usual suspect behind any conspiracy and it was accused as a hidden force engulfing the state apparatus in its entirety.

The fifth part of the book describes Turkey's political and social future by analyzing the decisions and reforms implemented under the rule of the AKP. The author examines the full range of the changes which finally lead this state to the so-called "Erdogan's New Turkey" heading toward an authoritarian regime. Although the AKP started as a democrat party it gradually turned into a one-man ruling party after winning elections continuously. The AKP broke with three main tenets: market-driven economics, Kurdish recognition, and the EU standards. Political Islamists effectively eliminated the independence of the judiciary in Turkey and used it as a tool of political persecution. Erdoğan eliminated almost every systemic, institutional or legal control mechanism which might limit his power, including the traditional political position of armed forces. Moreover, the author explains the human rights violations, restrictions on the media, and the destruction of democratic institutions from 2001 till now.

The next chapter is focused on the political theology of political Islamist of Turkey and takes under consideration the dispute about to what extent Islam should play a role in political affairs. To understand the political theology of political Islamists of Turkey, the author bases the further deliberation on a few elements and conditions: Islam and Politics, Democracy, Nationalism, Erdoğan's autocratic ambitions, caliphate, Muslim Nation (*Umma*), Islamic State, and Shariah. Secondly, readers may learn about a specific Turkish Institution – Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) – the state institution which reports to the prime minister, has a budget larger than that of most ministries and in consequence controls religious affairs in Turkey. Understanding the role of its institution is important since it is one of the tools for the AKP regime to support the extreme ideology of the party. Moreover, discussed chapter addresses the role of excommunication (*Takfir*) against opponents which may have various reasons – political, economic, cultural, educational, and psychological, mostly used by extremists accompanied by aggression toward the others. The chapter ends with the description and analysis of the Turkish educational system which has a pivotal role to fight extremism and undemocratic changes in every state in the world. The author addresses the AKP government reforms to Islamize Turkey's education – turning religious schools from a selective option to a central institution in the system.

The last substantive chapter is dedicated to the political theology of the Gülen Movement, which refers to a few core elements of the ideological base: nationalism, secularism, democracy, education, Sharia and Islamic Law, Islamic State, Caliphate, Muslim Nation (*Umma*), relations with non-Muslims and the West. Readers may find out more detailed information about hierarchy within the movement and operations of *Hizmet* and read the author's assessment considering terror, violence, and radicalism of the organization.

Finally, the publication is concluded in form of a comparison of the two groups – AKP and Gülen Movement based on previously described elements such

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as democracy, nationalism, caliphate, Muslim Nation, the Shariah, Islamic State, education, and terrorism. The most insightful motion from this chapter is the conclusion made by the author that the main reason for the split between AKP and Gülen is not the power struggle but understanding of Islam or, in other words, how each group interprets Islam in theory and practice. The split between them is, in reality, the difference between political Islam and civil Islam. The chapter ends with scenarios and perspectives on how this fight would shape the future of Turkey as well as how it may direct Muslims' understanding of Islam when they adopt the ideology of political Islam or the ideology of civil Islam.