



26.10.07
FRIDAY

Fethullah Gülen: Kemalist and Islamic Republicanism and Turkey's Democratic Future

by *Louis Cantori*

Panel:
The Gülen Movement,
Secularism and Democracy

Venue:
Lecture Theatre,
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

26.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00	Presentation 05	
15:10-17:00		

To put it bluntly, the claim that liberal democracy is a universal concept is false. Its prerequisites of individualism, equality, secularism, pluralism etc. have a minority status in the world. On the other hand, what can be termed Islamic conservatism does apply to Islamic societies: 1) the past incorporates within it the revelations of God as expressed in the Qur'an as the spiritual centre of gravity; 2) community and family take precedence over the individual and 3) the goal of society is the enjoining of that which is good and the prohibition of that which is evil. Islamic conservatism can also be analytically attached to republicanism as an alternative to democracy. Referred to here is the republicanism of ancient Rome which argues for (a) the limitation of the powers of a strong and benevolent and moral state, (b) an elite pledged to serve the public good (*maslahah*), (c) a citizenry also pledged to serve society, and (d) an embedded law respected and upheld by all.

Kemalism in contemporary Turkey represents the principles of republicanism as formulated in the famous 'Six Arrows', which centred more on the need for a strong centralised state than on the obligations of the state to its citizens. If measured against the four criteria of the ancient Roman republican ideal, the Turkish state clearly falls far short. By contrast, this paper argues, the Gülen movement does, rather remarkably, meet those high standards. As a consequence, there are present in Turkey today, two interacting modes of republicanism that are increasingly beginning to overlap with and resemble one another.

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Louis Cantori: Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Maryland, Baltimore Co. He did postgraduate work at the University of Chicago, and Islamic philosophy in the Faculty of Theology, al-Azhar University, Cairo. He is the author, co-author or editor of four books on the Middle East and on comparative politics and over 40 articles on the Middle East and related subjects. Among recent publications: articles on 'Modernization and Development' and 'Republic', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (revised, 2008); 'Islamic Republican Hamas and the Palestinian Future', *American Political Science Association*, Chicago, IL. August 30, 2007