

Social and Spiritual Capital of the Gülen Movement

by *Talip Kucukcan*

This paper examines the Gülen movement from the perspective of social and spiritual capital theory. It argues that, in an increasingly globalised world, this movement has been distinguished by its consistent ability to convert its social network and spiritual capital into creative projects that contribute positively to the transformation of Islamic thought and practice in many different settings and socio-political contexts. In the past, traditional spiritual and religious movements remained largely indifferent to the new forms of transformative agency such as civil society organisations, the media, modern educational establishments, corporations and global networking. Social capital theory is derived from the idea that social networks have both importance and power as civil actors in modern democratic societies. The Gülen movement was able to adapt to the modern conditions and successfully turned its spiritual, intellectual and human resources into effective social capital. Three areas of that adaptive success are examined: *education* (establishment of institutions from primary school to university level, attracting students of diverse backgrounds); *the media* (a wide range of products in print and audio-visual communication, from a mass circulation daily to TV and radio channels); and *civil society organisations* (foundations and associations to promote democratic participation and dialogue among various sections of the society). The paper concludes that the Gülen movement has built up a huge social capital and turns it into a number of transformative agents informed by Islamic spirituality.

Panel:
Gülen and Islam as Social
Capital

Venue:
Lecture Theatre,
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

26.10.07 Panels	Parellel Session 1	Parellel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00	Presentation 12	

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