



The Turkish Government's Policy in Weakening the Gulen Movement

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Abstract:

This article focuses on the policies of the Turkish Government in its efforts to weaken the Gulen Movement. The Gulen movement has grown in 150 countries has used its educational centers to spread ideas. Since the failed 2016 coup, sympathizers of the Gulen Movement have been branded Turkey and Islam as a threat. For the data collection method, the author used an in-depth literature review. This study used a qualitative approach to content analysis. The data collected is sourced from Mendeley and Harzing Publish or Perish, which then the data found will be further strengthened by various reviews. After the data was collected, the authors conducted an in-depth analysis and review in finding research data. There are two forms of policies carried out by the Turkish government, namely domestic policies, namely: (1) branding the Gulen Movement as a Terrorism Movement, (2) closing educational institutions and universities affiliated with the Gulen Movement, (3) threatening participants and followers of the Gulen Movement with imprisonment. Through false accusations, forced transfers, and kidnappings. Then for its foreign policy: (1) the Gulen Movement, which is branded internationally as the Terrorism Movement, (2) the closure of educational institutions and universities outside Turkey affiliated with the Gulen Movement, (3) threatening to arrest and hunt down the participants of the Gulen Movement and mention there is no safe place for them, including outside Turkey, (4) against the influence of Gulen's ideology with Sunni Islam in the process of spreading it. This research contributes to explaining the policy of the Turkish Government in depth through its efforts to weaken its Movement, the Gulen Movement, which is also an advantage over other similar studies. Then the drawback of this research is that it does not discuss further explanations of the Gulen Movement in detail.

Keywords:

Government's Policy; Gulen Movement; Turkish Government

I. Introduction

The Gülen movement, which since mid-July 2016 has attempted a military coup but failed, is now growing and cannot be separated from the figure of an Islamic preacher and social critic, Fethullah Gülen, who has been forcibly exiled from his homeland. The events of that night marked the final stage and the breaking of the egg in Fethullah Gülen's transition from a powerful established ally to Turkey's most wanted criminal. The Turkish Government held Gulen directly responsible for masterminding the coup, and the Turkish Government referred to the Gülen Movement since then as the Fethullah Terrorist Organization as FETÖ. Then there was a wave of arrests and purges of the domestic state sector and outside but with several approaches in interacting with the destination country. The arrest by the Turkish Government in 2016 was unprecedented, which had been witnessed, and of course, arrests were aimed at members.

Tens of thousands of people, many of whom do not have any relationship with the Gülen Movement, are still being processed, which causes them to lose their jobs, flee from Turkey or other countries, and many are still in prison. Of course, because of the increasing prevalence of these arrests, it is not surprising that the followers or participants of the Gülen Movement who were in Turkey and managed to escape to seek refuge abroad, many of them headed for Western Europe and the United States, which of these events resulted in the Gülen Movement having statistics. The growing distribution is also in the related destination countries. The Government also confiscated financial assets by the state with a reasonably large nominal after they were arrested. Anti-Gülenism activists who at that time in Turkey were experiencing high conflict tensions coupled with disputes due to the public situation and the political turmoil of President Erdoğan's power were seen only little chance and loophole for the possible prospect of the Gülen Movement restoring its once-strong position in Turkey.

From here, this article seeks to discuss what the Turkish Government's policy is in weakening the Gulen Movement because this Movement tends to be felt to threaten the existence and authority of the Government. Meanwhile, it is also hoped that from this article it is also hoped that the Turkish Government's policy in weakening the Gulen Movement will be limited. Therefore, this research is limited to policies in the Turkish Government's efforts to weaken the Gulen Movement. It is different from other studies which the author also used as a reference, where studies these other studies tend to discuss in detail the Gulen Movement in a comprehensive manner and its relations and relations with the Turkish Government, but only mention the basic essence without going deep into the context of policy products.

II. Review of Literature

2.1. Gulen Movement and Turkish Government

In Ahmet Erdi 's writing, based on interests, Erdogan, who was previously in an alliance with Gulen, separated himself in 2012 from a coalition of liberal and nationalist supporters of the West with Eurasianist orientation. Soon the Gulen Movement spread to hundreds of countries because it was felt to threaten the Government, Erdogan as the Turkish Government issued a policy (Öztürk, 2016). Then also, Dr. Euphrates Aviv, through his writings, the Government knows that Fethullah Gülen is in Pennsylvania and is considered the mastermind of the failed coup. The Government seeks diplomacy with the US for the extradition of Gülen to return to Turkey regarding his foreign policy in carrying out post-coup purges even after the Turkish Government sent dozens of documents containing evidence that Gulen was behind the coup (Aviv, 2016).

In contrast to the writings written by Ghulam Fatima, there is a positive intention from the Gulen Movement, where Gülen supports the modern western democratic system because it is no different from the concept of shura in Islam. Still, there should be no theocracy in Islamic politics, it appears that Gulen is trying to accommodate the Muslim community. In the opinion that Gulen is actively building education, they also apply the value of gender equality for women (Fatima, & Hayyat, 2016). In addition, Jeff Jager's writings also shed light on another perspective of the scope of the Gülen Movement, with its founder Fethullah Gülen being the world's best living intellectual figure as well as an inspirational leader for millions of followers who some still see as a threat to Turkey (Jager, 2016).

2.2. Turkish Government's Response

Officials within the Government did not escape arrests, as evidenced by W. Andrew Terrill's writing, explaining that even state officials, including those from the military at home and abroad who were suspected of being arrested, did not escape arrest and were imprisoned.

Most of them are considered as Gülen participants, many of whom are trying to be sent back to Turkey to serve their sentences abroad (Terrill, 2016). As for Nur Uysal's writings, he explained a lot about the diplomatic side of the Government in using public media after the failed 2016 coup attempt in Turkey to control communications and revealing the parties concerned who challenge the capabilities of the Turkish Government due to the rise of the diaspora (Uysal, 2019).

Meanwhile, in another article by Ahmet Erdi with Simon P. Watmough, it was explained that over time with the attitude of the Turkish Government against Gülen, the Gülen Movement was increasingly entering a crisis phase because the Movement continued to be difficult (Watmough, & Öztürk, 2018). Another article by the same author explores the Gülen Movement whose condition has turned increasingly critical since the coup attempt, which was followed by a crackdown by the Turkish Government in which many members were in a situation of political exile (Watmough, & Öztürk, 2018)

Then the writings of M. Hakan Yavuz changed the Gülen Movement over time which was initially relatively liberal and pluralistic based in Turkey, then tended to become authoritarianism and liberalism, especially after the rivalry with the Turkish Government (Yavuz, 2018). Then finally, the writings of M. Hakan Yavuz and Rasim Koç explained that because of the failed coup attempt, the military, which was suspected by many of Gülen's participants, had begun to be stopped under surveillance, at the same time the Government was trying to consolidate civil society (Yavuz, & Koç, 2016).

The ten literature reviews above have their specific tendencies; some of the studies above focus on further elaborating on the Gülen Movement, some also mention general domestic policies, and some explain Gülen from a different perspective than the Government. Likewise, the research conducted by this author focuses more on the policy products carried out by the Turkish Government in its efforts to weaken the Gülen Movement.

III. Research Methods

The subject of this research is to examine the policy products of the Turkish Government in its efforts to weaken the Gülen Movement. The authors conducted a literature review by mapping each to get organized data. After the data was collected, the authors conducted an in-depth analysis and review in finding research data. Then for the limitations of the research so as not to widen further, this research is focused on the efforts of the Turkish Government in weakening the Gülen Movement's policy products, as for the scope of the study, namely from 2016 to 2019 with a focus on the Turkish Government's policy areas in other countries. The data collected by the authors are sourced from Mendeley and Harzing Publish or Perish, which then the data found will be further strengthened by various research and literature reviews.

To answer the formulation of the problem, the research methodology used by the author is to use qualitative methods. From the previous related explanation, from this article, the author tries to explain the policy of the Turkish Government in weakening the Gülen Movement, so the question of this research is what is the policy of the Turkish Government in its efforts to weaken the Gülen Movement?

IV. Result and Discussion

Simply put, the Gülen Movement opposes categorization from outsiders, and points of comparison with other religious organizations or ideologies are difficult to find. The Movement rejects labeling itself and tends to reject the notion that it is an organized movement, which they say lies at the heart of Gülen's vision of a better world. Empirically, it can be seen that the Gülen Movement considers their presence not as the head of an organizational structure that seems to be organized, but rather as an inspiration united only by their commitment to the universal principles of civil service and humanity. The Gülen movement is a movement initiated by ulama and Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen. The essence of the Gülen Movement is that contemporary Islam is voluntary and interrelated, especially the fact that the Gülen Movement has grown and spread in more than 150 countries in the world. The growth of this Movement cannot be separated from its members who volunteer in educational centers of the Gülen Movement. Besides Gülen, they have another designation, namely Hizmet. This designation tends to be their name.

The Gülen Movement has its mission and vision to spread its influence and implement its ideology. The Turkish Government sees this as a threat. The Turkish Government tries to stem the Gülen Movement's agendas by implementing policies and regulations that make it difficult for their activities to spread their goals and political ideology. Over the past three decades, it seems to have continued to grow by growing and gaining power in Turkey and abroad. With the waning of the Gülen Movement, following the failed coup attempt in 2016, the AKP made a firm decision to purge the Gülen movement from both Turkish life and abroad.

4.1. Domestic Policy

Furthermore, even though the Gülen Movement was previously an alliance of the AKP, a pro-government group, the Turkish Government does not hesitate to cast narratives aimed at the Gülen Movement. Even though Turkish President Erdoğan is also openly going through their plan to hunt down anyone who supports, follows, defends, or participates in the Gülen Movement at home and abroad, the tension between the AKP and Gülen cannot be separated. The AKP continues to grow significantly, and disputes occur because of different policy approaches. Investigations by the Turkish Government into detainees arrested both at home and abroad have continued after the failed coup. However, the European Union has criticized the Turkish Government's policy of obtaining information from detainees by methods that tend to be harsh. In the end, the conflict between the AKP government and the Gülen Movement was seen as a power struggle for political power.

Turkey in Erdoğan's Government was arguably the winner of the conflict that occurred during the vulnerable time with the Gülen Movement. From this success, the Turkish Government quickly took policies to strengthen their position while weakening the influence of the Gülen by gradually restructuring the positions that had previously been given to members of the Movement as coalition partners. They were then transferred to a new coalition from the Government, which led to the sinking of Gülen and the increasing prominence of various branches of sects or other religious organizations. In Europe, the previous Turkish government structure has survived since the 1970s. Hence, the significant restructuring carried out by the Turkish Government certainly has a significant impact on Turkey's foreign policy indirectly.

Every time the Turkish Government makes domestic decisions regarding the Gulen Movement, they simultaneously declare war on terrorism, which refers explicitly to the fight against FETO where there is branding by the Turkish Government in referring to Gulen; this policy is taken. It is also one of the central prioritized policies and has a significant impact abroad. This is addressed to the Turkish people publicly and to the international community to neutralize criticism of the Government. In addition and any form, terrorism cannot be justified because terrorism itself is a crime against humanity which is the most vulnerable as one of the many forms of crime. The FETÖ label that has been instilled in Gulen members means that sympathizers are no longer seen as citizens but as enemies or radicals. In this context, of course, the Government plays an essential role as a securitization actor in making decisions to brand the Gulen Movement as a dangerous threat.

4.2. Foreign policy

After 2014, the Turkish Government quickly formed an international union with the AKP. It began to implement its policies through messengers relating to official and unofficial transnational religions that served as a center for information and coordination with the Government, initially through the diaspora, which was gradually carried out until it was finally implemented. The Turkish Government consistently strives for a more active global discourse. The Turkish Government in Erdoğan's time is often seen as the most competent and legitimate representative used by the Government to strengthen the Government's influence by raising religious themes for Turkey's foreign policy. As for this, it also proves the seriousness of the Turkish Government, especially during the Erdogan era, to control and have an essential role in the global Muslim population through the state instruments they have to secure influence over Muslims everywhere. In the end, the religious foreign policy championed by the Government must continue to be carried out more intensively than before to trigger a greater level of influence for Erdogan from this policy on the influence of the Turkish Government, especially concerning religion at home and internationally as well as to weaken Gulen's influence.

In many circumstances, the Gulen Movement itself is often considered the Gulen Movement as causing the tension to worsen and even being considered the cause. The involvement of the Gulen Movement has caused them to be wanted by the authorities since then because of their involvement, especially in what are considered to be activities. Independently anti-secular, and warrants for the arrest of each participant or follower were issued. Even in 1999, Fethullah Gülen left Turkey for the United States. Then, during the heyday of his unofficial alliance with the AKP government, the charges against him were finally dropped. However, Fethullah Gülen chose not to return and preferred to remain in the United States. Of course, the Turkish Government also tried to arrest Fethullah Gülen through diplomatic relations with the United States.

In addition, the Turkish Government and the AKP use instruments from Sunni Islam as a fundamental goal to strengthen its influence. Islam has been a substantial source of national ideology and ethos, especially concerning weakening the Gulen movement, including in the global sphere. Even the Turkish Government has a strong commitment, as evidenced by the delegation to the Minister of Religious Affairs, who was given a larger budget than others. Other line ministries and the encouragement and strong desire of the Government to be even more active at home and abroad in the future. So far, the progress of this development plan has spread in several Balkan countries, from Eastern Europe to Cuba, by building the largest mosques in the region and elsewhere in the world. As for the Turkish Government through its representatives, many are actively involved with other Turkish Islamic organizations that are considered to have historical relatives in North Africa and

Central Asia, especially in Western European countries that have a large population of Turks who live there. In many places, under Erdogan's leadership, Turkey positioned their influence situation as a representative and, over time, hopes to become the leader of the Muslim world in his influence. This vital role and plan carried out by the Turkish Government actively has an important role and is a product used as a foreign policy tool.

The Turkish Government, through its policies, also continues to seek to diminish the influence of the Gulen Movement by stopping its capability to spread ideology and understanding through education. Anyone outside Turkey was reduced through communication and interaction between countries with a diplomatic approach. Gulen has many schools or educational centers that have many students and followers. Therefore it is not difficult for the Gulen Movement to spread its wings in spreading its ideology. In addition to the policies implemented, this will significantly reduce the spread of the Gulen Movement's thoughts.

V. Conclusion

It can be seen that the Turkish Government is very serious about weakening the Gulen. It can be seen from their efforts, such as the policies implemented, in their foreign policy in a complex and comprehensive manner implementing policies that are also closely related to their domestic relations. The most significant finding from foreign policy, namely by seeking the closure of schools and colleges that have a relationship or affiliation with the Gulen movement itself, is that education is believed to have the strongest role in spreading ideology concerning strengthening the influence of their Movement. Furthermore, of course, this Movement cannot necessarily be carried out without diplomatic efforts from the Turkish Government to close schools outside the Turkish Government's reach due to the absence of the Turkish Government's capability to intervene and coercion to close schools and colleges outside Turkey. Negotiations must be pursued on the part of the Turkish Government. A similar policy that involves diplomacy in the process is also from the Turkish Government's policy of arresting members or participants of the Gulen Movement, as previously explained that the Turkish Government will firmly stop anyone who participates in the Gulen Movement at home or abroad.

In general, it can also be seen that each policy is related to the other, where foreign policy tends to be based on or due to previous domestic policies. Domestic policies that are implemented also impact supporting the implemented foreign policy policies.

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