

AMSS 39th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“Cosmopolitan Islam: Globalization, Transnationalism and Muslim Diasporas”

Cosponsored by:
DePaul University, Chicago, IL
September 25, 2010

ABSTRACT

“Muslim Cosmopolitanism in a Globalizing World”

By: Ermin Sinanovic, Ph.D
(United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD)

The current age of globalization is characterized, among other things, by convergence of identities. This phenomenon gave rise to renewed discussions and debates on cosmopolitanism and its meanings, especially in relation to modern concepts, such as the nation-state, transnationalism, and non-state actors. Contemporary Muslims find themselves in the midst of these debates. Yet, there is precious little written about the concept of cosmopolitanism in contemporary Islamic thought. Building on the theoretical works of Kwame Anthony Appiah, Sydney Tarrow, and Tariq Ramadan, this paper is a step toward developing a framework for Islamic ethics of cosmopolitanism in a globalizing world. It examines sources, both textual and experiential, that point to a possibility of Muslim cosmopolitan ethics. The paper answers questions surrounding the tensions between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism, Islamic universalism and nation-state particularism, and Islamic exclusivism and inclusivism; all of which are central to the formulation of Muslim cosmopolitan ethics. Further, after developing the above-mentioned ethical framework, the paper briefly examines two case studies in contemporary Islamic transnational movements and the ways in which they appropriated - sometimes unwittingly - cosmopolitan ethics, as well as instances where these movements contradicted it. These case studies serve as an evidence of the underdeveloped and *ad-hoc* approach to transnationalism and cosmopolitanism within contemporary Islamic thought. The paper suggests some of the ways in which these tensions may be resolved.