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F R I D A Y

Civility in Islamic Activism: Towards a Better Understanding of Shared Values for Civil Society Development

by Wanda Krause

Fethullah Gülen’s works and movement have aimed to mend the tensions and fissures, specifically along racial and ideological lines on both practical and theoretical levels that are emerging in this rapidly globalising world. Within a civil society theoretical framework, this paper addresses the knowledge developed on Islamically inspired forms of activism, before proceeding to an examination of key civil society actors with focus on the Gülen movement.

Islam-based forms of organisation are conventionally presented as deficient in ‘civility’ or even antithetical to civil principles. The danger is that they are then simply excluded from normative definitions of civil society and their positive role in it diminished. In this respect, this paper argues for expanding the concepts through which we view and come to judge civility and citizenship. The role of shared values in building civil society is facilitated by expanding the concepts through which we measure and exclude crucial components. Recognising the value systems behind Islamic forms of organisation helps develop better tools for deciphering the shared values among various parts of civil society.

Focusing on the Gülen movement, through an investigation of its beliefs, values and practices, the paper illustrates not only its contribution in terms of expanding civil societies internationally, but also how – according to the criteria used for measuring its effect – it is positioned as a leading example of dealing with contemporary challenges. It is hoped that this work will contribute to laying the epistemological groundwork for those struggling against Islamophobia and striving to expose the values shared among all actors in a healthy and vibrant civil society.

Panel:
Gülen and Islam as Social Capital

Venue:
Lecture Theatre,
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

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

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She has written many articles on politics in the Middle East and other developing countries and article entries in encyclopaedias. Among recent publications: ‘Political Islam in the Middle East – Doing the State’s Work: Women and the Parallel Sector in the Arab World’ in Thomas Bateman and Roger Epp (eds.) *Braving the New World: Readings in Contemporary Politics* (Nelson, 3rd edn. 2004); ‘Civil Society in the Democratization Process: A Case Study on Cairo Islamic Women’s and Secular Feminist Organizations’, *Global Development Studies*, (Winter/Spring) 2004; ‘The Role and Example of Chilean and Argentinean Mothers in Democratization’, *Development in Practice*, 14/3 (April 2004).

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