



26.10.07  
FRIDAY

## Turkish Muslims and Islamic Turkey: Perspectives for a New European Islamic Identity?

by *Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi*

**Panel:**  
Euro-Islam, Identity and  
Integration

**Venue:**  
B202,  
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

26.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30		Presentation 01
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		

The paper discusses the potential of Fethullah Gülen’s thinking on the revival of core socio-ethical tenets of Islam to influence an emerging European Islamic identity. The long absence of any substantial Muslim population from the religious landscape of western Europe in the modern period began to end with the post-War immigration of Muslims from South Asia to the UK and other parts of Europe. But Muslims from other parts of the Islamic world have also established communities in Europe with their own, different expressions of Islam. The presence of Muslims represents a religio-cultural counterpoint to the projected ‘post-Christian society of Europe’, since they are now permanently settled within that society.

The encounter of ‘Turkish Islam’ (Anatolian & other) and the majority ‘South Asian Islam’ (with its diverse strands, Bareilvi, Deobandi and others) in western Europe hints at the building of a new ‘European Islamic’ identity. Arguably, this twenty-first century ‘European Islam’ might be a synthesis of the ‘Turkish’ and the ‘South Asian’ expressions of Islam. Any disharmony, on the other hand, might kindle yet another rivalry in the heart of Europe. This paper considers whether Gülen’s thought on community education based on the fundamentals of Islam could help build a positive and fresh expression of Islam that may reform the prevailing image of it as a cultural tradition that resorts to violence in order to redress grievances.

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Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi (PhD on majority–minority ethnic and religious conflict, Melbourne College of Divinity, University of Melbourne): Lecturer in Religion and Conflict, St. Phillip’s Centre for Study and Engagement, Leicester, UK. He develops and facilitates the Centre’s numerous programmes concerning interrelationships and dialogue between different religious, cultural and ethnic communities. Dr. Hettiarachchi is the founder Co-ordinator of the Luton Council of Faiths, Bedfordshire, UK. His primary research interests are in diaspora communities – their religious affiliations in the UK, Europe and Australia; their social adjustment processes; radicalisation of religious faith; land, history and notions of chosen-ness as political tools to define identity. He has published widely on related topics.