



26.10.07
FRIDAY

Changing Perspectives on Islamism and Secularism in Turkey: the Gülen Movement and the AK Party

by *Ahmet Kuru*

The debate between secularists and Islamic groups, a conspicuous feature of Turkish politics for decades, changed in the late 1990s when the political discourse of mainstream Islamic groups embraced secularism. The establishment elite advocate the existing French model of an ‘assertive secularism’, meaning that, in the public domain, the state supports only the expression of a secular worldview, and formally excludes religion and religious symbols from that domain. The pro-Islamic conservatives, on the other hand, favour the American model of ‘passive secularism’, in which the state permits the expression of religion in the public domain. In short, what Turkey has witnessed over the last decade is no longer a tussle between secularism and Islamism, but between two brands of secularism.

Two actors have played crucial roles in this transformation: the Gülen movement and the Justice and Development (AK) Party. Recently the Gülen movement became an international actor and a defendant of passive secularism. Similarly, although the AK Party was originated from an Islamist Milli Görüş (National Outlook) movement, it is now a keen supporter of Turkey’s membership to the European Union and defends (passive) secularist, democratic regime. This paper analyses the transformation of these important social and political actors with regard to certain structural conditions, as well as the interactions between them.

Panel:
The Gülen Movement,
Secularism and Democracy

Venue:
Lecture Theatre,
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

26.10.07 Panels	Parellel Session 1	Parellel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00	Presentation 08	
15:10-17:00		

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