



27.10.07

SATURDAY

Preaching by Example: Understanding the Gülen *Hizmet* in the Global Context of Religious Philanthropy and Civil Religion

by Greg Barton

Panel:
Gülen Movement in Peace
Building and
Conflict Resolution

Venue:
D202,
Clement House, LSE

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

The Gülen movement, or *hizmet*, is often misunderstood, and this is in large measure because it is unlike anything else in the Muslim world, though the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama mass-based organisations of Indonesia do bear some resemblance. However, there is no good reason to limit comparisons to the Muslim world. As a social movement motivated by religious values and the ideals of selfless service, engaged in philanthropic endeavour and active in the civil sphere, the Gülen *hizmet* deserves comparison with other such movements around the globe.

This paper looks outside the geographic and cultural context of the Muslim world to demonstrate that the Gülen *hizmet* shares much in common with many Western, Christian, philanthropic initiatives in education and public discourse of the past three centuries, particularly in North America. The utility of this comparison is that it helps us to understand better aspects of the Gülen *hizmet* that cannot be easily understood in the limited context of the Muslim world. It also helps break down some of the 'us and them' barriers that divide Christians and Muslims, and east and west, by allowing us to recognise common concerns, values and shared experiences.

The paper also explores the concept of civil religion in the twenty-first century, examines ways in which religious philanthropic activity can contribute to the development of non-exclusivist civil religion and apply these insights to the Gülen *hizmet* to argue that the *hizmet* models an interesting modern Islamic alternative to Islamism.

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Greg Barton: from January 2007, Herb Feith Research Professor for the Study of Indonesia, Monash University. In 2006 he was Associate Professor at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he continues to be an Adjunct Professor. 1993 to 2005 he taught comparative religion, Islamic studies and politics at Deakin University. Research interests and publications: Professor Barton has written about Jemaah Islamiyah and other radical Islamist groups in Southeast Asia; his central research interest is progressive Islamic thought and its contribution to civil society and politics, to which he has added a focus on comparative study of progressive Islamic thought in Turkey and Indonesia. He has widely published in this field. Currently working on two book projects: *Islam's Other Nation: a Fresh Look at Indonesia* and *Progressive Islamic Thought and Social Movements in Indonesia and Turkey*.