

M. Fethullah Gülen as a Transformational Leader: Exemplar for the “Golden Generation”

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ABSTRACT

The Gülen Movement may well be the most important social, educational, and religious movement in Turkey today, and its impact is felt world-wide. It emphasizes the importance of education, especially science and math, and the necessity for dialogue among all faith communities. Exceptionally effective in mobilizing human and material support, it has succeeded in creating major communication outlets and numerous educational institutions throughout the world. Its unusual success is largely due to the transformational leadership of its acknowledged head, M. Fethullah Gülen. This paper will discuss the theoretical basis of transformational leadership; demonstrate how Mr. Gülen embodies its precepts; and discuss the significance that his leadership holds for the movement.

Transformational leadership, a theory developed by James McGregor Burns, explains how some leaders are able to effect change of a higher level. These leaders are able to “transform” the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of their supporters. As opposed to the traditional “transactional” leader, who motivates followers by extrinsic rewards, the transformational leader brings about powerful cognitive and affective changes in supporters by emphasizing intrinsic rewards. Transformational leaders broaden and elevate the interest of their supporters and move them to go beyond their own self-interest

for the good of the group. Transformational leadership is able to effect more enduring change within an organization than transactional leadership.

The four attributes of a transformational leader are: (1) idealized influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) individualized consideration, and (4) intellectual stimulation. Our paper argues that M.

Fethullah Gülen embodies all four of these characteristics, is an excellent example of transformational leadership, and has inspired a movement of extraordinary power and importance.

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Fethullah Gülen long dreamed of a young generation, a “golden generation”, who would combine intellectual ‘enlightenment’ with pure spirituality, wisdom, and continuous activism (Gülen 1998: i).

The Islamic reform movement headed by M. Fethullah Gülen, variously known as the “Gülen Movement”, the “Nurculik”, or simply the “Movement”, is the most important social force active in Turkey today and has had an increasing global presence since the 1990s (Kuru 2008). Inspired by the example of an earlier Muslim reformer, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1874-1960) and developed further by Gülen’s own activities, it is over a century in the making and aims at transforming the way Islamic thought relates to the imperatives of modern society. A force for guided, religiously inspired modernization with long-term legal, political, social, educational, and economic implications, it promotes a revitalized form of Islamic mysticism that is wedded simultaneously to traditional Muslim practice and to the scientific, technical, and industrial methods that have so clearly lifted the material level of Western society (Gülen 1998).

The scope of the Gülen movement is difficult to estimate, but the number of Turkish followers may reach many millions. Some of the most active and productive members of Turkish society are par-

ticipants. An important segment is composed of business people who respond both to Gülen's commitment to traditional Islamic values and to his defense of free enterprise. Plainly, they have reacted against their perception of the aggressive secularism of the bureaucratic and military establishment as well as to the corruption and over-regulation that became a hallmark of Atatürk's successors. This group provides much of the funding that fuels the Movement's educational and promotional activities. The burgeoning educated classes provide another significant component. Supporters from this category want to retain their Islamic identity, but also want to preserve their connection to the professional values, associations, and infrastructure of their Western counterparts (Hendrick 2006). College students form a conspicuous subset of this group, for they provide much of the energy that animates the movement as a whole.

While business people and students form the core of his movement, Gülen also appeals to a much wider audience. He promotes a particularly sophisticated view of Turkish identity, claiming it was forged in pre-Anatolian times, then shaped and honed by the Ottomans into a multi-national, multi-cultural civilization of extraordinary cosmopolitanism. That interpretation, which satisfies ethnic pride while avoiding a narrow nationalistic definition, (Williams 2000; 56) resonates with many Turks. Furthermore, he has taken a very strong stand against the use of terror (Gülen 2004b: 1-3); moderate Turks who are unsympathetic to Islamic extremism and secular republicanism find Gülen's positions very attractive.

This paper analyzes Gülen's influence on the movement that bears his name by using Transformational Leadership Theory. We are convinced that this is a valuable approach. Placing Gülen's activities within this theoretical framework brings his leadership style into clear focus; provides insight into the reasons for his striking success; and allows a better estimation of the future of the Movement.

Leadership has been defined as activity aimed at bringing about change in an organization or social system in order to improve peoples' lives (Aldoory & Toth 2004). The concept of transformational

leadership was first introduced by James MacGregor Burns (1978) in his seminal book, Leadership. According to Burns, transformational leadership is leadership that has the effect of “transforming” followers’ attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. He contrasted transformational leadership with the more commonly occurring transactional leadership, which had previously dominated leadership research and training. Transactional leadership emphasizes the exchange, or transaction, of rewards for effort as the key mechanism in influencing and motivating followers; for example, higher pay for greater effort. The difference between transformational and transactional leadership is what leaders and followers offer one another (Burns, 1978). The transformational leader’s internal, external, and relational context of behavior connects with the followers’ own sense of internal motivation.

Good transactional leaders are managers of what they have in hand and make limited incremental progress on modest goals, making best use of given resources. What Burns calls transformational leaders, on the other hand, have a teaching role. They elevate, motivate, define values, offer vision, and creatively produce reform and at times revolutionary developments in the face of unusual opportunities and challenges (Abshire 2001:1).

Burns is a political scientist and presidential biographer, and is the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for his biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Because of his training, he originally examined leadership in the political context, focusing on the leadership style of U.S. presidents. Bernard Bass and his colleagues (Bass 1985) extended Burns’ ideas of transformational leadership and adapted them from the political arena to the organizational context. Bass argued that transactional leaders “mostly consider how to marginally improve and maintain the quantity and quality of performance, how to substitute one goal for another, how to reduce resistance to particular actions, and how to implement decisions (Bass 1985:27). Transformational leaders, on the other hand,

...attempt and succeed in raising colleagues, subordinates, followers, clients, or constituencies to a greater awareness about

the issues of consequence. This heightening of awareness requires a leader with vision, self confidence and inner strength to argue successfully what he sees is right or good, not for what is popular or is acceptable according to established wisdom of the time (Bass 1985:17).

The effect of these transformational leaders is often discussed in terms of dramatic cognitive and affective changes. Bass, for example, says that transformational leaders arouse intense feelings; “they are inspirational and heighten expectations and engender excitement” (Bass 1985:10). Transformational leaders offer a purpose that transcends short-term goals and focuses on higher order intrinsic needs. This results in followers identifying with the needs of the leader. However, a transformational leader has to have an intuitive understanding of followers’ needs, especially higher level needs, and must use communication that appeals to those needs. Communication skills are crucial for a transformational leader, especially the use of dramatic and inspirational language. Bass suggests “extra effort is inspired by the appeal of the leader’s symbols, images, and vision of a better state of affairs along with his persuasive language” (Bass 1985:66). Transformational leaders use a variety of modes of expression and make full use of all the available media to communicate to others their shared identity. They use metaphors and figures of speech; they give examples, tell stories, and relate anecdotes; they draw word pictures; and they offer quotations and recite slogans (Zorn 1991).

Another feature of transformational leadership is the articulation of a “vision”. The transforming leader uses a compelling rhetorical vision to focus followers’ attention and energy, and to build commitment to organizational purposes (Zorn 1991). Bass (1985) repeatedly equates transformational leadership with the articulation of a vision of a better world, which is something that Gülen does masterfully. Transformational leaders are characterized by their risk taking, goal articulation, high expectations, emphasis on collective identity, self-assertion, and vision. The central role of the transformational

leader is to use his vision to create meaning and symbols for followers, in order for them to change (Aldoory & Toth 2004).

Because of the powerful impact it can have on followers, transformational leadership carries the potential for abuse (Tucker & Russell 2004). However, Bass (1999) answered this criticism by grounding the effectiveness of genuine transformational leadership in three essential pillars: 1) moral character; 2) ethical values; and 3) morality of the process of ethical choices. As we will demonstrate, Gülen clearly meets these three conditions.

Bass identified four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. We will discuss each of these in detail, matching Fethullah Gülen's efforts to these four dimensions. We find that he very precisely meets all of these requirements.

The first of these dimensions is idealized influence. According to Van Eeden:

“Idealized influence implies that followers respect, admire, and trust the leader and emulate his behavior, assume his values, and are committed to achieving his vision and making sacrifices in this regard. The leader shows dedication, a strong sense of purpose and perseverance, and confidence in the purpose and the actions of the group that helps to ensure the success of the group and gives followers a sense of empowerment and ownership. He behaves morally and ethically” (2008:255).

It is important at this point to differentiate between “idealized influence” and “charisma”. Transformational leadership and charismatic leadership theories have much in common and complement each other in important ways. The terms are often used interchangeably, but there are important differences. In terms of self schema, or cognitive generalizations about oneself, a transformational leader allows mutuality while a charismatic leader has a high need for power and control, and views mutuality as inappropriate. In perception of success, a transformational leader values mutual elevation and stimulation, and a charismatic leader does not. Per-

haps most importantly, in looking at power orientation, a transformational leader shares power and believes in integrating power, but a charismatic leader desires personal power and his power is based on personal appeal and persuasive skills. This difference has an enormous impact on the organization's future success. In an organization led by a transformational leader, succession is not a problem; however, organizations led by charismatic leaders often flounder and fail when the leader is no longer available (Miller 2007).

Gülen fulfills a key requirement of idealized influence by instilling a strong sense of empowerment and ownership in his followers. He definitely shares power and believes in integrating power, as evidenced by this description of the Movement's organization:

The Gülen community consists of three circles. At the center of the Movement is a core group of believers who lead the activities (*hizmet*) in a spirit of full and unconditional loyalty to the Gülen Movement. This core group includes a considerable number of university graduates who specialized in technical subjects and come from rural areas or small towns in Turkey. The main core of the Movement consists of around 30 elder brothers (*büyük abiler*), some of them Gülen's closest friends and students, who are highly respected and regularly consulted on major day to day policies (Yavuz 2003: 189).

A transformational leader does not have to, and often should not, have charisma. After all, what role does charisma play in identification of transforming leaders? The theory of transformational leadership does focus on the leader being a change agent, but the transforming leader's 'charisma' is not the defining characteristic for the transformational leader. The need to appear larger than life or to embellish oneself or to distance oneself from others in order to attain status by a charisma that is larger than life is not characteristic of the transformational leader. The charismatic aspect of persona is never the major focus in describing transformational leaders. Mother Theresa and Ghandi are both recognized as being transformational leaders who exemplify transformation, but who would not fit the criteria of 'charismatic' as Max Weber and others used

the term. Self-aggrandisement, need for power, and need for affiliation are central in charismatic leaders. Ghandi, Mandala, and Mother Theresa probably fall short on need for power and dominance, but then again, they were transformational, not charismatic, leaders (Miller 2007).

Gülen's ascetic life and altruism places him in that same company, and his modesty, self-effacement, and leadership by example are major factors in attracting and motivating followers. As associates of his have observed:

Gülen is a distinguished scholar who comes from a very modest background. With very little ambition for worldly wealth, and as a person of God, a preacher, a man of spirituality, ascetism and profound knowledge, he could have had a very satisfying career simply by serving as a preacher/teacher and author. However, he has invested an enormous amount of effort into motivating the masses to invest in sound education and has led by example (Aslandoğan & Cetin 2006: 39).

To Gülen, efforts—translated into actual deeds—are far more important than claims. M. Hakan Yavuz, who has closely studied the Movement, has noted that: “The way of creating an ethical society, for Gülen, is not to offer courses in religion or ethics in schools but rather to set good examples, known as *temsil*, in one's daily life, as a teacher, policeman, businessman, and journalist” (Yavuz 2003:187).

In part because of Gülen's relentless efforts in behalf of value-based education, he has a long-established reputation as an important Muslim thinker. His prominent position was recently acknowledged by Foreign Policy magazine, a publication of the Washington-based Carnegie Foundation for International Peace that specializes in researching and analyzing international affairs. Its May/June 2008 issue recognized Gülen as one of the leading intellectuals in the world¹ and, after publishing its list of the world's 100 Top Public Intellectuals, asked its readers to cast their ballots for the top 20. In this poll, Gülen received more votes than any one else on the list, and was thus honored as the world's foremost intellectual.

In addition to this prestigious recognition, Gülen has received positive international attention from the world's press. For example, just in the past two years he has been given favorable coverage in such diverse newspapers, magazines and journals as The New York Times; Forbes magazine; the International Herald Tribune; the Journal of Middle East Women's Studies; The Economist; U.S. News and World Report; The Irish Times; The Muslim World, and the Middle East Journal.

Vision is an important component of idealized influence, and Gülen's vision is very clear. He believes in a cognitive transformation of society through education that is to be taught by an elite sensitive to Turkish history and traditions and the sentiments of the common people. His program is aimed at creating this new elite, known as the "golden generation" (*altın nesil*). His moral and ethical behavior is recognized by admirers throughout the world, and he has been positively received by such respected leaders as Pope John Paul II; John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York; Leon Levy, former president of the Anti-Defamation League; the Vatican's Ambassador to Turkey; the Patriarch of the Turkish Orthodox Church; the Patriarch of the Turkish-Armenian community; and the Chief Rabbi of the Turkish Jewish community.

Because Gülen is still alive, no biography of him has been produced that can have the benefits of a full retrospective on his life and work. However, "it is undoubtedly the case that Gülen is held in great esteem by those associated with him, as evidenced by the honorific title of *hocaefendi* (esteemed teacher) accorded to him by those who follow his teachings" (Weller 2006:72).

His ability to influence a variety of people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, can be attributed at least in part to his religious sincerity and personal piety. When challenged by Islamic critics, Fethullah Gülen has responded in a quite pragmatic, and typically Sufi, fashion by pointing to his scholarly credentials in the Islamic sciences² and by demonstrating a very public and completely unwavering devotion to the Qur'an, the ritualistic requirements of Islam, and the person of

the Prophet (Fontenot & Fontenot, 2007). His obvious authenticity has brought him and the movement he exemplifies a substantial degree of respect and creditability.

It is Gülen's personal charisma as a conservative and pious Muslim which allows both him and the movement to sometimes be more liberal in practice than in theory. The movement's conservatist image allows people who would never be reached by the state's reformist discourse to participate in new forms of Islamic engagement. The movement's practice, moreover, permits the integration of people into its activities who would never have been reached by any other Islamic group. (Agai 2005:72)

Gülen is generally respected for his intellectual prowess as well as for his moral and ethical actions. Dr. Jill Carroll of Rice University, who recently wrote a book in which she posited a dialogue between him and five of the world's greatest thinkers, was deeply impressed by Gülen:

I remain inspired by his ideas, and after meeting him I see why he has inspired nearly three generations now of Turkish men and women to create a new world. He is a man of deep spirituality, integrity, and compassion, and this is amply evident in his writings and in his person. I have partnered Gülen's ideas with those of Kant, Plato, Confucius, Mill and Sartre because I believe they are worthy discussants for Gülen, and he for them. I interpret all of them as people with immense knowledge who care about the most pressing and enduring questions of human existence, and who approach difficult challenges with their whole selves honestly and without cynicism (p. 101).

In sum, Gülen mirrors the components of Idealized Influence set forth by Van Eeden. He has the admiration and trust of his followers. They are motivated by his vision, inspired by his learning, personal piety, and modesty. They feel that they have influence within the movement and, through their daily efforts in emulating him, on the world around them. Furthermore, Gülen's reputation

has spread beyond its Turkish-based areas, a development that bodes well for the future of the Movement.

The second essential component of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. This refers to the leader's enthusiasm and optimism in creating a vision of the future, thus stimulating similar feelings among followers. The leader is seen to commit to the vision; specific goals and expectations are clearly communicated; and confidence is expressed in followers' ability to achieve these expectations (van Eeden 2008).

Gülen articulates his vision of a "golden generation" both clearly and poetically:

Among wavering crowds that lack sound thinking or reasoning a new type of people will appear. They will rely equally on reason and experience, but give as much importance to conscience and inspiration as they do to the former. They will pursue the perfect in everything, establish the balance between this world and the next, and wed the heart to the intellect. The coming to be of such people will not be easy. All births are painful, but these blessed births will take place and provide the world with a new, brilliant generation. Just as rain pours out of slowly gathering clouds and water wells up from underground, so too will the "flowers" of this new generation one day appear among us (Gülen 2004c:81).

He has stated that in the modern world the only way to get others to accept your ideas is by persuasion. "Those who resort to force are intellectually bankrupt; people will always demand freedom of choice in the way they run their affairs and in their expression of their spiritual and religious values" (Gülen 2004c: xii.)

Leaders who are skilled at inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand. Followers need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to be motivated to act. It is also important that this visionary aspect of leadership be supported by communication skills that allow the leader to articulate his vision with precision and power in a compelling and persuasive

way. Bass says, “We restrict inspirational motivation to leadership that employs or adds nonintellectual, emotional qualities to the influence process and reserve the factor of intellectual stimulation to influence processes emphasizing convincing argument, logic and rationality without appeals to feelings, sentiments, and emotions” (Bass 1985:63).

Gülen’s use of rhetorical invention³ closely matches Bass’s category of inspirational motivation. Profiting from an early exposure to the attitudes and values of Sufis, he has generalized their use of symbolic expression and extended it into the arena of public discourse. Where Sufis customarily employed vivid, imaginative, poetic language in order to describe a direct, personal connection with the Divine, he regularly applies it to the cause of social reform. Gülen employs metaphors, similes, and allegorical constructions of all kinds in his arguments for the modernization of Islamic practice. He uses rhetorical invention as a tool that can penetrate the surface of Islamic injunctions and beliefs so that their “inner pearl” (2002) can be grasped. “The Qur’an,” he claims, “is like a rose that develops a new petal each passing day and continues to bloom.... We are all children of time. We must question the past and the present” (Williams 2000:53).

Inspirational activities by the transformational leader become of particular importance when effort, self-sacrifice, and initiative is essential for organizational success; when the work is difficult and frustrating, and followers are likely to become discouraged by temporary setbacks and lack of progress; and when followers have ideals and values that are relevant to the activities of the group and will serve as the basis for inspirational appeals (Bass 1985:75). Followers must be moved to feel that what is wanted of them can be justified, not by receipt of a tangible reward, as in transactional leadership, but by the prospect of contributing to a better world and by doing one’s duty to God and country (Bass 1998:74). In an almost exact copy of Bass’s criterion, Gülen calls for followers that:

...measure and evaluate the work and the deed not through the result attained, but rather directly by how the duty was performed, whether it has been performed with a pure heart and whether it corresponds to the approval of God. In this manner, they do not limit the vastness of their subjection by connecting it to any price or reward, they do not adulterate divine and holy deeds with deeds that are bound to the Earth; and these people assess their deeds as being naught before the infinite power of the All-Mighty, and lead their lives in this expansive dimension that they feel in their hearts (Gülen 2004c:126).

This separation of service from material reward sometimes led to a re-alignment of careers within the membership of the Movement:

Gülen promoted a career in education as superior to one in medicine, engineering or law, despite the prospects of a wealthier future in the others. Gülen's message to teachers and prospective teachers was simple but subtle: serving your fellow citizens and humanity in general through education is a duty for every responsible human being. Suddenly, the relatively low paid, unappreciated and low status teachers were being recognized as the key builders of the country's future (Aslandoğan & Cetin 2006: 34).

Yavuz describes Gülen's rhetorical style as being effective and dramatic.

His emotional preaching style stirs up the inner feelings of Muslims and imbues his messages with feelings of love and pain. Gülen's style is effective and forms a powerful emotional bond between him and his followers. He not only stirs up the emotions of the faithful but also exhorts them to self-sacrifice and activism. Thus, he arms his followers with an emotional map of action to translate their heart-guided conclusions into action (Yavuz 2003:183).

Gülen's message is one of encouragement for those who follow his path. In describing the Golden Generation, he says,

This generation will be able to overcome the ideologies of the past. The West and the East cannot chain his feet or capture him. Also, the 'isms' that are against his soul's origins will not change the directions of his path or even touch him (Agai 2003:58).

He is able to communicate to them the importance of their mission when he asserts,

If you wish to keep masses under control, simply starve them in the area of knowledge. They can escape such tyranny only through education. The road to social justice is paved with adequate, universal education, for only this will give people sufficient understanding and tolerance to respect the rights of others (in Michel 2003: 74).

Gülen skillfully uses imagery and symbolism in his rhetoric. According to Yavuz:

Gülen is an accomplished poet; his poetry invokes a romantic nostalgia for the Ottoman past and elucidates its relevance for contemporary Turkish society. Furthermore, his poetry seeks to construct an ethno religious (Turkish-Islamic) consciousness that calls for the mobilization of youth to realize a historical mission, namely the creation of a powerful and prosperous Turkey that once again will play a leadership role in the Islamic world as it did during Ottoman times (Yavuz 2003:190).

Gülen's poetic style is clearly evident when he describes one of his most popular themes, love.

Love is the most essential element of every being, and it is the most radiant light, and it is the greatest power, able to resist and overcome all else. Love elevates every soul that absorbs it, and prepares these souls for the journey to eternity (Gülen 2004c:1).

Actually, love is a sultan, the heart is the throne, and the groans of hope and longing uttered on the prayer rugs in the remotest corners are the voices of that sultan (Gülen 2004c: 5).

As was the case with Bass's category of Idealized Influence, Gülen matches the requirements for inspirational motivation. He communicates his vision clearly and eloquently, inspires his followers, and instills confidence that their joint cause will triumph.

The next requirement for transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. This implies a leader who values the intellectual ability of followers, encourages innovation, and promotes creativity. Others are encouraged to reframe problems, use a holistic perspective in understanding issues, question the status quo, and approach problems from different angles. This creates readiness for change and develops the ability to solve current and future problems (van Eeden, 2008). Intellectual stimulation includes the use of logic, the construction of convincing arguments, and rational thinking to arouse and change follower problem awareness and problem solving. Thought is promoted, imagination is fired, and beliefs and values are modified and strengthened.

Gülen has been particularly successful in articulating a cohesive argument that bridges the perceived dichotomy between tradition and modernity and religion and science.

He witnessed rationalism devoid of spirituality that focused exclusively on self-interest. The other extreme was a blind adherence to tradition. His middle way in this context was underlining the necessity of sound reasoning for every individual while promoting spiritual values as a guide for the intellect. Between self-centered individualism and selflessness he defined a middle way that inculcated a sense of social responsibility that did not neglect or deny individual rights. He promoted serving one's community as a responsibility of being human and conduct pleasing to the Creator. At the same time, he framed individual rights as unfringeable for the greater good without an individual's consent (Aslandođan & Cetin 2006:36).

Gülen powerfully argues that religion and science not only can, but must, co-exist:

Neglect of the intellect...would result in a community of poor, docile mystics. Negligence of the heart or spirit, on the other

hand, would result in crude rationalism devoid of any spiritual dimension...It is only when we the intellect, spirit, and body are harmonized, and man is motivated towards activity in the illuminated way of the Divine message, that he can become a complete being and attain true humanity (Gülen 1995:105-106).

Yavuz describes Gülen's method of argumentation as being very allegorical.

He constantly refers to nature as 'the book'. He does not offer literal interpretation of the Qur'an but rather reads it through the lens of the phenomenal world. This literary interpretation softens the language of religion and makes it more amenable to practical life (Yavuz 2003:191).

For example, Gülen writes:

Firstly, the Universe is a book written by God for us to study over and over again. Man is a transparent index of all the worlds, a being able to discover the depths of existence. As for life, it is the manifestation of the meanings filtered from that index and book, and reflected by Divine Expression throughout the Universe. If man, life, and the Universe are three aspects of a single reality with each having a genuine color of its own, then a partial approach to them will be a disrespect to both man, in particular, and the whole creation, in general, as it will demolish the harmonious composition of reality (Gülen 1998: 8).

The impact of transformational leadership is influenced by the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this trait stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. Systematic differences exist between transactional and transformational leaders in intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders may be less willing to be satisfied with partial solutions or to accept the status quo. They are more likely to be proactive rather than reactive in their thinking; more creative, novel and innovative in their ideas; more radical in their ideology; and less inhibited in their solutions. Gülen exemplifies transformational leadership because of his creativity and inno-

vative thinking. For example, Yavuz presents an excellent comparison of Gülen's skill in this area compared to traditional Islamic scholars, or *ulema*:

Three main characteristics differentiate Gülen from the traditional ulema. First, unlike the ulema, whose references are the Qur'an and sunna, the reference points for Gülen and the new class of Muslim intellectuals include rational reasoning and European Enlightenment thought. Second, Gülen encourages independent thinking (the ulema, in contrast, guide the community and seek to preserve tradition whereas these new Turkish Muslim intellectuals seek to encourage critical thought). Gülen in fact has managed to juggle a remarkable mix of these two traditions. Another major characteristic of this modern hybrid of ulema-intellectual is his ability to interpret Islamic precepts within the context of modern social conditions. Gülen is well versed in works of such world writers as Kant, Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Sartre, and Kafka, and he uses their ideas to reinforce his reinterpretations of Islam to meet contemporary needs (Yavuz 2003:185).

Gülen strongly encourages creativity and independent thought in his followers, and he believes that if people are educated properly to think for themselves and to espouse the positive values of social justice, human rights, and tolerance, they can be agents of change to implement these beneficial goals (Michel 2003:74). However, although he believes in using reason and intellect to solve problems and improve the world, he clearly does not see rational thought as substituting for religion and spirituality.

Regardless of changes, advancements in science and technology, and new ways of thinking, the feeling of attachment to a religion always has been the primary factor in forming humanity's scientific and intellectual life, developing human virtues, and establishing new civilizations. With its charm and power, religion is still and will be the most influential element and power in peoples' lives (Williams 2000:43).

Gülen sees no contradiction between science and religion, and rejects the argument that a choice must be made between the two.

Humankind from time to time has denied religion in the name of science and denied science in the name of religion, arguing that the two present conflicting views. All knowledge belongs to God and religion is from God. How then can the two be in conflict? (Gülen 2004c:xiii.)

When Bass discussed the component of intellectual stimulation, he meant:

...the arousal and change in followers of problem awareness and problem solving, of thought and imagination, and of beliefs and values, rather than arousal and change in immediate action. The intellectual stimulation of the transformational leader is seen in the discrete jump in the followers' conceptualization, comprehension, and discernment of the nature of the problems they face and their solutions (Bass 1985:99).

Gülen is particularly adept at conceptualizing issues and problems in innovative and thought-provoking ways. For example, he provides a provocative analysis of forgiveness:

The greatest gift that the generation of today can give their children and grandchildren is to teach them how to forgive—to forgive even when confronted by the worst behaviors and the most disturbing events. However, thinking of forgiving monstrous, evil people who enjoy making others suffer would be disrespectful to the idea of forgiveness. We have no right to forgive them; forgiving them would be disrespectful to humanity. I do not believe that there is any probability that anyone could see an act that is disrespectful to forgiveness as being acceptable (Gülen 2004c:29).

Consider also his argument against terrorism: “Just as Islam is not a religion of terrorism, any Muslim who correctly understands Islam cannot be or become a terrorist” (Gülen 2004c:181).

Many researchers have noted the extent to which transformational leaders have to serve as teachers. As a profession, teachers often play the role of transformational leader, sharply changing the beliefs and values of at least some of their students (Burns 1978). For the greater part of his life, Gülen has been teaching and influ-

encing others. It is quite possible that his effective use of logic, his reliance on reasoned argumentation, his insistence on broadened perspectives, and his emphasis on creative problem-solving are connected to his educational experience.

The last component of transformational leadership is Individualized consideration. This concept implies that the leader considers the ability of followers and their level of maturity in order to determine their need for further development. He acts as a mentor, giving personal attention, listening to others' concerns, and providing feedback, advice, support, and encouragement. The leader designs appropriate strategies to develop individual followers to achieve higher levels of motivation, potential, and performance (van Eeden 2008).

The leader's effectiveness is affected by the degree to which he attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower, and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. This also encompasses the need to respect and celebrate the individual contribution that each follower can make to the group because it is the diversity of the group that gives it its true strength. Whereas the transactional leader functions primarily as a manager, the transformational leader takes a developmental orientation, similar to that found in the Confucian concept of the leader as a moral example and Plato's image of the leader as shepherd. The transformational leader sets examples to be followed and will consciously or unconsciously serve as a role model for followers.

Gülen not only believes in individual consideration and practices it in his own life, but he counsels others, especially teachers, to do so as well. He feels strongly that each person should be treated as an individual:

Real teachers sow the seed and preserve it. They occupy themselves with what is good and wholesome, and lead and guide the children in life and whatever events they encounter.... In addition to setting a good example, teachers should be patient enough to obtain the desired results. They should know their students very well, and address their hearts, spirits, and feelings. The best way to educate people is to show a real concern for

every individual, not forgetting that each individual is a different 'world'.... Teachers should know how to find a way to the student's heart and leave indelible imprints (Gülen 2004d:208).

The Gülen movement is based on three coordinated tiers: businessmen, journalists, and teachers and students. The first tier has been discussed previously in this paper:

The second circle of people support Gülen's religious-national goal and (in) directly participate in the creation of *eser* (good work) activities through charities (*himmət*). This circle includes *esnaf* (small and medium sized merchants) and *islami* (businessmen who constitute a board of trustees of the movement's numerous foundations. They support the movement's activities in their area through fundraisings organized by local volunteers (Yavuz 2003: 189).

Even though the contributions of individuals in each group differ, Gülen makes sure that they know their work is valued and important to achieving the vision of the Movement. According to Yavuz, he has followed this policy since the beginning of his teaching. Even though teachers and other academics were the focus of his vision, he acknowledged the work of the business people who supported them.

He drew much of his support from engineers, the new Anatolian bourgeoisie, academics and other professionals. In his speeches, he carefully stressed the role of merchants and businessmen as the sources revitalizing Turkey as a regional power (Yavuz 2003: 184).

Gülen is inclusive in his teaching and in his vision, and he sees a role for all people. Gülen's vision for women is based in Islam and shares similarities with that of Atatürk. His support of Islamist women's education, employment, and world travel encourages the possibility for them to attain the best education and go on to public professions (Stephenson 2006:125).

The Gülen Movement has become an international one, and it has shown a remarkable ability to transcend cultural differences. Schools

have been established in more than 50 countries in Europe, Asia, North and South America, Africa and Australia. In addition, six universities have been created in Turkey and Central Asia. These schools have shown a remarkable ability to respect the language, norms, customs, laws, and culture of the individual countries while at the same time being true to the ethical underpinnings of Gülen's vision. That characteristic has impressed knowledgeable observers. For example, Fr. Thomas Michel, ecumenical secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops and a member of the Indonesian Province of the Jesuits, has visited many of the schools, and he remarks, "The schools established in countries as diverse as Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Denmark and Brazil are necessarily very different from one another, but they are all inspired by the same humanistic vision" (Michel 2003: 79).

According to Lam (2002), many studies have demonstrated that applying transformational leadership may be universally more effective than other methods because a preference for transformational leadership over transactional leadership exists in many different cultures. In studying the Gülen Movement schools, Agai observed,

The most striking point about these schools is that they do not teach religion, even though religious faith is a primary motive for their creation. Rather, they stress the teaching of ethics (ahlak), which are seen as a unifying factor between different religious, ethnic, and political orientations. (Agai 2003:48)

Thus, the Gülen Movement has managed to strike an effective balance between individualized attention at a personal, group, and societal level and, simultaneously, adherence to universal norms and values. That interesting conjunction of particularized attention and generalized practice helps explain the extraordinary success of the Gülen-inspired "Turkish schools."

As we can see, Gülen's leadership style clearly conforms to Bass's four dimensions of transformational leadership. If Gülen is not a transformational leader and the Movement is not a transformational one, no such things exist. The fit is so exact that, chrono-

logical contradictions aside, Bass could have had Gülen in mind while crafting his theoretical framework.

IMPLICATIONS OF GÜLEN'S TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership has many advantages over transactional leadership. One prominent benefit is the promotion of a greater degree of personal and organizational satisfaction among members, which in turn promotes increased loyalty and cooperation. This intensified commitment is a precondition for the realization of strong and permanent change, which is the hallmark of transformational leadership as well as the hallmark of the Gülen Movement. Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors have been transformed by Gülen's example; unlike what occurs in transactional leadership, the changes he initiated have been internalized by his followers.

Bass (1985) argues that transactional leadership results in "first order" changes, or changes in degree; in other words, as a result of receiving rewards based on their performance of tasks, followers may work somewhat harder, faster, or produce somewhat better quality. However, he contends that a higher order of change, a second order of change, is possible. Second order changes will result in revolutionary changes in attitudes, values, and beliefs, and "quantum leaps in motivation and performance" (Zorn 1991:179). These second order changes can result only from transformational leadership (Bass 1985). According to Burns, "the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (1978:4). This higher level change means that an organization can proceed even when the leader is no longer available. The recent history of the Movement tends to bear this observation out. Increasing health problems have caused Gülen to become less active; nevertheless, the Movement shows no sign of faltering.

Transformational leaders not only influence the culture among their supporters, but their influence also extends beyond the orga-

nization to the outside culture. One of Gülen's most attractive ideas is that each follower, in the simple course of daily life, influences the world for the better. His description of such people reaches lyrical heights:

Endeavoring to enlighten every part of the world with a devotion that is suitable for the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, disregarding their own desires and acting in order to live for others without ostentation—on the contrary, always acting humbly—these legendary heroes are displaying today, despite many negative factors, a generosity rarely matched in history; they have come to serve humanity. They are whispering something from the bottom of their hearts, creating a Paradise on Earth by planting new saplings everywhere, trying to express themselves and inviting everybody to eternity—always faithful, determined, decisive, and hopeful for the future. (Gülen 2004c:107).

In a fine example of transformational influence, a woman teaching in a “Turkish school” in Houston, Texas reduced that passage to its essentials. In describing her Gülen-inspired sense of mission, she said that “we should leave ‘footprints’ behind us in this life” (Stephenson 2006: 128).

Transformational leadership originates in the personal values and beliefs of leaders, not in an exchange of commodities between leaders and followers. Both Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) believed that transformational leaders operate out of deeply held personal values systems that include such values as justice and integrity. By expressing their personal standards, transformational leaders are able both to unite followers and to change followers' goals and beliefs. This form of leadership results in achievement of higher levels of performance among individuals than previously thought possible (Bass 1985).

This higher level of performance is clearly seen in the Movement's confident assault on one of the most perplexing problems of the modern world—that is, the reconciliation of science and religion. Gülen's Movement is, above all, directed to the production of a citi-

zenry that is not only morally informed and values an interior life of the spirit, but is also scientifically orientated. From an instrumentalist point of view, the prime objective of the Movement is the successful interweaving of science and religion; Gülen insists that reason and Islamic revelation are not only compatible, but also complementary. “All principles of Islam, being a revealed religion originating in an All-Encompassing knowledge, certainly can be confirmed by reason (Gülen 1995:160). Furthermore,

The light of the intellect is scientific knowledge while the heart of the spirit derives its light from religious knowledge. Scientific knowledge without religion usually causes atheism while religious knowledge without intellectual enlightenment gives rise to bigotry. When combined, they urge a student to research, further and further research, deepening in both belief and knowledge (Gülen 2003:120).

The Movement is not simply concerned with producing Sufis or scientists; it wishes to produce Sufi scientists that can steer advances in science and technology into humane and productive channels. Gülen has pinned his hopes on this emerging “Golden Generation” and we can see, from the following quotation, that his appeals can reach a rare level of intensity: “O long-awaited generation! Rise, for the love of the Creator, to your sacred task, and replace the choking darkness around us with the light of your love, hope, and nobility! Rise and force back the “monsters” of the age to their dens!” (Gülen 1998:107) The increasing public support for Gülen’s goals and the swelling number of Gülen-inspired schools that aim to dispel that “choking darkness” testify to his stature as a transformational leader.

NOTES

- 1 Foreign Policy described him as “a modernist Islamic scholar and leader of the movement named after him. He is widely considered one of the most important Muslim thinkers alive today. He has authored more than 60 books.” Cited in St. Petersburg Times (May 11, 2008), p.4p.
- 2 For a description of Gülen’s early education, see Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams, Advocate of Dialogue, Fethullah Gülen (Fairfax, Va.: The Fountain, 2000), p. 15. We should note that he was deeply influenced by Muhammed Lütfi Efendi, who worked within the Mawlana tradition associated with Jalaladdin Rumi.
- 3 Invention—*inventio*, to the ancient Romans—is the creative effort involved in explaining, re-stating, enlarging, or repositioning an argument in order to increase its effectiveness or strengthen its appeal. The term refers to the imaginative aspect of an illuminating intellectual process, with the strong implication that it is expressed in an original or striking fashion. Invention was a significant component of Aristotle’s Rhetoric.

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