ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES, *16*, 2007, 1, 3-21

ARTICLES

TRANSNATIONALISM, DIASPORA AND ISLAM AMONG THE TURKS*

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This paper investigates transnationalism among the Turks as a multifaceted phenomenon that has been engendered by the interconectivity in the modern world, mass education and the victorious rise of telecommunication technologies, cyberspace medias as well as global transportation systems. With loosening of boundaries between countries from Germany and the United States as far as Central Asia, the Turks have entered into numerous transnational networks as important actors. My focus here is on the transnational religious identity of Islam among the Turks, mainly in Germany and Central Asia, that manifests itself through both non-governmental movements and networks (apolitical as well as political, both accommodationist and extremist), and state-based organizations. The identity that arises out of such a process can be influenced by ethnolinguistic transnationalism, nationalistic transnationalism or political aspirations, too.

Key words: transnationalism, Islam, Turkey, diaspora, migration, glocalization, Germany

We live in a shrunk world where global trends permanently adapt to local conditions and the local and the global coexist in various forms and places. This state of affairs has also been described as a mixture of globalization and

* While preparing this paper I was able to take advantage of the support extended to me by the Ronald and Eileen Weiser Professional Development Award Program 2007.

localization, shortly *glocalization* (Roland Robertson).[1] One way of measuring the interplay of these conflicting phenomena is to look at transnationalism, nationalism and diaspora Islam as a cluster of mutually interwoven factors.

As against the more classical "concept" of migration, which used to be a rather directed movement with a point of departure and a point of arrival, migratory waves are nowadays increasingly turning into an ongoing channelling between two or more social spaces. Two standard variants that characterized migration in the industrial age seem to be overcome: the aim of migrants is neither to return to their country of origin, nor to fully integrate within the host society: the i-mmigrants and e-migrants are becoming trans-migrants.[2] Words such as *bitmeyen göç* ("endless migration"), new tribalism, trans-territorial nation-state, long-distance nationalism, bilocalism or "deterritorialized" nation-state are used to describe the situation.[3] Steve Vertovec characterizes transnationalism as "...the actual ongoing exchanges of information, money and resources – as well as regular travel and communication – that members of a diaspora undertake with others in the homeland or elsewhere within the globalized ethnic community".[4] Undeniably, transnationalism is not a single and straightforward phenomenon, since it takes various forms and pursues bi-national or pluri-national agendas.[5] Born around 1920, the term transnationalism is nowadays associated with such different areas of human existence as financial governance or religious identity, whilst scholars of transnationalism simultaneously research anything from the rise in the total volume of long-distance phone calls up to the changing consumption patterns. Some eighty years ago, however, it was the Catholic Church which was considered to be the only power capable of creating a transnational polity.[6] Until recently, research on transnationalism concentrated on communities of European e(trans)migrants, such as Irish Americans or Jewish Americans, who still retain their allegiances, but over the past two decennia, it is the

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[1] ROBERTSON, Roland. 1998: 'Glokalisierung: Homogenität und Heterogenität in Raum und Zeit'. In: Beck, U., ed.: *Perspektiven der Weltgesellschaft*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, pp. 192-221.

[2] BARŠOVÁ, A. – BARŠA, P. 2005: *Přistěhovalectví a liberální stát. Imigrační a integrační politiky v USA, západní Evropě a Česku*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita – Mezinárodní politologický ústav, p. 8. To demonstrate the scope of migration in the present world it is useful to remind that in the estimations made by *BBC World* TV station there were 191 million migrants in 2005, 30-40 million of them illegal.

[3] ABADAN-UNAT, N. 2002: *Bitmeyen göç*. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

[4] VERTOVEC, Steven. 2001: 'Religion and diaspora'. ESRC Transnational Communities Research Programme *Working Papers* 01-01, p. 12. (www.transcomm.ox .ac uk)

[5] GRILLO, Ralph – SOARES, Benjamin F. 2005: 'Transnational Islam in Western Europe'. *ISIM Review*, No. 15, p. 11.

[6] SMELSER, N. J. – BALTES, P. B., ed. 2001: *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Vol. 23. Oxford: Elsevier, p. 15,858.

transnational communities of Turks, Arabs, Pakistanis or Kurds who are most often researched in the European context.[7]

According to the Turkish-German scholar Betigül Ercan Argun, transnationalism, together with its transmigrants, is a pervasive phenomenon which gives an extraterritorial dimension to the national public sphere of origin.[8] Diasporic communities aim at pursuing religious and cultural interests that are usually distinct from both their host culture and their country of "origin". It is equally noteworthy that "in the present period of mass migration many nation-states that have experienced substantial out-migration are entering into a process of actively promoting 'transnational reincorporation' of migrants into their state-centered projects".[9]

New medias shape the identity of the young generation as never before and transnationalism is also closely linked to the cyberspace and airwaves activities. The rise of audiovisual medias has indeed been astounding in all corners of the world. Taking the example of Turkey, in the early 1990s there has been no law permitting the operation of private TV and radio stations in the country. As soon as such a law was passed by the *meclis* in 1992, over two hundred Islamic radio and forty TV stations have appeared, together with many non-religious, in Turkey. The emergence of various Turkish TV channels – both in Turkey and abroad – has lessened the importance of the state television and radio (*TRT*), which were formerly instrumental in maintaining the monolithic Turkish identity. Turkish dailies such as *Milliyet*, *Hürriyet* or *Zaman*, have been published in Germany for quite a long time now with supplements on local issues, and today, some of them are printed in the USA, too. But the global age also brought a new consciousness, a new state of mind, which is at least equally important as the technology used by (trans)migrants.

Islam represents one of the most challenging components in the current process of cultural globalization and glocalization and according to many analysts Islam has become the main factor of transposition of religion from the private sphere to central political arenas. However, we hear nowadays much more about Arabic, Persian or Afghan Islam than about the historically – at least for Central Europeans – far "closer" Turkish Islam. And so, to look at Turkish Islam necessitates deeper understanding of Turks – as well as Kurds –

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[7] In this respect, it is noteworthy that Turkish specialists and scholars have found their place of work at almost all important universities of the West, especially in the US. With new trends in scholarship developing rapidly, they engage in debates that influence societal and political milieus not only among diaspora circles, but also in Turkey.

[8] ARGUN, B. E. 2003: *Turkey in Germany. The Transnational Sphere of Deutschkei*. New York & London: Routledge. See also EWING, Katherine Pratt. 2003: 'Living Islam in the Diaspora: Between Turkey and Germany'. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, No. 102, pp. 405-431.

[9] SMITH, M. P. – GUARNIZO, L. E., ed., 1998: *Transnationalism From Below*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, p. 8.

living outside the Turkish national boundary in the countries of European Union, that is Turks living within transnational conditions, moving between their country of "origin" and rooted in great numbers in their new country: primarily Germany. According to the serious studies, for instance, of the more than two million Turks who live in Germany half spend their vacation every year in Turkey, but marriage migration (*Heiratsmigration*) is increasingly recognized as an important pattern in family-formation as well.

Attention of the scholars in the field has been paid to the fact that "Islamic transnational movements occur in a significantly different context than Christian ones, because Islam lacks a central organizational hierarchy."[10] Since the abolition of caliphate in 1924 by the Great National Assembly of Turkey under the leadership of President Mustafa Kemal there has been no transnational authority of Sunni Muslims and so Islamic movements and networks have been relatively free to promote their own societal, cultural or political agenda without any limitations or directives. Interestingly, that gives Muslim activists, believers and politicians a degree of independence not seen in the Catholic countries.[11]

An important aspect of Muslim self-definition that can be processed further transnationally is the idea of a global Islamic "de-territorialized" community of believers in Allāh. A consensus has developed around a concept of a unified Muslim community (*'umma*, in Turkish *ümmet*) – a kind of *Global 'Umma* – as an ideal transcending all possible limitations and divisions. In terms of the public sphere the *'umma* constitutes a transnational "network of relations and institutions encompassing but extending beyond Europe to include scholars and authorities throughout the Muslim world".[12] On the other side, however, calls for unity and the universalist message of Islam cannot hide the fact that in everyday life pluralism of belief and practice reflect the tension between the universal and the specific.

Certain traits of transnationalism could already be identified with the activities of Sufi social and political movements during the pre-modern period. For example, the Naqshbandi (*Nakşibendi*) Sufi order of wandering dervishes, that historically originated in the province of Khorasan in eastern Iran, has developed into world-wide organization spreading gradually into areas as

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[10] SMELSER, N. J. – BALTES, P. B., ed. 2001: *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Vol. 23. Oxford: Elsevier, p. 15,864.

[11] HALE, William 2006: 'Christian Democracy and the JDP. Parallels and Contrasts'. In: Yavuz, M. H., ed.: *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, p. 75.

[12] GRILLO, Ralph – SOARES, Benjamin F. 2005: 'Transnational Islam in Western Europe'. *ISIM Review*, No. 15, p. 11.

different as Ottoman Empire, China and India.[13] As early as the 12th century Ahmet Yesevi (died 1166), a Turkestani Sufi, has been sending his dervishes from Central Asia to Anatolia and Sufi orders had an important role in spreading and propagating Islam, not completely different from the activities of Catholic or Protestant missionaries. Spatial diasporas, naturally, are not at all new and each religion could come out with its own diasporic centres throughout history.

Diasporic experiences are not limited, however, to spatial dimensions of migration and geography in places far away from homeland, because a diaspora can also be produced discursively in one's own country, for example, when official manifestations of religion are devalued and turned into something almost illegal. As Yasin Aktay shows "Islamism in modern Turkey ought to be understood within the context of such a diasporic history, which is peculiar to Turkish Islamism".[14] Such diasporic conditions have been embodied in the life of two prominent Turkish personalities shaping twentieth century Islam: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960) and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1904-1983). Their "inward migration", to use the term of Hakan Yavuz, demonstrates the ability of religious circles and their leaders to challenge the secular-state centre from the periphery, while preserving the public role of Islam. Since the establishment of a *laik* republic in 1923, and in particular during one-party regime (1925-1946), Turkish Islamist intellectuals have been living in a discursive "existential" diaspora, alienated in their own homeland, but striving to overcome this internal diaspora as soon as possible. For some of them, spiritual and emotional diaspora mingled with forced spatial exile, often in frontier or rural regions of Turkey (e.g. the town of Barla in the case of Said Nursi).

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The Federal Republic of Germany began to recruit Turkish workers in 1961, based on an interstate agreement, and during the first ten years there were about half a million of them in West German territory. The "economic miracle" in Germany and consequently the employment of Anatolian peasants in the countries of the European Community, have influenced the Turkish domestic situation, especially through remittances that have been sent back home by migrant workers. In fact, the Turkish economy soon became dependent on the flow of German marks sent back home by *Gastarbeiters*.

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[13] ÖZDALGA, E., ed. 1999: *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*. Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute.

[14] AKTAY, Yasin. 2003: 'Diaspora and Stability. Constitutive Elements in a Body of Knowledge'. In: Yavuz, M. H. – Esposito, J. L., ed.: *Turkish Islam and the Secular State. The Gülen Movement*. New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 131-155.

Currently, the estimated number of Turks living abroad oscillates between 2.5 million and 3.5 million, which makes up about 5 per cent of the Turkish population. Although Turkish migrations in Euroasia are well-known throughout history, labour migration is a relatively new concept, dating back only to the late 1950s.[15] Turks migrating to Germany have come mostly from rural areas and they have had an insufficient level of education, as well as little knowledge about their own identity and culture. In general, it is possible to say that while educated white-collar Turkish migrants went to the United States, unskilled workers from the Anatolian "periphery" migrated to Europe.[16] Over the time the situation has changed, however, and step by step new economic and financial networks have been created between Turkey and diaspora communities, especially Germany. Indeed, "Islamic groups... started to benefit from the expanding market and legal protection, their identities and worldviews began to transform."[17]

Members of the second and third generation of Turks, who represent the children and grandchildren of former immigrants, are, among other things, quite often much more interested in their identity than their parents were. Representative research done in 2004 by the *Zentrum für Türkeistudien* in west-German city of Essen states that among the Turks in the *Bundesrepublik* 39 % feel connected mainly with Turkey, 31 % feel ties mainly with Germany and 24 % with both countries. Recently, almost 71 % of Turks in the federal state of Rheinland-Westfalen alone have described themselves as believers. In general, "all the forms of difference in contemporary Turkey proliferate in the Turkish diaspora as well – Turks and Kurds, workers and intellectuals, Islamists and leftists, Sunnis and Alevis. This is especially true for groups that can operate more openly in Europe than in Turkey."[18] Migrants in Europe also gradually rediscovered their religious identity: that is exactly what happened with the Alevis.[19] The harsh conditions introduced after the 1980 military coup in Turkey had coerced many left-wing intellectuals and activists to seek asylum in Western Europe and to continue their political activities there.

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[15] SAATÇİ, Mustafa. 2006: 'New Migration, Old Trends: Turkish Immigrants and Segmented Assimilation in the United States'. *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 98-99.

[16] This essay concentrates on the external migration (*dış göç*) of Turkish citizens, although sociologically speaking, the internal migration (*iç göç*) has been since 1950s at least equally important.

[17] YAVUZ, M. Hakan. 2004: 'Is there a Turkish Islam? The Emergence of Convergence and Consensus'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 213-232.

[18] FINDLEY, C. V. 2005: *The Turks in World History*. Oxford: OUP, p. 222.

[19] BRUINESSEN, M. van 1999: *The Kurds in Movement: Migrations, Mobilisations, Communications and the Globalisation of the Kurdish Question*. Tokyo: Islamic Area Studies Project No. 14, pp. 10-11.

Furthermore, migration of Turkish workers to Western Europe has posed an important challenge to the secularist principle of the Turkish state (*laiklik*) and it is widely claimed that many Turks living within the liberal European setting, have, paradoxically, adopted a more Islamic orientation. It is, moreover, well-known that various segments of Turkish community in the EU approach Kemalism, secularism included, in a different way, depending on their identity: Sunni, Alevi, Islamist, Kemalist or eventually Kurdish. Otherness, it has to be said, can be perceived differently in different situations.

The Turkish-Muslim diaspora organizations are from time to time subjects of disputes on the Turkish internal political scene. Representatives of the Turkish General Staff, staunch defenders of the Turkish secularism, repeatedly accused the current government of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) under the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, that has been in power since 2002, of fostering links to Turkish diaspora organizations that are described by the generals as "fundamentalist".

Turkish Islam has been many times described in scholarly works as pluralist, with various types of interpretation of the Islamic faith: so-called state-Islam, Sufi or mystical currents (both orthodox and heterodox), Alevism etc. The current 'Sunni renaissance' in Turkey, as has been argued by Andrew Mango, "accompanies and is partly a reaction to the continuing organic secularization of Turkish society, just as Victorian piety developed in counterpoint to the secularization of British society".[20] The Islamic organizations and movements in Germany – Turkish Muslims included – are mostly sister branches of "mother" religious or state associations that are active in the country of origin, mostly in the Middle East. The best example is DİTİB (*Diyanet İşleri Türk-İslam Birliği*), the "Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs", an offshoot of the Turkish governmental Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), but the same principle governs activities of the most influential non-state Turkish diaspora organizations: primarily the National Outlook Movement (*Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş, IGMG*), which represents a movement that has always stood close to the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) and its successors incarnating the Turkish political Islam. Another organization, the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (*Verband der islamischen Kulturzentren, VIKZ*), is a European branch of *Süleymancı* tarika, whereas the "Islamische Gemeinschaft Jama'at un-Nur" stands for followers of Nurcu movement in Germany. In addition, supporters of the Turkish extreme right embodied by the late Alparslan Türkeş and his Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP*) have established in 1978 their own organization that is nowadays known as the "Federation of European

[20] MANGO, A. 2004: *The Turks Today*. London: John Murray, p. 11.

Democratic Idealist Turkish Associations" (*Avrupa Demokratik Ülkücü Türk Dernekleri Federasyonu, ADÜTDF*). From the 1970s onwards several of these organizations have struggled for influence among Turkish immigrants. To the aforementioned ties one might add transnational connections of the National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*) with Arab-Muslim organizations, such as Muslim brotherhood.

Trails of transnationalism marked the activities of most wellknown representatives among the Turkish Islamists. Prominent Turkish Islamist politician Necmettin Erbakan, who spent some time during the 1950s in Aachen's (Germany) Technical University, was influenced by the German industrial boom and later he has given much emphasis on a "heavy industrialization" (*ağır sanayi hamlesi*) programme in Turkey itself.[21] Since the outset, Erbakan has created a reserve base in the circles of the German Turkish diaspora for his Islamist parties in Turkey, a sort of "permanent exiled structure" that is a source of financial and material support, "hidden" far away from the Turkish judicial system.[22]

The position of Turkish state Islam, which in the first period after it came into existence tried to cut Turkish Muslims off from foreign contacts within the broader context of the Islamic world, is continuously changing and in recent years the *Diyanet* has abandoned the narrow bounds of the national state. Until recently, the *Diyanet* has prevented the incursions of even moderate Muslim ideas from other countries of the Islamic world. In fact, "the *raison d'être* of the Directorate of Religious Affairs has been to create a tailor-made national modern Turkish-Islam, definitely supressing the transnational links and role... specific and limited to the nation-state's official borders that were drawn with the Lausanne Treaty of 1924".[23] Though transnational ties and interreligious dialog has originally been missing from Office's agenda, nowadays it already has a department that cultivates contacts with other religions. While previously the Directorate has been promoting the idea of Turkish national Islam that is in accordance with the policies of the modern secular state, new challenges and developments since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 have contributed to a certain re-orientation of its activities. The present global context characterized by a great number of new, often competing, networks and a decline of the nation-state's primary role on the international scene is counterveiled by new

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[21] ARGUN, B. E. 2003: *Turkey in Germany. The Transnational Sphere of Deutschkei*. New York & London: Routledge, p. 154.

[22] ZARCONE, T. 2004: *La Turquie moderne et l'islam*. Paris: Flammarion, p. 193.

[23] YILMAZ, Ihsan. 2005: 'State, Law, Civil Society and Islam in Contemporary Turkey'. *The Muslim World*, Vol. 95, No. 3, p. 387.

initiatives of the Turkish state.[24] The Kemalist establishment suddenly emphasizes the need to initiate international relations, because it understands them as a counterbalance to the foreign activities of Turkish religious movements and brotherhoods, such as the one inspired by thoughts of Fethullah Gülen.[25] Contrary to the situation in Turkey, where the secular establishment often accuses the Nurcu movement and other religious formations of being involved in reactionary activities, Turkish embassies in Central Asia established a more flexible *modus vivendi* with private educational enterprises that are driven by Islamic ethics and morals. Turkish ambassadors even encourage cooperation agreements between Nurcu groups and local Turkic governments.[26]

During the last ten years the *Diyanet* has participated in construction projects throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus that resulted in building-up numerous mosques, as well as opening of several theological faculties and secondary schools, providing them with teaching personnel for Qur'ānic courses and copies of Qur'āns in Arabic. A similar scenario has been welcomed by the West because the international community under its leadership considered the Turkish model of Islam acceptable and worth emulating in the ex-Soviet Turkic republics.

In order to promote a dialog between religions, the *Diyanet's* chairman Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz visited the Vatican in 2000 on the personal invitation of Pope John Paul II. It was the first such visit since the establishment of the *Diyanet* in 1924. Both sides have signed a protocol on mutual cooperation aiming at exchange of documents, students and various specialists as well as broadening the platform of so-called "religious tourism".

In member states of the European Union the Directorate carries religious and national culture, it brings Turkish identity, along with Islam.[27] While in Turkey all mosques are traditionally monitored by and linked to the *Diyanet*, in Germany the majority of places of worship until 1984 were in the hands of Turkish Sufi *cemaat*s that are still formally outlawed in Turkey. Afraid of losing control over the Turkish Muslim diaspora in favour of radical organizations, the republican establishment in Ankara started to build up a whole network of mosques in Germany, controled in agreement with German authorities by Turkish embassies and consulates. At present, the *Diyanet* manages some 120 mosques in European countries and several hundred employees are supported

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[24] More in COLONOMOS, A., ed. 1995: *Sociologie des réseaux transnationaux. Communauté, entreprises et individus: liens social et système international*. Paris: L'Harmattan, p. 24.

[25] YILMAZ, Ihsan. 2003: '*Ijtihad* and *Tajdid* by Conduct. The Gülen Movement'. In: Yavuz, M. H. – Esposito, J. L., ed.: *Turkish Islam and the Secular State. The Gülen Movement*. New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 232-233.

[26] BALCI, Bayram. 2002: 'Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools'. *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 9, p. 31.

[27] YAVUZ, M. Hakan 2004: 'Is there a Turkish Islam? The Emergence of Convergence and Consensus'. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 232.

by the budget of the Turkish government in Ankara. Aimed at training qualified men of religion for diaspora Turks in Germany, in 1985 the Turkish government even opened a special high school for imams and preachers (*Beykoz Anadolu İmam Hatip Lisesi*), which was supposed to provide high-level teaching in German language. Notwithstanding, the school had not met expectations and was finally turned into an elitist establishment with the instruction in English.[28] Also, when the *Diyanet* gained importance in European countries during the 1980s, *Milli Görüş* made efforts to counterbalance its influence and set up new mosques and other organizations.

It is not unimportant to note that Turks living in Germany – but the same could be said about the Turks in Turkey – do not limit their demands addressed to DİTİB exclusively to religious issues. In fact, as DİTİB mosques are visited mostly by "first generation" immigrants, their expectations are of a social and educational nature, too. This can be shown on various examples from everyday life, for instance, when immigrants petition DİTİB to open day nursaries (*kreş açsın*) or ask for their children's education (*cocuklarımız eğitsin*).[29]

Transnational aspects are also sometimes expressed on a symbolic level and in that way underpinning the agenda of individual actors. In 1993 the Turkish Ministry of Education decided under the influence of conservative right-wing intellectuals from the "Hearth of the Enlightened" (*Aydınlar Ocağı*), initiator of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, that every school textbook must contain a map of the Turkic World from the shores of Bosphorus to Tian Shan mountain range, which should be added to the more traditional Turkish symbols (portrait of Atatürk, national flag and anthem, map of Turkey). Conversely, traditional Turkish republican icons are present in private and state-sponsored schools in Central Asia.[30] Given the scope of these symbolic meanings one could even speak about the export or incursions of Turkish Kemalist "culture". The export of laicism (*laiklik ihracı*) belongs to the transnational activities of Turkish authorities as much as delivery of imams for the places of worship in Germany (*imamlar ve görevliler*).[31] Kemalism had originally aspired not just to eliminate

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[28] ÇAKIR, R. - BOZAN, İ. 2005: *Sivil, Şeffaf ve Demokratik bir Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Mümkün mü?* İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları. P. 333. (www.tesev.org.tr)

[29] ÇAKIR, R. - BOZAN, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

[30] At Turkish educational establishments all over Central Asia it is quite common to find the so-called "Atatürk corner" (*Atatürk köşesi*), a kind of notice-board introducing the biography and ideas of the first Turkish President Kemal Atatürk.

[31] Secularity (that is ideological secularism meaning to replace religion) not secularism is said to be the best term to describe Turkish *laiklik*. As an example of what secularity means it is instructive to quote from Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. In September 2004 during a symposium on religion organized by the state *Diyanet* he proclaimed to the astonishment of many participants that "secularism is a way of life, which should be adopted by an individual". A second example comes from the opening speech of President Sezer at the 21st World Congress of

the political Islam in Turkey, but equally to break the power of Islam as a cultural code, although this latter aspiration failed very soon.[32] Historically, the Turkish model of nationalism has been defined in terms of "civilisation" *à la française* and not in terms of "culture" that characterizes the German model of nationalism. Cultural, religious and linguistic dimensions of nationalism have been, however, reinforced among the Turkish immigrants in Germany and many of them started to go back to their alleged "origins".

One of the strikingly successful examples of adaptation to transnational conditions is represented by the Sufi *cemaat* named after its founder Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888-1959), the *Süleymancıs*. During the 1950s and 1960s *Süleymancıs* gained control over various levels of the state *Diyanet* in Turkey, while compromising with the demands of Kemalist bureaucracy and the ideology of Turkish laicism. The *Süleymancıs* supplied preachers who have been prepared to combine religious beliefs with the ideas of Turkish nationalism. The end of cohabitation between the *Süleymancıs* and the Turkish bureaucracy was linked to the approval of a new law on the *Diyanet* in 1965. Under its terms employees of the Directorate in the future had to be graduates of the High Schools for Imams and Preachers (*İmam Hatip Liseleri*).[33] The new legislation put an end to the dominant standing of *Süleymancıs*, who until then also served as heads of Qur'ānic seminaries. Therefore, members of the *Süleymancı* order have re-oriented their activities to Turkish (e)migrants in Germany and Austria. At the begining, they have been opening Qur'ānic courses. Later, however, they initiated the birth of Islamic Cultural Centres and in 1980 finally integrated them into the Union of Islamic Cultural Centres (*İslam Kültür Merkezleri Birliği*, in German *Verband der islamischen Kulturzentren*). The Association claims to have around 300 communities and about twenty thousand members.[34] Traditionally, members of this current, who were branded "ultra-conservative", kept a reserve towards the German majority and have been hesitant in dialogue with Christians.[35]

In discussions on transnationalism special attention is regularly paid to neo-Sufi communities and new religious movements that often have complex relationships with the Turkish state and authorities, even though in the past they

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Philosophy in August 2003 in Istanbul, where he proclaimed that "philosophy must be modern and secular".

[32] ABU-RABIʿ, Ibrahim M. 2003: 'How to Read Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur*'. In: Abu Rabiʿ, I. M., ed.: *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 65.

[33] ÇAKIR, R. – BOZAN, İ. – TALU, B. 2004: *İmam Hatip Liseleri: Efsaneler ve Gerçekler*. İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları.

[34] GOLDBERG, A. – HALM, D. – ŞEN, F.: *Die deutschen Türken*. Münster 2004, p. 107.

[35] FEINDT-RIGGERS, N. – STEINBACH, U.: *Islamische Organisationen in Deutschland*. Hamburg 1997, p. 19.

used to participate in state-sponsored religious activities. Based on the writings of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, especially his Epistles of Light Collection (*Risale-i Nur Külliyatı*), the Nurcu movement has been among the symbols of resistance against the ruling secular ideology.[36] The Nurcu movement, that is decentralized and print based, has no real geographical centre in Turkey, although it has a strong basis in the eastern provinces with a Kurdish majority, and Nurcu groups in diaspora are active from Malaysia, the US and Pakistan to Germany and Austria. Following the death of Said Nursi in 1960, the Nurcu community desintegrated into a great number of splinter groups, but all of them follow the footsteps of their spiritual leader.[37] The spiritual, economic and educational network around Fethullah Gülen (born 1938) is also a splinter group of the vast Nurcu movement, functioning as a transnational social actor with loosely connected clusters of supporters. It is a sort of civil society network that is visible via educational programmes, publishing and business activities or media presentations. A style of mobilization based on personal networks loosely allied with domestic or foreign organizations has been termed „vernacular politics".[38] Nowadays the movement spiritually connected with the teachings of Fethullah Gülen operates more than four hundred schools in some fifty countries all over the world.[39] Owing mainly to health reasons, Fethullah Gülen himself has established his home in the USA for the last several years, after all, diaspora conditions are more suitable for his world-wide activities and protect him from the hegemonic Kemalist ideology and its surveillance.

The main accelerator for the widespread activities of followers of Fethullah Gülen in Central Asia is to be found in the desintegration of the Soviet rule over the region and in the efforts of Turkish Muslims to reintegrate the new Turkic republics into the Muslim world. Fethullah Gülen understands the Central Asian region as a corridor uniting Turkey, the Middle East and the booming Pacific region.

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[36] See MARDİN, Ş. 1989: *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York Press; ABU-RABI[c], I. M., ed. 2003: *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York Press; PIRICKÝ, G. 2004: *Islám v Turecku: Fethullah Gülen a Nurcuovia* ("Islam in Turkey: Fethullah Gülen and the Nurcus"). Trnava: UCM; MARKHAM, I. – OZDEMIR, I. 2005: *Globalization, Ethics and Islam: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

[37] Interestingly, another branch of Nurcu movement under Mehmet Kutlular, is called *Yeni Asyacılar* (New Asians), as if transnationalism was recorded in its name and the name of its newspaper, *Yeni Asya Gazetesi*.

[38] WHITE, J. B. 2002: *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey. A Study in Vernacular Politics*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, p. 276.

[39] KURU, Ahmet T. 2006: 'Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of Justice and Development Party'. In: Yavuz, M. H., ed.: *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, p. 141.

The expansion of transnational capital and mass media to even the remotest of hinterlands is an effective strategy for dealing with challenges of the globalized world community of Turkic Muslims. Indeed, banking house *Asya Finans* that since its establishment in 1996 was considered to be an institution related to the activities of circles close to Gülen, expanded both in the West and in Central Asia. This non-interest bearing bank was backed at the time of its launch by sixteen partners and 125 million USD in capital. In its development strategies the bank repeatedly stressed the need to adapt to the conditions of globalization.[40] One of Gülen's financial advisers has been quoted as saying that if the movement transferred its power from abroad to Turkey it would become a political giant in Turkey.[41] Hence, relations between *foreigners* and *nationals* are of concern not only for domestic but equally for foreign policy. Moreover, *"exit weakens the home state's ability to cage and penetrate its population. Access to another territory and its greater economic and ideological resources gives migrants new-found leverage to effect change at home".*[42]

Transnational actions are not just local, but also trans-local, and quite often local-to-local. According to Bekim Agai, who researched three countries (Albania, Germany and Turkey) with *Fethullahçı* educational networks, the education centre in the German city of Bonn, which is part of Gülen's network, is directly supporting educational activities in Kyrgyzstan.[43] In all these cases informality and lack of formal structure help to fulfil the goals of the participants in networking activities. Schools and educational centres are, in fact, often serving as a vehicle of English language education, next to Turkish and the local language, combining local and Turkish curricula.

In Central Asia, through activities of followers of Fethullah Gülen, transnationalism mixes with cultural pan-Turkism. Common roots (both existing and invented) or ancestors, blood brotherhood, similar customs, food or drink, all are used to refer to the shared Turkicness mixed with ethnic consciousness in Turkish Islam. In order not to fall into disgrace or not to risk conflict with the Turkish state, the Gülen network outside Turkey "has developed a more efficient and effective national identity... rather than an

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[40] http://www.asyafinans.com.tr

[41] BİLİCİ, Mucahit. 2006: 'The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Its Politics of Representation in Turkey'. *The Muslim World*, Vol. 96, No. 1, p. 7.

[42] WALDINGER, Roger – FITZGERALD, David. 2004: 'Transnationalism in Question'. *AJS*, Vol. 109, No. 5, p. 1183.

[43] AGAI, B. 2004: *Zwischen Netzwerk und Diskurs. Das Bildungsnetzwerk um Fethullah Gülen (geb. 1938): Die flexible Umsetzung modernen islamischen Gedankenguts*. Hamburg: EB-Verlag. See also AGAI, Bekim. 2003: 'The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethics of Education'. In: Yavuz, M. H. – Esposito, J. L., ed.: *Turkish Islam and the Secular State. The Gülen Movement*. New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 48-68.

Islamic one".[44] This is also evidence that in its transnational activities Islamic networks are ready to suppress, at least partially, their vision of an Islamic mission. In other words, "while transnational practices and hybrid identities are indeed potentially counter-hegemonic, they are by no means always resistant".[45] On the other side, borrowing Mücahit Bilici's argument, we notice that the Islamic religion is acceptable and legitimate for the Turkish state only as far as it is part of the Turkish national identity, but it is not acceptable as religion pure and simple.[46] In Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, two private institutions associated with people close to Fethullah Gülen, *Başkent* and *Sebat*, are active side by side with the official Turkish ministry of education (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı*). At "Turkish" schools in Kyrgyzstan or Turkmenistan it is a common thing to celebrate Turkish national holidays, including the date of Atatürk's passing.[47]

In analysing transnational Islam, several extremist Turkish organizations that came into being in Germany have to be mentioned. Of approximately nineteen radical groups with some thirty-two thousand believers, the most active until its closure in 2001 was the group initiated in Cologne (Köln) in 1984 by Cemalettin Kaplan, who was surnamed the "Khomeiny from Köln". The organization has been officially known as the *Verband der islamischen Vereine und Gemeinden* (*İslam Cemaatleri ve Cemiyetleri Birliği*). Most notably, Kaplan rejected the Western notion of democracy and aimed at establishing a state based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law – *şeriat*. The ultimate aim of this group, called also the *Kaplancı*, has been the founding of a *Kalifatsstaat* in Turkey to replace the Kemalist republic. Kaplan has opted for the proclamation of a government in exile because he considered Turkey to be in the state of *cahiliyet* (age of ignorance and paganism) and in 1994 he appointed himself caliph. His plans for an Islamic revolution were inspired and saturated by the Iranian example. The *Kaplancı* dream of return to Turkey has been "expressed in the phrase *kendisini gurbetten kurtarmak* (to save oneself from living in a foreign country)".[48] For radical Turkish Islamists, emigration to

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[44] TURAM, Berna. 2003: 'National Loyalties and International Undertakings: The Case of the Gülen Community in Kazakhstan'. In: Yavuz, M. H. – Esposito, J. L., ed.: *Turkish Islam and the Secular State. The Gülen Movement*. New York: Syracuse University Press, p. 193.

[45] SMITH, M. P. – GUARNIZO, L. E., ed., 1998: *Transnationalism From Below*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, p. 5.

[46] BİLİCİ, Mucahit. 2006: 'The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Its Politics of Representation in Turkey'. *The Muslim World*, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 7.

[47] DEMIR, Cennet Engin - BALCI, Ayse - AKKOK, Fusun. 2000: 'The Role of Turkish Schools in the Educational System and Social Transformation of Central Asian Countries: the Case of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan'. *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.19, No.1, pp. 141-155.

[48] SCHIFFAUER, Werner. 1999: 'Islamism in the Diaspora. The fascination of political Islam among second generation German Turks'. ESRC Transnational Communities Research

Germany was a kind of *kutsal göç* (sacred e-migration) that, similarly to the experience of Prophet Muhammad, it could result in turning exile into victorious return. After all, Turkish Islamists, both extremist and accommodationist, usually unite the concept of migration (*hicret*) and Islamization (*davet*).[49] Cemalettin Kaplan was an outspoken and religiously fanatical opponent of secularism and his value system was clearly expressed by the following statement: *"İslamiyet hem din hem devlettir, hem ibadet, hem siyasettir. Hatta, İslam'ın ibadeti siyaset, siyaseti de ibadettir. Siyasetsiz ve devletsiz bir İslam dini düşünmek mümkün değildir"* ('Islam means both religion and state, both worship and politics. In Islam, worship even translates into politics, its politics is a worship. It is impossible to think about Islamic religion that exists without politics and state').[50] After his death in 1995, Metin Kaplan, Cemalettin's son, was proclaimed the new "emir of believers and khalif of all Muslims" (*emirü'l-mü' minin ve halifetü'l-müslimin*). He declared both Turkey and Germany to be *dar ül-harb* (the abode of war). Later, Ibrahim Sofu was proclaimed a counter caliph within the same movement, but Metin Kaplan issued a *fetva* to condemn him to death. In its media outreach, the *Kaplancı* group in Köln has been broadcasting programs full of antidemocratic propaganda through its television station *Hakk-TV* ("Justice or God TV") that called for the overthrow of the Turkish government.

To counter the religious activities of Turkish *emigré* Muslim organizations, the Turkish secularist establishment, apart from using forcible means, mobilizes support for various organizations that protect Kemalism and secularist principles. Although one of the largest civic movements, the Atatürk Thought Association (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği*), was born in Turkey in 1993 when Uğur Mumcu, respected journalist and human rights activist, had been murdered by radical Islamists in Istanbul, soon afterwards, an external branch of the association appeared in the countries of the European Union.

Similarly to the Islamists, Kurdish nationalists also rely on transnational ties and gain economic, political and financial resources from migrant communities in the West. In 1995 the Kurds finally achieved in the Netherlands what they missed at home: an executive body named "Kurdish Parliament in Exile". Paradoxically then as it may seem, Kurdish nationalism is a sort of transnational phenomenon.[51] Kurds living in the diaspora tend to be more interested in their

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Programme *Working Papers* 99-06, p. 14. (www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk). The most common Turkish term for an *emigré* is *gurbetçi*.

[49] TIBI, B. 1998: *Aufbruch am Bosporus. Die Türkei zwischen Europa und dem Islamismus.* München – Zürich: Diana Verlag, p. 275.

[50] GÜVENÇ, B. 2005: *Türk Kimliği. Kültür Tarihinin Kaynakları.* İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, p. 276.

[51] JUNG, D. – PICCOLI, W. 2001: *Turkey at the Crossroads. Ottoman Legacies and a Greater Middle East.* London & New York: Zed Books, p. 207.

Kurdishness regardless of the fact that their parents came to Europe thinking they were Turks and Turkish was also the language of communication among left-wing Kurdish nationalists. The Kurdish question, in fact, is no longer a dispute over the resources and territories of a distant people, but more and more a European problem of people living among us. The Kurds originally internalized the official doctrine of Turkey according to which every citizen of the republic is a Turk, or they simply did not think about any other option. Once in Europe, they rediscovered and re-imagined their Kurdishness and especially members of the second generation of Kurds started to openly demonstrate their Kurdish identity. In Western societies, the possibility to engage in various political and cultural activities enabled Kurds to publish in Kurdish. Thus, Kurds re-created the Kurdish language for modern usage (until then even the *PKK* did not take much care of Kurdish as its members published in Turkish, and it was often stated that the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan himself spoke hardly any Kurdish).

An interesting change has taken place among Kurdish migrants with regard to the language question. Whereas in the past language allegiance was not an issue among diaspora Kurds and all of them have spoken mostly Turkish anyway, later language started to play a non-negligeable role, especially in relations between Kurmanji and Zaza Kurds.[52] Unlike Zazas, who almost always understand some Kurmanji, Kurmanjis in general do not undestand Zazaki at all.[53] Progressively, a new Zaza identity has been born in the environment of Kurdish leftist organizations, soon after exiled Kurds started to supplant Turkish with Kurmanji Kurdish as a literary vehicle. Zaza Kurds (their homeland in eastern Turkey is now called "Zazastan"), however, felt their "otherness" and accused the Kurdish majority of discriminatory practices against their own Kurdish minority. As German scholar Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi summarized, "contrary to the situation in Turkey, where a solo attempt by Zazas to create a distinct politics of identity would have not the smallest chance to develop, the political atmosphere in Europe seems to encourage this".[54] In addition, the divide between Alevi and Sunni Zazas in Turkey is still immense and the language affiliation is not the most important phenomenon in their identity building process. Zaza nationalism is supported mainly by Alevi Zazas, while Sunni Zazas keep their reservations. And what's more, for some Zaza Alevis, Kurd even means 'Sunni'.

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[52] *PKK* (Kurdish Worker's Party) publications have been originally published almost exclusively in Turkish language.

[53] From a linguistic perpective it is often claimed that Zaza is not a Kurdish, but an Iranian language.

[54] KEHL-BODROGI, Krisztina. 2005: 'Kurds, Turks, or a People in their own Right? Competing Collective Identity among the Zazas'. *The Muslim World*, Vol. 89, No. 34, p. 449.

In many respects, the Alevi revival in Europe and Turkey has been similar to the rise in awareness of Kurdish identity in Western Europe. While in Turkey the use of adjective "Alevi" is still very rare and Alevi believers themselves prefer to use more neutral names (e.g. referring to famous local poets and mystics) when searching for self-definition, in Germany the word Alevi appears very often. Among Alevis, who represent about 30 percent of Turks in Germany, there is nevertheless a lack of consensus concerning the nature of Alevism. The issue of Alevism in Germany, however, is not the subject of such ardent polemics as in Turkey, because unlike Alevis in Turkey, German Alevis are in possession of very influential organizations.[55] Alevi organizations in Europe, supported by voluntary associations, raise money for Alevi victims of Sunni attacks in Turkey and they are the main vehicle in construction of the autonomous Alevi identity in Anatolia. At the same time, Alevi communities further divide into emerging ethnoreligious groups that might be either Turkish or Kurdish.

The Alevi conscioussness in Germany, and indeed in Europe, is strengthened by the fact that school textbooks give information on their religious and cultural traditions, moreover, there are European universities offering courses on *Alevilik*. These "achievements" are encouraging Alevi communities in Turkey who formulate similar demands within their more traditional environment. The "Federation of Alevi Unions in Europe" (*Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu*) strives permanently to change the present situation in Turkey and pushes the issue of recognition of Alevis as a religious minority.

As is evident from this short overview, diasporic groups may be focused on various dimensions of Islamic faith and its practice, but for almost all of them the myth of return to the original "homeland" is still alive. Some transnational organizations, that need not to be concerned about government interference, try to export Islam as a politico-religious ideology to their country of origin, others are dedicated to ethical and enterpreneurial activities that are pursued even in cooperation with agencies of the Turkish secular establishment, still others are aspiring to strengthen some specific religious identities, together with a newly re-imagined ethnolinguistic self-identification. With the aim of determining the diasporic definitions of Islam among Muslim Turks, Turkish government has reacted in its own way, striving for the control of (trans)migrants with the help of formal state-linked transnationalism. The fact that Turkish imams in Germany and elsewhere in Europe are supplied and paid by the foreign government, on the one side, promotes moderate – although often outdated and undynamic – interpretations of Islam that are in line with the Turkish official

[55] ÇAKIR, R. – BOZAN, İ. 2005: *Sivil, Şeffaf ve Demokratik bir Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Mümkün mü?* İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, p. 157.

policies of *laiklik*, on the other side, it hinders integration of diaspora Turks and makes numerous obstacles to those who would prefer to see European Islam adapted to the needs and aspirations of Turks living in Western societies. And so, *"paradoxically, the expansion of transnational practices from above and from below has resulted in outbursts of entrenched, essentialist nationalism in both 'sending' and 'receiving' countries. In receiving nation-states, movements aimed at recuperating and reifying a mythical national identity are expanding as a way to eliminate the penetration of alien 'others'. States of origin, on the other hand, are re-essentializing their national identity and extending it to their nationals abroad as a way to maintain their loyalty and flow of resources 'back home'. "*[56]

Finally, numerous transnational communities have in recent times developed their agendas in a completely new, *syncretic* or *creolizing* way. Those "Turks" who could not engage in political activities at home, mostly Kurdish separatists, Marxists or radical Islamists, have tried to profit from the liberal European judicial system in order to mobilize compatriots for their specific agenda. Turkey's Sunni Muslims, for example, usually reproach the Kemalist establishment for its excessive secularism, Alevis have reservations as far as the Sunni dominance in Turkey is concerned, and last but not least, Kurds blame the Turkish state for its allegedly uncompromising Turkishness. But, Muslim identity is also a flexible and hybrid category, and European Muslims, for instance, often have complex identities with Turkish-Muslim and local components. Apart from seeing (trans)migrants as Muslims, rather than children, workers, enterpreneurs or unemployeds, other social characteristics of Turks should not be marginalized either.[57]

Diaspora influences ongoing discussions about Turkish nationalism and laicism, especially in cases that are opposed to official Kemalism, particularly the so-called "religious nationalism" (combination of Turkness and Islam) or "racial nationalism" of the *MHP*. Even the political struggle with laicism is supported by diasporic groups, mainly from Germany.

In addition to transnational religious terrorism, that is under the scrutiny after September 11 2001, transnational connections have had many faces in recent decades. One example of the potentialities of transnationalism is to be found in various activities of Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, a country

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[56] SMITH, M. P. – GUARNIZO, L. E., ed., 1998: *Transnationalism From Below*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, p. 10.

[57] In Europe, migrants from Turkey, the Arab world or Pakistan are today increasingly labelled in religious terms, immigration, in fact, tends to be "Islamicized". On the other side, important research findings suggest that "religiosity is increasing in Turkey" and tensions between the Alevi and Sunni groups are rising in recent years. See ÇARKOĞLU, A. – TOPRAK, B. 2006: *Değişen Türkiye'de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset*. İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, pp. 11-12.

that has been financing mosques and Islamic publications in Turkey for many years. Here it must be noted that for Turks "the encounter with the Muslim 'Other' has been at least as important for self-definition as the confrontation with European 'Other'".[58]

In a certain sense, one could say, that given the fact that the Turkish community in Europe reflects the diverse ethnic composition of Turkey proper, diaspora conditions could in the future help to solve a great number of Turkish issues. On the other side, there are also "powerful forces in the diaspora that deliberately hinder integration or adaptation to the foreign cultures".[59] Interestingly, a significant shift has been recorded by the analysts of Turkish Islamist movements acting transnationally. Once the Islamists learned that Turkey's European integration could have transformational effects on a plethora of domestic issues, they have thrown out Euro-scepticism and embraced a pro-European policy. Most notably, "the 1997 coup helped the National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*) to rediscover Europe as a repository of democracy and human rights and to discard the long-held Islamist idea of Europe as a source of Kemalist authoritarianism".[60] This is also a proof, that transnational spaces and actors are under constant transfiguration and to keep track of their latest movements and developments will be simply of uttermost importance and value in the years ahead.

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[58] EICKELMAN, Dale F. – PISCATORI, James. 1990: 'Preface'. In: Eickelman, D. F. – Piscatori, J., ed.: *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and theReligious* Imagination. London: Routledge, p. xv.

[59] ARGUN, B. E. 2003: *Turkey in Germany. The Transnational Sphere of Deutschkei*. New York & London: Routledge, p. 171.

[60] "The 1997 coup", that is also branded "postmodern" or „virtual", is more euphemisticaly termed "the February 28 Recommendations" to the government of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. See YAVUZ, M. H. 2003: *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Oxford: OUP, p. 249.