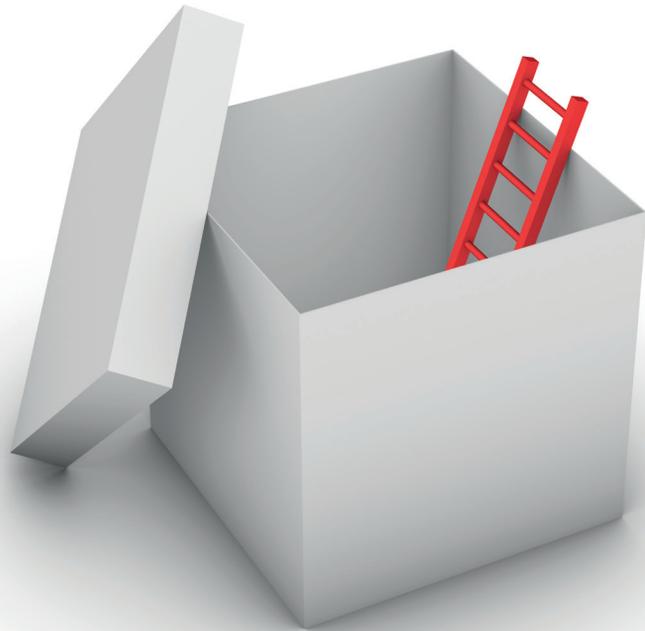


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Series

A Hizmet Approach to Rooting out Violent Extremism



Centre for
Hizmet
Studies

A Hizmet Approach to Rooting out Violent Extremism

By Ozcan Keles and Ismail Mesut Sezgin

Based in London, the Centre for Hizmet Studies provides access to reliable information and resources for the serious study of the Hizmet movement. The Centre aims to facilitate, as well as present, critical analysis of Hizmet for both academic and popular audiences. Its activities include research, resource development, online support, discussion forums and print publication.



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Executive Summary

- This publication targets researchers, policy makers and media interested in devising policies and strategies to prevent violent extremism. It was not written with the aim of targeting violent extremists themselves or those vulnerable to its ideology.
- Hizmet is an Islamically-inspired grassroots civil society movement with a presence in over 160 countries and whose core teachings, practice and refutations of violent extremism originate from its robust interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunna. Therefore, the question of what Hizmet thinks about, and how it responds to, violent extremism is most relevant to those concerned with this issue.
- Part one of this publication explores Hizmet's theological refutations of violent extremism which claim an Islamic justification. Part two explores Hizmet's core teachings, which underpin its values and practice and act as a positive counter-narrative undermining violent extremist ideology in the process. Part three covers the channels and conveyors through which Hizmet popularises that counter-narrative among the wider Muslim public. The conclusion draws these three parts together demonstrating how they undermine violent extremist ideology and tackle some of its root causes. Finally, the publication concludes with some recommendations for Hizmet and other stakeholders.
- Hizmet does not attempt to defeat violent extremist ideology or practice by meeting it head on. Rather, the core Islamic teachings that underpin its values and activism negate violent extremist ideology, mindset and practice as a natural by-product and default outcome of its positive work. Those core teachings are popularised among the wider public through a series of channels and practices acting as conveyors. Hizmet's core teachings and the values and activism they underpin are diametrically opposed to and mutually exclusive with those associated with violent extremism; therefore, the stronger one grows, the weaker the other becomes. Accordingly, the goal of defeating extremism is made to *ensue* without being directly and aggressively *pursued*, ensuring it avoids the pitfalls associated with being reactive – hence the term *deradicalisation by default*.

- The views of the Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen on violent extremism and terrorism are not conjunctural but authentic and fundamental. His condemnation of such acts has been unequivocal, consistent and also proactive as he and Hizmet collectively develop and disseminate a positive counter-narrative undermining violent extremist ideology and worldview. The publication looks at Gülen's foundational views for rejecting violent extremism as well exploring his views on the more controversial and specific debates and issues on the topic, including groups declaring war, the legitimacy of targeting innocent civilians, suicide attacks, Islamic state, and the dichotomous worldview of *dar al-harb* and *dar al-Islam*.
- The report concludes by offering three recommendations to Hizmet and other stakeholders on how best to optimise Hizmet's approach to rooting out violent extremism, noting that it is not only the content of the argument that is made but also the emotional packaging and grooming with which it is presented that is convincing to new recruits and that Hizmet's theology and practice has the advantage of addressing both facets together.

Foreword

Hizmet literally means service. The Hizmet movement is a transnational civil society movement inspired by the teachings, values and principles espoused by Fethullah Gülen, an Islamic scholar and peace advocate. It is civic, independent and inclusive, loosely connected through shared ideals. It began in Turkey in the 1970s as an effort to enable and empower the grassroots of society. It was and has remained funded by voluntary contributions from the ordinary public and staffed by voluntary participants who work as administrators or teachers for no or nominal wages. The movement has founded over two thousand schools; even more dialogue organisations, clinics, media outlets, and humanitarian aid and other charitable NGOs in over 160 countries worldwide.

Fethullah Gülen is a Sunni Muslim scholar from Turkey. Born in 1941, Gülen received classical madrasa training in Fiqh (jurisprudence), Hadith (prophetic traditions) and Tafseer (exegesis) as well as other Islamic sciences. He has worked as a state-licensed preacher for the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) for over thirty-five years and continued teaching after his retirement. Gülen has authored over sixty books, delivered hundreds of keynote sermons and continues to give shorter talks (sohbets) made public via the Internet. He knows Arabic and Persian and is well read in the western classics, enlightenment thought and contemporary culture. Gülen's teachings and activism are credited with initiating and inspiring the Hizmet movement.

The Centre for Hizmet Studies provides access to reliable information and resources for the serious study of Hizmet. The Centre aims to facilitate, as well as present, critical analysis of Hizmet for both academic and popular audiences. Its activities include research, resource development, online support, discussion forums and print publication.

In this 'thought and practice' series of publications, we analyse different aspects of the teachings and practice of Gülen and Hizmet. The series aims both to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Hizmet and also to express its views and praxis on significant contemporary issues such as tackling violent extremism, the Kurdish issue or political Islam. Each publication will be released with a series of 'book launches' organised in the

form of round table discussions in hope of generating dialogue on the issue and gauging feedback from readers.

It is my great pleasure to offer our second publication in the ‘thought and practice’ series, *A Hizmet Approach to Rooting out Violent Extremism* and I look forward to the dialogue and exchange of ideas and critique it generates.

Dr Ismail Mesut Sezgin
Director and Research Fellow
London, May 2015

Introduction

Radicalisation and violent extremism is a contested field with various definitions and descriptions put forward. The 'working definition' of this publication is that radicalisation is the process whereby individuals or communities outright reject the current system and/or despair of achieving social change through lawful means (such as peaceful protest) envisaged within that system. Among such people a minority go on to contemplate violence against their fellow citizens as a way of expressing their indignation and rallying others to their cause and their methods. The principal attributes of violent extremism as the term is used here are: (1) it regards the social system as the enemy; (2) it adopts an all-or-nothing stance, rejecting adjustment to (even the very right to exist of) those who disagree with its values and policies; (3) in excluding itself from society it specifically excludes itself from legal or normal restraints and justifies resort to random acts of violence, or what is referred to in this publication as violent extremism or terrorism.

While there are violent fringe elements in many groups or subgroups within society, and terror has historically been used by, for example, various political and national groups in the pursuit of their ideals, at the present time the greatest problem of radicalisation and extremism affects Muslim communities in particular. The violent fringe claims to act on behalf of Muslims as a whole and, often, in the name of Islam itself. Given the publicity that their violence attracts, Muslims and Islam generally come to be associated, however unfairly, with violent extremism. A further consequence is that it becomes difficult for non-Muslims as well as Muslims to dissociate any active commitment to Islam from the rhetoric and the actions of the 'radicalised' and 'extremist' fringe.¹

Often, radicalisation of Western European citizens occurs through the coming together of a number of conditions and experiences manipulated by violent extremists to win over new recruits, including but not restricted to: an identity crisis; perceived grievances; a sense of helplessness; a violent

¹ *Deradicalisation by Default: The 'Dialogue' Approach to Rooting out Violent Extremism* (Dialogue Society, 2009), p. 9.

Hizmet is an Islamically-inspired grassroots movement with a presence in over 160 countries whose core teachings and practice and refutations of violent extremism originate from its robust interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunna. Therefore, the question of what Hizmet thinks about, and how it responds to, violent extremism is most relevant to those concerned with this issue.

past and gang associations; a sense of stigmatisation from wider society; charismatic recruiters; and an absolutist and 'idealist' ideology. A combination of some of these factors will apply in some instances of radicalisation while a different combination may apply in other cases. What is clear, however, is that the process often involves a number of determinants and that the most common appear to be the ones listed above.

Hizmet is an Islamically-inspired grassroots movement with a presence in over 160 countries whose core teachings and practice and refutations of violent extremism originate from its robust interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunna. Therefore, the question of what Hizmet thinks about, and how it responds to, violent extremism is most relevant to those concerned with this issue. What is more, Hizmet's *deradicalisation by default* approach offers for consideration an alternative thinking and practice for undermining violent extremist ideology and mindset.

This publication targets researchers, policy makers and media interested in devising policies and strategies to prevent violent extremism. It was not written with the aim of targeting violent extremists themselves or those vulnerable to its ideology. Therefore, the theological discussion in this publication does not provide a detailed and methodical rebuttal of every argument and verse upon which violent extremists base their interpretation. Rather, it aims to provide an overview of Hizmet's positions on these critical fault-lines with enough quote and commentary to demonstrate to its target audience that Hizmet holds an entirely different view to those offered by violent extremists and that its position is theologically rooted in a traditional framework of Islam giving it credibility among the wider Muslim public. The aim of challenging violent extremist interpretations would result in a very different publication from this. The authors of this publication sought to achieve that other aim by supporting the production, publication and

dissemination of Ahmet Kurucan and Mustafa Kasim Erol's *Dialogue in Islam: Qur'an, Sunnah, History* (Dialogue Society, 2011). That publication addresses the theological issues methodically on a point-by-point basis and is strongly recommended to those interested in knowing 'how' Hizmet arrives at a different interpretation of Qur'anic verses such as "Kill them wherever you encounter them..." (al-Baqara, 2:191) or of Qur'anic verses that warn Muslims etc.²

This publication is organised in a number of sections. Part one explores Hizmet's theological refutations of violent extremism which claim an Islamic justification. Part two explores Hizmet's core teachings, which underpin its values and practice and act as a positive counter-narrative undermining violent extremist ideology in the process. Part three covers the channels and conveyors through which Hizmet popularises that counter-narrative among the wider Muslim public; the aggregate effect of this is to negate violent extremist ideology and some of its root causes as a natural by-product and default outcome of its core teachings and its positive and proactive work. Hence the term, *deradicalisation by default*. The conclusion draws the impact of all of these three parts together demonstrating how they undermine violent extremist ideology and tackle some of its root causes: certain mindsets and conditions exploited by violent extremists to their advantage. Finally, the publication concludes with some recommendations for Hizmet and other stakeholders on the topic at hand.

Hizmet's core teachings and practice predate its refutations of violent extremism both historically and theologically – Hizmet is a proactive expression of social action through education, dialogue, relief work and upward mobility projects that dates back to 1960 and 1970's Turkey. It is not a revolutionary or oppositional force aiming to merely replace, refute or reject and, what is more, the occasion to comment on the drastic events of violent extremists claiming an Islamic motivation only came along many years later. Despite that, Hizmet's views on violent extremism are covered first in this publication given its more obvious relevance. Hizmet's more impactful views and work in this regard are in fact embodied in its core teachings and practice as covered in parts two and three, respectively.

2 *Dialogue in Islam* directly addresses elements of Islamic sources from the Qur'an, Sunna and Islamic history, and traditional interpretations based on these, which are taken as contradicting the case for dialogue and exploited by violent extremists. It can be downloaded for free from www.dialoguesociety.org/publications/dialogue-in-islam.pdf.

Naturally, any study must delineate its remit, lest it becomes too cumbersome. What is more, the nature of Hizmet's mindset and activity – for example its focus on effectuating meaningful change over offering a critique of others – causes it to remain less vocal on certain aspects of this debate. That additionally limits the scope of this study. However, given Hizmet's logic and form of practice, its lack of commentary or activity on a topic should not automatically be interpreted as approval or disapproval. Rather, silence is more likely to be an expression of Hizmet's internal estimation that its views or activities on a particular issue are unlikely to have an effective or positive impact, and that therefore participants prefer to occupy themselves in areas where their efforts will have more positive outcomes.

Hizmet is not an institution or structured body. It has no official spokesperson or mouthpiece – Gülen denies that role even for himself. Rather, it is a collectivity of people and organisations inspired by the teachings, values, ideals and principles articulated and practised by Gülen and responded to, interpreted, developed and re-articulated through action by the Hizmet movement. The result of this dynamic and dialogic process is that Gülen (through his teachings and talks) and the movement (through its praxis and action) collectively develop and enrich an interpretive framework that acts as guide for the movement. It is from this that we deduce what Hizmet 'thinks' or 'does' or 'says' on a particular issue – in this case violent extremism. Sometimes, for ease of reference we will refer to what Gülen has said on a particular matter to illustrate what Hizmet thinks – a common practice of the movement. In each instance, however, we will be mindful of the interpretive framework referred to above. Unlike formal statements issued in writing or speech, positions that have been developed and communicated over years and decades through practice are less likely to change dramatically in a short period of time. In that sense, while harder to deduce at first, the positions stated here can be taken to be more representative of the movement's overall 'thinking' on the matter.

Part One: Hizmet's Theological Refutation

In this section we explore Hizmet's direct theological response to, and rejection of, violent extremist ideology that claims an Islamic justification, as communicated largely through Gülen's teachings and statements, both in speech and writing. As explained in the introduction, the purpose here is not to target and challenge violent extremists themselves or those vulnerable to its ideology. Therefore, the theological discussion in this publication does not extend to a detailed and methodical rebuttal of every argument and verse upon which violent extremists base their interpretation. Rather, it aims to provide an overview of Hizmet's positions on these critical fault-lines with sufficient quote and commentary to demonstrate that Hizmet's views are diametrically opposed to those held by violent extremists and that its position is theologically rooted in a traditional framework of Islam giving it credibility among the wider Muslim public. For those interested in how and why Hizmet's interpretive methodology yields a different approach to the various verses, hadiths and historical accounts from those offered by violent extremists and how Hizmet directly targets, through scriptural reasoning, those that may be vulnerable to the violent extremist narrative, mindset and 'idealism', we refer you to *Dialogue in Islam: Qur'an, Sunnah, History* (Dialogue Society 2011).

Hizmet's position on violent extremism is based on a comprehensive, thorough and robust understanding and reading of the spirit and teachings of Islam's primary sources, the Qur'an and Sunna – the same foundations on which its core teachings are based.

To elaborate, Gülen espouses the interpretation of Said Nursi (1877–1960), an extremely influential twentieth-century Kurdish Islamic scholar, that every form of life manifests a unique combination of God's names and attributes which we as humans were created to see and reflect upon in our spiritual journey of 'travelling' from the created to the Creator and arriving at a higher form of understanding and awareness of ourselves and God – that is the purpose of creation. Therefore, in addition to its inherent value, every form of life, be it human or not, is a unique species in and of itself. That is one interpretation of the Qur'anic verse 'the unjust killing of one person is like

Furthermore, since, according to Gülen, humans are key to the purpose of creation, unjust killing is a grave injustice not just against the person killed and their loved ones, but also against the entire universe to which their existence gives meaning.

the killing of all humankind' (Al-Ma'idah 5:32). Based on this reading, people have a positive responsibility to appreciate one another and ensure the continuation of life. Furthermore, since, according to Gülen, humans are key to the purpose of creation, unjust killing is a

grave injustice not just against the person killed and their loved ones, but also against the entire universe to which their existence gives meaning.

Similarly, this reading places a positive responsibility on humans towards all forms of existence, whether animate or inanimate, and prohibits them from ending any life or changing its form of existence out of heedlessness and outside the realms of permissibility. What is more, Gülen teaches that everything continues its existence in a state of constant dependence on God. We do not exist in a state of dependence on laws upon which God has conferred or delegated powers but in a state of dependence on his constant and continual creation, the recognised pattern of which is called *sunnatullah* (God's practice) in Islam and 'the laws of nature', such as gravity or photosynthesis, in science. Therefore, when altering something's state of existence, we are doing so contrary to its continued existence in that exact form at that exact moment due to God's sustained creation of it as such. As a result, our impermissible alteration contradicts not only God's rules that prohibit us from doing so but also His sustained will of maintaining that form of existence.

That is why Gülen says 'a true Muslim cannot be a terrorist and a terrorist cannot be a true Muslim' because they are so fundamentally and diametrically opposed to each other, not just according to the 'letter of Islam' but also according to the 'heart, soul and spirit of Islam'.

A person who believes in the letter and spirit of Islam is called a *mu'min* (literally, 'believer'), which stems from the Arabic roots *amn* and *amanah*, meaning trust, trustworthiness, peace and security – attributes that should be upheld by a true believer. A believer must always follow the concept of *sirat al-mustaqim* ('the middle way'), avoiding harmful extremity at every level of life including thought, feeling and even in the practice of religion,

where the Prophet admonished those who were too extreme in their fasting and praying to the point of neglecting their homes and families. A *mūmin* of this type is one from whom others are safe with respect to what he says and does.³

What is more, Gülen explains that the means and end must both be legitimate in Islam, which incidentally and additionally requires that it is also in accordance with the law of the land. You cannot reach holy ends by unholy means. No form of pragmatic expediency or necessity permits this. Therefore, Gülen draws no distinction between suicide bombs in London, Tel Aviv or Istanbul. Since the unjust killing of one person is a grave sin, it cannot be employed for any Islamic aim. In one of his talks, Gülen suggests, on the authority of a hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, which states that faith leaves the body of a believer when he or she commits a grave sin, only to return on repentance⁴, that since suicide bombers die in the state of committing their murderous acts, they may die not only while committing a great sin but also outside the fold of the religion they claim to be serving.

Even beyond the reprehensible violence of indiscriminate killing, violent extremism and terrorism, Gülen offers a rethinking on the less clear forms

Gülen suggests, on the authority of a hadith which states that faith leaves the body of a believer when he or she commits a grave sin, that since suicide bombers die in the state of committing their murderous acts, they may die outside of the fold of the religion they claim to be serving.

of state-declared war. Gülen argues that while legitimate states may continue to have the right to arm for deterrence, they cannot and must not wage war in an attempt 'to serve religion' by for example 'conquering' lands as was done in the past. Those wishing to serve religion, including legitimate

3 Al-Buhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 8, book 76, no. 491.

4 'Narrated 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbas: Allah's Messenger said, "When a slave (of Allah) commits illegal sexual intercourse, he is not a believer at the time of committing it; and if he steals, he is not a believer at the time of stealing; and if he drinks an alcoholic drink, when he is not a believer at the time of drinking it; and he is not a believer when he commits a murder," 'Ikrima said: I asked Ibn Abbas, "How is faith taken away from him?" He said, Like this," by clasping his hands and then separating them, and added, "But if he repents, faith returns to him like this, by clasping his hands again.' Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 8, book 82, no. 800.

states, cannot do so through war, combat and violence, but can only do so by appealing to the mind and reason of the civilised world.⁵

With that introduction into the theological and foundational basis for Gülen's rejection of violent extremist ideology let us now turn to how Gülen responds to more specific interpretations of the Qur'anic command to engage in war and the contested innocence of civilians. The treatment of the topic will be brief, bearing in mind this paper's objective and target audience.

The Qur'anic verse often used by religious extremists to justify violence against followers of other faiths is: "Kill them wherever you encounter them..." (al-Baqara, 2:191). Although this verse refers to a very specific context in which the early Muslim community faced persecution and even death from polytheist tribes who had broken treaties with the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, this verse is often seized upon by religious extremists and critics of Islam alike to promote an image of a violent, uncompromising faith. However, a reading of the surrounding verses and the historical context within which it was revealed makes it clear that this verse commanded fighting against those already engaged in war against Muslims and that even fighting in this context was bound by Islamic rules on warfare, including a prohibition on starting hostilities, a command to accept any ceasefires offered by the enemy and to only fight in accordance with all the rules on warfare. Equally, present-day Muslims must take care to take into account other Qur'anic injunctions (such as the many calls for peace, love and tolerance for one's neighbour demonstrating that peace is default in Islam and that war is the exception), before using a single verse – taken out of its original context – to justify violence.

The second issue is that of civilian innocence. Violent extremists claim that the civilians they kill are not 'innocent', but rather implicated by being part of the political and economic structures that the extremists are targeting. They claim that civilians become legitimate targets through the tacit support they show their governments by voting or paying taxes, thus revoking their 'innocence' and making them lawful targets.

5 'Hizmet Studies Responds to Gülen's 23rd December 2014 Video Blog' press release dated 23rd December 2014, Centre for Hizmet Studies website, accessed 1st February 2015, www.hizmetstudies.org/117A19_31-hizmet-studies-responds-to-gulen-s-video-blog.html.

The second issue is that of civilian innocence. Gülen's response is multifaceted. At the outset, Gülen denies such groups have the right to declare and engage in war in the first instance.

Gülen's response, collated and summarised from relevant sections of his many talks and articles, is multifaceted. At the outset, Gülen denies such groups have the right to declare and engage in war in the first instance, meaning that the declaration of war

and all they do from that point on is illegitimate. Second, he points out that 'guilt is personal' in Islam and cannot be transferred to another. Third, only a state-appointed judge can determine guilt and punishment. Fourth, that Islam's rules of war prohibit even the killing of soldiers captured while in a state of non-hostile activity. Fifth, that Islam's conditions of war expressly prohibit the harming of civilians: if 'tacit support' made them guilty, then similar arguments could have been made against the civilians of Mecca, for example, who supported its rulers through living, working and trading in the city and paying taxes and benefitting from the spoils of war. Instead, however, when the Muslims conquered Mecca, its people, including combatants of past wars, were given total immunity. Sixth, Islam's maxim that 'the sharia (the law) judges by the apparent' means that aggressive hostile intention and action cannot be implied from carrying out the duties of citizenship to a certain state. Finally, according to Gülen, peace is default and war is the exception in Islam, which requires that the 'war verses' be restrictively interpreted, not expansively to include a new and vastly increased category of people who have traditionally been held separate from combatants in Islam.

It can therefore be seen that Gülen's views on violent extremism and terrorism are not conjunctural or offered because they are fashionable, but are authentic and fundamental. That is why Gülen's condemnation of such acts has been unequivocal, consistent and also proactive, in the sense that he has not only condemned violent extremism but also espoused a completely different interpretation that undermines the so-called theological grounds given by violent extremists, as explored in the next section.

Some examples of Gülen's specific responses to particular incidents and controversial issues concerning violent extremism are given below:

- **On the beheading of James Foley and others:** ‘I deplore the brutal atrocities being committed by the ISIS terrorist group hiding behind a false religious rhetoric.... Any form of attack, suppression or persecution of minorities or innocent civilians is an act that contradicts the principles of the Qur’an and the tradition of our Prophet, upon whom be peace and blessings.’⁶
- **On the defence of Kobani:** ‘All forms of oppression, persecution and attack against minorities and innocent civilians are completely against and at odds with the teachings of the Qur’an and the practices of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ... [W]hat they [ISIS] are doing is terrorism and must be called as such.’

‘The purpose of religion is to bring about a peace that is founded on universal human rights, the rule of law and universal human values. Interpretations contrary to this, especially efforts to inflame conflict through the perversion of religion, go against the spirit of religion.’⁷

- **On 9/11:** ‘I would like to stress that any terrorist activity, no matter who does it and for what purpose, is the greatest blow to peace, democracy and humanity. For this reason terrorist activities can by no means be approved of. Terror cannot be a means for independence, nor can it be applied to a struggle for salvation.... This latest terrorist activity is the most bloody and condemnable. It is an act of sabotage against not only the United States of America, but also against world peace and universal democratic and humanistic values. Those who committed these acts cannot be but the most brutal of all in the world.... Terrorism cannot be a means for any Islamic goal, and a terrorist cannot be a Muslim, nor can a true Muslim be a terrorist.’⁸
- **On Muslims committing terrorism:** ‘The Prophet (pbuh) says: “a person cannot commit adultery while in a state of belief”. A believer does not commit adultery; if he does he is not in a state of belief, at

6 ‘Fethullah Gülen on ISIS’, Centre for Hizmet Studies website, Centre for Hizmet Studies website, accessed 1st February 2015, www.hizmetstudies.org/60-13-_17,fethullah-gulen-statement-on-isis.html.

7 ‘Fethullah Gülen on the Peshmerge, Turkmen and Iraqi defense of Kobani’, Centre for Hizmet Studies website, accessed 1st February 2015, www.hizmetstudies.org/115-13-_17,fethullah-gulen-on-the-peshmerge-turkmen-and-iraqi-defense-of-kobani.html.

8 ‘On 9/11’, Centre for Hizmet Studies website, accessed 1st February 2015, www.hizmetstudies.org/101-13-_17,on-9-11.html.

least during that period. Some scholars have interpreted this to mean that during that period, faith leaves a person, rising above his body temporarily, and only returning once the act is complete and the person has repented. This is a bit of a forced interpretation but it is sound in terms of what it means. A person cannot commit these acts if he truly believes in God, the afterlife, that he will give account of his actions, that there is heaven and hell. In this sense, when a terrorist commits terrorism at that point in time he is not a *mum'in* (a believer in Islam). And a true *mum'in* cannot enter into acts of terrorism while in a state of true belief.⁹

- **On suicide attacks and Palestine:** ‘Despite the great hardship in Palestine, suicide attacks cannot be accepted. A Muslim cannot strap a bomb around his or her waist and go into a public space and detonate a bomb killing people like that.’¹⁰
- **On Qaradawi’s religious decree on suicide attacks in Israel:** ‘In response to the atrocities and injustices in Palestine, Palestinians take part in suicide terrorist attacks. Apparently, Qaradawi has said that this is legitimate in Islam since they have no other weapons to use. I was deeply saddened when I heard this statement by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b.1926) because he, like Ratib al-Nabulsi (b.1938), Said Ramadan al-Buti (d.2013) and Hassan al-Turabi (b.1932) are well-known people in the Muslim world – they are not average people, they are well-known. When they speak, it is as if they speak on behalf of Islam and as a result Islam is negatively impacted by this statement. How can he legitimise such an act? On what Islamic rule or principle does he base this opinion? That does not mean I am suggesting that we remain indifferent to what is happening there – I die with every person I see dying in those lands. But this form of action is not in accordance with the “pleasure of God” or with reason.’¹¹

9 ‘Kanlı Arenada İslam İmajı (Londra’da Terör). Bamteli. 09.07.2005’, Herkul website, accessed 5th February 2015, www.herkul.org/bamteli/kanli-arenada-islam-imagi-londrada-teror/.

10 ‘Filistin ve İntihar Saldırıları. Kirik Testi, 13.05.2002.’ Herkul website, accessed 5th February 2015, www.herkul.org/kirik-testi/filistin-ve-intihar-saldirilari/.

11 ‘Kanlı Arenada İslam İmajı (Londra’da Terör). Bamteli. 09.07.2005’, Herkul website, accessed 5th February 2015, www.herkul.org/bamteli/kanli-arenada-islam-imagi-londrada-teror/.

- **On groups declaring war:** ‘Any Muslim with even a little Islamic knowledge knows that even if Muslims lose their freedom, even if their land is occupied, an individual or a group cannot declare war or mobilise people for war.’¹²
- **On suicide attacks during legitimate war:** ‘Even during war you cannot touch or harass those that are innocent. No one can issue a religious decree (fatwa) that contradicts this position. No one can be a suicide bomber in Islam. No one can strap bombs around their waist and run into a crowd of people regardless of the faith or religion of the crowd of people that are targeted.’¹³
- **On the punishment for terrorism and suicide attacks in Islam:** ‘Terror can never be used to achieve an Islamic goal. In this respect, a true Muslim cannot be a terrorist and a terrorist a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be a terrorist because Islam foresees the harshest penalty in this world for murder or for violating security and in the afterlife it foresees the harshest penalty for those that reject faith, those who associate partners with Him and again those who have committed murder. It warns that those who have deliberately [and unjustly] killed another will face an eternal life in Hell.’¹⁴

‘Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says: “a time will come when he who kills will not know why he killed and he who was killed will not know why he was killed!” It is as if we are going towards that point step by step. Some people become suicide bombers and claim to be doing this in the name of religion. They do this for revenge, they do this to draw attention; if somebody blows themselves up as a suicide bomber, forgive me, but that person will fall straight into Hell.’¹⁵

12 ‘Kanlı Arenada İslam İmajı (Londra’da Terör). Bamteli. 09.07.2005’, Herkul website, accessed 5th February 2015, www.herkul.org/bamтели/kanli-arenada-islam-imagi-londra-da-teror/.

13 ‘Nuriye Akman, Zaman gazetesi roportaji, 2004.’ Fethullah Gülen website, accessed 5th February 2015, fgulen.com/tr/turk-basininda-fethullah-gulen/fethullah-gulenle-gazete-roportajlari/zamanda-nuriye-akmanla/12070-zaman-bugun-islam-dunyasi-diye-bir-dunya-yok.

14 ‘Nevval Sevindi, Fethullah Gülen İle *New York Sohbeti*, 2002.’ Fethullah Gülen website, accessed 5th February 2015, www.fethullahgulen.com/tr/turk-basininda-fethullah-gulen/dizi-yazilar-dosyalar/fethullah-Gulen-ile-new-york-sohbeti/3438-nevval-sevindi-11-eylul-sonrasi-islam-ve-teror-arasindaki-iliski-butun-dunyada-cok-tartisildi-bu-konuda-ne-diyorsunuz.html.

15 ‘Kutsala Saygı, Teröre Lanet. Herkul Nagme, 15.01.2015’, Herkul website, accessed 1st February 2015, www.herkul.org/herkul-nagme/451-nagme-kutsala-saygi-terore-lanet/.

- **On compromising the right of an individual for the right of a community:** '[A]s far as the rights of humanity are concerned, based on its principle that "rights cannot be categorised as great and small," Islam sees the right of an individual as being equal to the right of the community. It does not sacrifice one of these for the other, and it has introduced the principle that "if on a ship there are nine criminals and one innocent person, as long as that innocent person remains on the ship, the ship cannot be sunk in order to punish the nine criminals."¹⁶
- **On what Hizmet must do in response:** 'We must do our best to change these people's views and opinions on these matters. It appears that some headway is being achieved by telling people about ourselves through efforts for dialogue and empathic acceptance. Islam cannot be represented by people who engage in certain acts; such people have fallen prey to their emotions, to anger and hatred.'¹⁷

'Achieving any goal by killing people is not the way of the Prophets or the friends of God. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was oppressed and persecuted as if compressed through a crusher for thirteen years but he did not even tread on an ant. He responded to and treated those arrogant, harsh and tyrannical people in a humane way. And we must teach these people of this way and spirit to prevent people from resorting to terrorism.'¹⁸

16 'Interview in Kenya's *Daily Nation*, 2004.' Fethullah Gülen website, accessed 5th February 2015, fgulen.com/en/press/interviews-claims-and-answers/25238-interview-in-kenyas-daily-nation.

17 'Kanlı Arenada İslam İmajı (Londra'da Terör). Bamteli. 09.07.2005', Hekul website, accessed 5th February 2015, www.herkul.org/bamteli/kanli-arenada-islam-imagi-londrada-teror/.

18 'Terör ve Izdirap. Bam Teli, 24.10.2011.' Hekul website, accessed 1st February 2015, www.herkul.org/bamteli/teror-ve-izdirap/.

Part Two: Hizmet's Positive Counter-Narrative

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The challenge with linear, traditional government policies directly aimed at defeating violent extremist ideology is that by its nature the policy and the measures that flow from it are formulated in reaction to the problem. Reactionary policies are less inspiring. This matters, especially when community support is needed for its success. Such policies are also more likely to focus

on the immediate and visible triggers of the problem over its deep-rooted and fundamental causes, since the former are more likely to be achieved within the lifespan of a parliamentary term. What is more, when a reactive policy is focused on a particular group, in this case Muslims, it can have the unintended consequence of turning them into 'suspect communities', or at least making them feel so, further undermining public support from the very people and communities whose involvement is needed most. Particularly in this context, the shortcomings of the standard linear government policy approach need to be recognised and supplanted by a comprehensive, deep-rooted, long-lasting, positive and proactive approach.

Hizmet, at least for itself, does not advocate defeating violent extremism ideology or practice by meeting it head on. Rather, the core Islamic teachings that underpin its values and activism negate violent extremist ideology, mindset and practice as a natural by-product and default outcome of its positive work. Those core teachings are popularised to wider public through a series of channels and practice referred to in this publication as 'conveyors'. Hizmet's core teachings and the values and activism they underpin are diametrically opposed to and mutually exclusive with those associated with violent extremism; therefore the stronger one grows the weaker the other

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becomes. Accordingly, the goal of defeating extremism is made to *ensue* without being directly *pursued*, ensuring it avoids the pitfalls associated with being reactive, as discussed above. This process was dubbed *Deradicalisation by Default: the 'dialogue' approach to rooting out violent extremism* by the Hizmet-inspired Dialogue Society in 2009.¹⁹

Hizmet's core teachings, values and activism have the credibility to deradicalise by default for several reasons. Firstly, it is and is perceived to be *authentic*, in that it is based on a thorough, genuine and robust reading of Islam's primary sources according to well-established methodologies of Islamic reasoning. It is also *independent* – it is not based on serving one political agenda or government or another but rather its loyalties lie with the subject matter itself. Additionally, at its core it is *altruistic* rather than career-based (while acknowledging the importance of professional input, the perceived self-sacrifice of terrorists must be challenged with the genuine self-sacrifice of those offering an alternative worldview). Lastly, it is, as mentioned already, positive and proactive in setting its own agenda that has not been formulated in opposition to anything, and which has the potential to motivate and inspire the grassroots, a task which counter-extremist initiatives and narratives find more challenging to achieve.

In this section, we summarize Hizmet's core teachings, which serve as an authentic positive counter-narrative to undermine and negate violent extremist ideology. In the next section, part three, we will look at the channels through which Hizmet popularises its teachings and how that further undermines violent extremist ideology and tackles some of its root causes: certain mindsets and conditions that are exploited by violent extremists to bring about the internalisation of their ideology.

¹⁹ See *Deradicalisation by Default: The 'Dialogue' Approach to Rooting out Violent Extremism* (Dialogue Society, 2009) that can be downloaded for free at: www.dialoguesociety.org/publications.html.

To be clear, this approach is not geared towards deradicalising those already radicalised (a small minority) but towards empowering the larger majority to rebut and withstand the lure of radicalisation: the very pool of people that violent extremists target to sustain their need for new recruits.

- **Love and compassion:** The teaching that the universe in all its diversity was created out of love and compassion. It is the primary premise upon which all else must be established including the basis of all our interactions with one another and our pursuit for peace and justice.
- **Belief in diversity:** The teaching that the Qur'an explicitly conceives of belief in the plural, referring to verses such as: 'Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth would have believed. So can you [O Prophet] compel people to believe?' (Yunus, 10:99). The Qur'an connects human diversity to the divine intention that human beings should get to know one another (al-Hujurat, 49:13). For Gülen, diversity of race, religion, nation and life-way was intended by God and should be accepted and valued as a route to understanding. According to Gülen, the response to diversity through positive engagement and dialogue is one of the major goals that the divine will has set for humankind.²⁰
- **Free will:** The teaching that emphasises agency and free will. It is free will that makes us human and humans that give meaning to creation according to Gülen. Therefore, the denial of free will negates human nature undermining the purpose of creation. God granted free will; its denial is a crime against humans, God and creation, with which it is connected.
- **Middle path:** The teaching that every human faculty, emotion and potential must be used in the appropriate measure, manner and context for which it was created; that is to find the middle way in every instance (*sirat al-mustaqim*). For example, desire is a human emotion that is harmful when manifested as envy towards another's possessions (i.e. *hasad*) but useful when channelled towards desire to emulate the good qualities in others (i.e. *ghibta*).
- **Engagement:** The teaching that strongly encourages positive engagement despite any actions or attributes in the 'other' with which one might take issue. Unwillingness to engage can be overcome by a

20 Frances Sleap and Omer Sener, Paul Weller (ed), *Gülen on Dialogue*, (Centre for Hizmet Studies, 2014), p. 21.

sophisticated view that differentiates between the composite parts of a person, community or civilisation (i.e. actions, attributes or characteristics) and the whole. Hizmet teaches that one can engage with a person, community or civilisation, while reserving judgment over some of its practices or attributes. This also overlaps with the teaching that one can judge an action or attribute at most but should, so far as possible, avoid judging a person engaged in the act. Therefore, one's dislike of another's action or attribute should not translate into a dislike of the 'other' overall. Doing so is tantamount to sinking an entire ship on account of the 'guilty' alongside the numerous innocent on board. This sophisticated appraisal of the other, be it in relation to an individual or a group of people, empowers positive engagement over rejectionist isolation.

- **Self-reflexivity (or doubt) versus absolutism:** The teaching that while people can believe that their religion represents 'the Truth', their access to it is defined by their own limitations; hence, the need in Islam for *ijma'* (consensus) in religious issues to ascertain the more weightier (not absolute) interpretation and the need for *shura* (consultation) in worldly affairs to arrive at better decision making. In that vein, Gülen says 'he who is certain of himself, is almost certainly at loss,' drawing attention to the constant need to doubt *one's subjective* grasp of religion and sincerity in belief, not belief itself. In recognition of this fact, to counter absolutist tendencies and follow an Islamic practice, Hizmet places great emphasis on consultative, collaborative decision-making at all times. It is also why Hizmet encourages an open, engaging and inquisitive mind, which inhibits dogmatic and entrenched positions from emerging. Furthermore, Hizmet's emphasis on meaning over form counters an absolutist mindset that seeks comfort in the simplicity of fixating on outward signs, symbols and labels over essence and meaning. Encouraging the opening of non-denominational schools in 1970's Turkey instead of more mosques is one example of this emphasis on meaning over form.
- **Positive action:** The teaching that as humans we are responsible to 'act' and that that act must be 'positive' (*müsbet hareket*). 'Positive or constructive action', is proactive, not formulated in reaction to someone else's action or position. Positive action helps people to maintain a positive mindset, whereas a reactive approach may incline them to perpetuate ongoing disputes and polemics. It involves a level-

headedness, and a calm, collected, consistent approach. Its more comprehensive meaning is that everything that befalls us is ultimately our responsibility, not that of others, and that we can only redress by treating the 'actual' not necessarily the 'apparent' causes, an approach which requires constant positive and proactive action. This teaching overcomes the 'victimhood mindset' of the extremist, which incessantly blames others for its own perceived troubles.²¹

- **Positive thinking:** The teaching that positive action requires positive thinking about others (*husn-u zan*) as opposed to seeing people in a negative light (*su-izan*). Gülen points out that when we see others in this light, assuming the worst of them, we nurture a suspicious attitude towards them and a sense of superiority in ourselves. The comprehensive meaning of *husn-u zan* refers to thinking constructively about others, always preferring the most positive interpretation of another's action, not taking other people's actions lightly, and avoiding focusing on other people's mistakes.²²
- **Redefining *dar al-harb*:** Various terms and phrases are instrumentalised to present a dichotomous worldview of 'us' versus 'them'. One of them is *dar al-harb* (abode of war) and *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam). These terms are political concepts coined by Muslim scholars in the medieval era. Gülen opposes such a mindset and worldview. Rather, he encourages assessment to be made on principles, merit, effort, attributes and characteristics not on religious or national identities. Accordingly, he proposes *dar al-hizmah* (abode of service) as a single concept to replace the other two by seeing the entire world as a place to serve and help others.

These are some of Hizmet's core teachings covered very briefly, with others not included for the sake of brevity. These teachings are rooted in Islam; they are associated with Hizmet because of Hizmet's interpretation and emphasis on them. It is self-evident that a person who internalises the above teachings cannot be lured by the violent extremist ideology or mindset. The question of course is whether or not, or how far, these Hizmet teachings are being conveyed to wider society.

21 Frances Sleap and Omer Sener, Paul Weller (ed), *Gülen on Dialogue*, (Centre for Hizmet Studies, 2014), p. 25.

22 Frances Sleap and Omer Sener, Paul Weller (ed), *Gülen on Dialogue*, (Centre for Hizmet Studies, 2014), p. 26.

Part Three: Hizmet's Deradicalising By Default Praxis

In this section, we cover how Hizmet popularises its core teachings, as set out in part two, which act as a positive counter-narrative to violent extremist ideologies and mindsets that seek to appeal to Muslims claiming an Islamic justification.

First, Hizmet is one of the most dynamic Muslim-led civil society movements in the world with a presence in over 160 countries through a significantly wide range of activities. This means it has reach through which to disseminate its message.

Second, Hizmet's substantial investment in print and broadcast media enables it to popularise its discourse.

Third, Hizmet's faith-centric justification for all its activities, be it those geared towards wider society, which are faith-neutral in character and content (i.e. its schools, dialogue activities, relief work etc.) or those geared towards Muslims and Hizmet participants, which can be more faith/religion centric in nature

(i.e. its sermons or religious publications and religious TV stations), has the potential to have a powerful impact on Muslims' interpretation of Islam and Islamic activism in the twenty-first century. This is especially so in relation to Hizmet activities that are faith-neutral and faith-inclusive in practice – the vast majority of Hizmet's work.

The following are some channels through which Hizmet instils, disseminates and popularises its core teachings among the wider Muslim public. Where the work is religious in nature, then Hizmet's views and core teachings are popularised directly by way of its content. Where the content of the work is not religious, the core teachings are indirectly communicated through the example of the values that underpin that work.

More specifically, the following are some channels through which Hizmet instils,

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- **Sermons and talks:** Hundreds of Gülen's key sermons have been recorded, copied and disseminated on cassettes across the country. Now these sermons are available on iPods and via the Internet on YouTube reaching far and wide and overseas. Today, Gülen continues to give weekly talks (Bamteli and Herkulnagme), which are made public by being uploaded to Herkul.org. His current weekly talks are downloaded by some 20–50,000 listeners. Laden with emotional plea and scholarly discourse, these sermons provide Gülen and his views with 'street credibility'. They are also important as they speak to both the urban and rural, the highly educated and the general public. Although the majority are in the Turkish language and without voice over or subtitle translation, transcribed and translated texts of Gülen's weekly talks are starting to be made available in English.²³
- **Books:** Gülen has authored over sixty books, some of which are required reading for certain degrees at Universities such as Al-Azhar, a considerable number of which have been translated into English, Arabic and other languages, including his work on the biography of the Prophet, the revival of Islamic thought in our time and his *Key Concepts of Sufism*. For over two decades Gülen has been working on this latter title, a multi-volume collection of essays methodically exploring the roots between the key concepts associated with Sufism in the Qur'an and Sunna. This is one measure of his commitment to strengthening the inner dimensions of Muslim practice and is targeted at Muslim societies. In this way, Gülen helps re-orientate the focus of Muslims from form to meaning and from outward criticism to inner reflection.
- **Other print publications:** The movement publishes many books and magazines through its publishing houses and bookstores. Some are produced by its Istanbul-based 'Akademi', an institute of Islamic scholars. Hizmet's religious magazines and periodicals include *Yeni*

23 See: <http://www.herkul.org/this-week/>.

Umit in Turkish, *The Fountain* in English, *Ebru* in French and *Hira* in Arabic. Established in 2005, *Hira* is a quarterly magazine in Arabic with an editorial by Gülen, and articles by Turkish and Arab writers on theology, culture, science and education. The magazine is printed in Turkey, Egypt and Morocco. In 2011, *Hira* had a worldwide subscription of 40,000 distributed as follows: Saudi Arabia – 10,000; Egypt – 7,000; Morocco – 5,000; Yemen – 4,000 and Turkey – 3,000 and growing interest in other parts of the Muslim world including Jordan, Syria, Pakistan and Sudan.

- **Media:** In 2006, the movement owned one international TV station, Samanyolu TV. Today, it has nine channels, including: Mehtap (cultural–religious); Irmak (religious); Hira (Arabic, cultural); Dunya (Kurdish, cultural); Samanyolu Haber (twenty-four-hour news); Ebru (English, US-based); and Yumurcak (children's TV). In 2006, the movement launched its first English-language daily, *Today's Zaman*, now the best-selling English newspaper in Turkey; *Zaman* itself has the largest circulation among newspapers published in Turkish and since 2011 the movement has published *Turkish Review*, an English-language bi-monthly news magazine. Gülen's official website is accessible in twenty languages including Arabic, Persian and Urdu. A growing number of popular TV series produced and broadcast in Turkey including those by the movement's production companies are being dubbed in Arabic and broadcast in the Middle East.
- **Religious circles:** Participants in the movement network among themselves and with others through regular meetings called *sobbets*. A *sobbet* (literally, 'conversation') is usually held weekly and attended by a small group of people. *Sobbets* consist of discussions on faith, religion, society and new and on-going Hizmet projects. The main function of these gatherings is to inform and invigorate belief, to develop social responsibility and to move awareness towards activism. Out of these *sobbets*, smaller informal groups may emerge between people who are willing to further commit themselves to discuss and contribute to Hizmet-related projects. These gatherings are usually called *istishare*, derived from *shura* (literally, 'consultation', 'deliberation'). The *sobbets* are an excellent mechanism through which Hizmet's core teachings are taught and demonstrated.

- **Schools:** While it is difficult to give exact numbers as the movement is decentralised and dynamic, it is estimated that Hizmet operates approximately two thousand schools, including primary, secondary and tertiary education, in over 160 countries. These schools do not target students of a particular race or religion. That said, given their number and spread, these schools exist where there is a significant Muslim minority presence, including in the US and western Europe, as well as in the Muslim world – in at least forty-three of the fifty-seven member states of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, for example, including thirty in Northern Iraq, twenty-five in Pakistan and five in Yemen.

Except for rare exceptions, these schools are non-denominational and follow the national curriculum of the country in which they are based. Where there is state funding for private school enterprise, the schools opt for that route. Where there is not, they are founded as fee-paying independent schools with scholarship and bursary quotas available for girls and boys. In addition, the movement runs university prep centres, supplementary schools, free tuition centres and one-to-one tuition and mentoring services for low-income families.

These schools support upward social mobility, providing the confidence and skill-sets for students to change their own circumstances; expose students to different religions and cultures through mixed classes and support particularly vulnerable students through bursary and supplementary education. They exemplify positive role models and positive activism, and thus provide students with an attractive and convincing alternative to the ‘victimised’ self-image and the false sense of idealism which is preyed on and presented, respectively, by violent extremists.

- **Dialogue:** Another significant activity for Hizmet is dialogue. Hizmet began encouraging interfaith and intercultural dialogue activities and organisation from the mid-1990s onwards. Today there are literally thousands of dialogue organisations across the world. Their activities include discussion forums, courses, outreach, research and publications.

They impact on two levels. The first effect is on the ‘service-recipients’ and end-users who attend the events or read the material, by helping them to overcome their misconceptions by meeting new people or appreciating new perspectives. Since such end-users include Muslims, they also benefit from this form of outcome. The second effect is,

however, more significant and it occurs by way of the justification for their work. These Hizmet-inspired dialogue organisations make it clear that they are invested in long-term sustainable and genuine dialogue because they believe it is not just permitted but necessitated by their Islamic faith. They make this clear on their websites, in their public identity and by publishing on the issue. The London-based Dialogue Society published a book titled *Dialogue in Islam: Qur'an, Sunnah, History* in a question-and-answer format to make the theological case for dialogue in Islam. As a result, through their praxis and their justification, these organisations are continuously pushing the message that Islam necessitates dialogue and dialogic values, which empowers Muslims against exclusivist interpretations of Islam.

- **Relief Work:** A major venture for the movement was the foundation in 2004 of a relief and development charity, Kimse Yok Mu ('Is Anybody There' in Turkish). Now a member of UN ECOSOC as a consulting institution, with twenty-nine branches (as of 2012) and tens of thousands of volunteers in Turkey and ninety countries around the world, its work spans seven areas: aid for disasters, aid for health, aid for education, aid for significant religious days (Eid), individual aid campaigns, aid for Africa and 'family pairing' aids. The charity continues to run campaigns for and delivers aid and services in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Darfur, Niger, Palestine and Haiti. Its commitment in Somalia is very significant; it includes setting up and running refugee camps, providing hot meals to 90,000 people daily, restoring the Benadir hospital, providing emergency and routine health care services, providing clean water supplies, and beginning the construction of a sixty-bed hospital and medical institute. As of 2012 the charity was also planning to found and run two new schools in the region. Relief charities in Europe and other parts of the world are also being set up by the movement with a great many of them in Europe adopting the name Time to Help.²⁴

Relief work is a significant advance for the movement. Its cultural projects naturally led to an enlargement of its capacity, credibility and network of sympathisers and participants. Involvement in poverty and disaster relief is an indicator of the movement's commitment to help in the Muslim world and the Global South.

24 Kimse Yok Mu website, accessed 8th August 2012, www.kimseyokmu.org.tr/?lang=en

In conclusion, therefore, Hizmet's core teachings are conveyed directly where the content of the work is religious in nature (as in sermons, talks, books, print and broadcast media) and indirectly, in all instances, as values manifested in the nature of the work done and the character and disposition of the participants undertaking it. It is self-evident how a person who internalises Hizmet's core teachings through such conveyors cannot be lured by violent extremist ideology since they are by nature, mutually exclusive. It is less clear how these core teachings and practice impact upon certain mindsets that violent extremists manipulate to win over recruits, which will be covered in the conclusion drawing all three parts of this publication together.

Conclusion: Drawing It All Together

Hizmet's core teachings and practice and its refutation of extremism originate from the same basis – its comprehensive and robust reading of Islam's primary sources, the Qur'an and Sunna. Its core teachings and practice precede its refutation of violent extremism both historically and theologically: Hizmet is a proactive expression of seeking to serve through inspiring, empowering and connecting society dating back to Turkey's 1960's and 1970's. It is not a revolutionary or oppositional force aiming to replace, refute or reject and what is more, the occasion to comment on the drastic actions of violent extremists claiming an Islamic motivation only came occurred many years later. Despite that, Hizmet's views on violent extremism are covered first in this publication given its more obvious relevance. That said, Hizmet's more impactful views and work on violent extremism are in fact embodied in its core teachings and practice as covered in part two and three, respectively.

Below we will draw those three parts together to illustrate how Hizmet's approach undermines violent extremist ideology and tackles some of its root causes in the form of certain mindsets and conditions preyed on by violent extremists.

In **part one, 'Hizmet's Refutation of Extremism'**, we summarized Hizmet's theological categorical and unequivocal rejection of violent extremist ideology through Gülen's teachings on the following points:

1. *Terrorism*: Gülen provides a religious condemnation of terrorism stating that (i) terrorism cannot be justified in Islam, whatever the situation or circumstance, (ii) that it is diametrically opposed to the spirit and letter of Islam, (iii) that a person cannot remain a true Muslim or *mu'min* (believer) while committing an act of terrorism, and (iv) that the punishment in Islam for the unjust killing of a person, as the case in terrorism, is eternal hell.
2. *Suicide attacks*: That it is completely forbidden in that it is a form of indiscriminate killing and suicide – prohibited alone or together. As with other forms of terrorism and indiscriminate killing, Gülen rejects suicide attacks categorically. Unlike Qaradawi, he says no form of asymmetrical power legitimises this act in Islam.

3. *Jihad*: Gülen emphasises the inherent priority of ‘greater jihad’ (inner struggle to overcome one’s carnal desires) over ‘lesser jihad’ (outer struggle including, but not restricted to, war). On lesser jihad Gülen argues that only a state can declare jihad but only after a series of conditions are met, such as exhausting all diplomatic opportunities, and only then in accordance with very restrictive rules. Gülen categorically rejects the idea that individuals or groups can declare war or even call to prepare for war. Gülen counsels that a comprehensive reading of the Qur’an reveals that peace is the default position in Islam and that war is the exception requiring a restrictive interpretation concerning these verses to reflect this position.
4. *Innocence of civilians*: Gülen rejects the killing of civilians for being implicated in the political and economic structures that extremists are targeting. His reasons include: that groups making such claims have no authority to declare war at the outset, far less the right to extend the category of lawful targets, and that therefore their declaration of war and all they do thereafter is illegitimate; that Islam even prohibits the killing of soldiers captured while in a state of non-hostile activity, demonstrating that it cannot therefore allow the killing of non-combatants in an implied yet unproven state of hostile activity and intention towards Muslims; and that there are clear and unequivocal rules of engagement in Islam that prohibit the killing of civilians without recourse to the type of modern day reasoning of violent extremist groups despite similar conditions prevailing at the time of Prophet.
5. *Islamic state*: Gülen rejects the notion that Islam obliges Muslims to found a state, Islamic or otherwise. Rather, Gülen argues, Islam requires a free and vibrant civil society in which it can be practised and flourish; it does not require nor prescribe a set form of state, says Gülen, removing a central impetus for many violent and non-violent extremist groups.
6. *Dichotomous worldview*: Various terms and phrases from the medieval era are instrumentalised to present a dichotomous worldview of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. One of them is *dar al-harb* (abode of war) and *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam). Gülen opposes such a worldview. Rather, he encourages assessment to be made on principles, merit, effort, and characteristics, and not on religious or national identities.

Hizmet's core teachings include a foundational religious interpretation of the purpose of religion – that it is to bring about a peace that is founded on universal human rights, the rule of law and universal human values.

Accordingly, he proposes *dar al-hizmah* (abode of service) as a single concept to replace the other two by seeing the entire world as a place to serve and help others.

In **part two, 'Hizmet's Positive Counter Narrative'**, we described Hizmet's core teachings that inform and underpin its values and practice and which act as an authentic counter-narrative with 'street credibility' to undermine and negate violent extremist ideology.

Hizmet's core teachings include a foundational religious interpretation of the purpose of religion – that it is to bring about a peace that is founded on universal human rights, the rule of law and universal human values; a belief in the centrality of *love and compassion* in Islam which must be the primary premise upon which all else is established including all forms of interaction and interpretation; that *diversity of belief* was and is intended by God; that *free will* is key to human nature, whose proper function must be guarded and guaranteed at all times; that people must seek the middle way in all actions, temperaments and potentials (*sirat al-mustaqim*); that there is a positive Islamic responsibility on people to engage and learn from one another without needing first to approve of each other's views and lifestyle; that there is a responsibility always to think positively about others (*husn-u zan*); that people must be in a constant and continuous state of positive and proactive action (*müsbet hareket*) while favouring a worldview that brings together on shared humanity rather than divides on the pretext of difference.

In **part three, 'Hizmet's Deradicalising by Default Praxis'**, we listed the channels through which Hizmet popularises its core teachings, which act as its positive counter-narrative to violent extremist ideologies and mindsets. Those channels include sermons and talks, books and magazines, numerous TV channels and newspapers and informal religious circles as well as Hizmet-inspired schools, dialogue organisations and relief charities worldwide. Where the content and form of Hizmet's activity is not religious in nature (as in its schools) then the core teachings are conveyed as values through example rather than inculcation.

By popularising its core teachings, Hizmet empowers Muslims against violent extremist ideology. Furthermore, Hizmet's core teachings and practice also addresses certain mindsets and conditions that extremists exploit to win over new recruits.

Hizmet's core teachings and the values, mindset and narrative it informs are mutually exclusive with those of violent extremism. Therefore, the stronger one grows, the weaker the other becomes. By popularising its core teachings, Hizmet empowers Muslims against violent extremist ideology

and tackles some of its root causes as a natural by-product and default outcome of its positive and proactive work – hence, *deradicalisation by default*. Furthermore, Hizmet's core teachings and practice also addresses certain mindsets and conditions listed below that extremists play upon to win over new recruits:

1. *Identity crisis*: Hizmet overcomes this problem by focusing on values, characteristics and attributes over labels, signs and symbols. It teaches that Islam recognises and celebrates the diversity of identity in a person and society, instilling skill and confidence among its participants and beneficiaries to embrace and navigate different parts and forms of their identity.
2. *Perceived grievances*: Hizmet counters the tendency to be pre-occupied by grievances by inculcating a positive and proactive view, disposition and mindset that focuses on personal responsibility to do what can be done here and now (i.e. the 'near'), rather than apportioning blame on others about what has happened elsewhere (often 'afar').
3. *Sense of helplessness*: Hizmet tackles this sense among Muslims and its underlying causes by teaching that Muslims have a responsibility to do all they can to bring about positive development in their own and other people's circumstances in belief that their effort is a form of 'active prayer' to God, who ultimately brings about change. Therefore, doubting the possibility of 'change' is tantamount to doubting God and the onus is on the individual to continuously and methodically make effort. Furthermore, Hizmet attempts to address the structural causes of this problem by continually investing in upward social mobility projects and initiatives to help people

develop the means and confidence to bring about improvements in their personal and communal lives, thereby overcoming any tendency towards a sense of helplessness.

4. *Absolutist ideology*: Hizmet considers absolutism to contradict the basic tenets, methods and ethos of Islam by confusing the right to uphold one's religion as objectively true with the right to claim certainty in one's subjective interpretation and sincerity of belief in that 'objective truth'. Methodologically, Hizmet encourages a disposition and form of activism that is open, enquiring, reflective, critical, consensus-seeking, collective-decision-making, socially outward while spiritually inward looking – all of which counter absolutist tendencies.
5. *Charismatic demagogues and recruiters*: Hizmet's teachers, mentors and scholars exemplify Hizmet's core teachings through practice. That encounter provides Muslim beneficiaries with an example of an Islam-rooted practice that is completely at odds with that offered by extremist charismatic recruiters and demagogues. By exemplifying appealing characteristics such as self-sacrifice to people from whom violent extremists aim to recruit, Hizmet removes for those people the novelty of seeing or hearing claims to those characteristics in violent extremist groups.

Overall, Hizmet's core teachings and practice and specific refutations impact upon violent extremist ideology and some of its root causes. This approach reaches the much larger pool of non-radicalised Muslims who are continuously targeted by violent extremists for new recruits.

Overall, Hizmet's core teachings and practice and specific refutations impact upon violent extremist ideology and some of its root causes. This approach reaches the much larger pool of non-radicalised Muslims who are continuously targeted by violent extremists for new recruits, rather than those that have already been radicalised.

As a result, Hizmet has fewer success stories of ‘ex-extremists’,²⁵ making it easier for governments and media to overlook its impact in this respect. Yet, Western European and other governments have yet to come up with an alternative policy that is able to counter violent extremist ideology among Muslim communities without simultaneously undermining community support for those policies. Until they do so, Hizmet’s *deradicalisation by default*, and similar approaches of other groups and movements, should be recognized, valued and taken into consideration by policy makers.

25 That said, there are growing number of stories such as that of a Hizmet-inspired Turkish lawyer based in Aarhus, Denmark, who volunteers as a mentor in a pioneering state-sponsored programme that treats one-time returning fighters not as criminals or potential terrorists but as wayward youths who deserve a second chance through counseling and support. This Hizmet participant has helped rehabilitate returning fighters by first winning their trust, which he says was the biggest hurdle, then moving their ideas by exposing the flaws in their extremist interpretation of their faith. See Andrew Higgins, ‘For Jihadists, Denmark Tries Rehabilitation’, *New York Times*, 13th December 2014, accessed 14/12/2014. www.nytimes.com/2014/12/14/world/for-jihadists-denmark-tries-rehabilitation.html?_r=1.

Recommendations

Based on the observations in this report there are a number of points for both Hizmet and other stakeholders to consider.

For Hizmet

To have greater impact on this issue:

1. Hizmet must become more vocal and more visible in the current debates about Islam. Its character as 'faith-inspired in motivation, yet faith-neutral in manifestation' and, to a certain extent, its Turkishness inhibit it from being more visibly engaged in the unfolding debate on Islam and Muslims in Europe. Hizmet needs to do more to address this without necessarily needing to change its basic praxis.
2. Hizmet needs more vocal cultural interlocutors, home-grown leaders and speakers who can formulate and articulate Hizmet's values, aspirations and practices through a cultural idiom that better connects and resonates with non-Turkish communities and wider society.
3. Hizmet needs to do more to specifically target Muslim youth and communities living as minorities in Western European countries. Currently, Hizmet targets them as it does any other group and is expanding rapidly in the wider Muslim world but a more specific focus on Muslim minority communities is required, especially where they are sought after by violent extremists to take the 'fight back home'.

For Other Stakeholders

Policy-makers and other stakeholders need to be mindful that:

1. Standard and linear policies geared towards defeating violent extremist ideology should be formulated in a more positive, proactive, long-lasting and comprehensive way so as to avoid all the pitfalls associated and experienced with reactive policy-making and messaging.

2. Support is needed for all work and all practices that empower community and faith groups to become more open, engaging, confident and dialogic, especially those that are grounded on faith and religious reasoning. There is a Europe-wide trend to differentiate projects that aim at ‘achieving social inclusion’ from those that aim at ‘defeating violent extremism’. However, as argued in this publication, the outcome of defeating violent extremism must be made to *ensue* by addressing the core dynamics of the teachings and conditions that make them attractive, rather than always being an outcome that is aggressively and directly *pursued*. This requires support for projects that explore and further the belief in dialogue, citizenship and greater engagement from the perspective of all religions, beliefs and worldviews.
3. Further work and research needs to be conducted on violent extremist ideology,²⁶ especially its nature and the reasons for it being attractive to certain people and groups. Often, it is not only the content of the argument that is made but also the emotional packaging and grooming with which it is presented that is convincing. That is why the authenticity and veracity of the argument (be it theological and/or political or otherwise) must be targeted alongside the comprehensive package with which it point was first introduced and inculcated. Hizmet, through its theory and practice, appears to be addressing those two facets at the same time but since it is not constructed and communicated in opposition to violent extremism, its deradicalising impact is not readily recognised. If we are concerned about the larger pool of non-radicalised, yet targeted, Muslim youth, then we must factor in this approach when formulating policies and strategies.

26 RadicalisationResearch.org is a good example of a recent venture in this respect.

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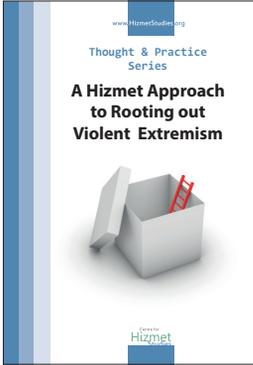
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Hizmet (literally ‘service’) is an Islamically-inspired transnational civil society movement with a presence in over 160 countries whose core teachings and practice are based on a comprehensive, deep-rooted and robust interpretation of Islam’s primary sources - the Qur’an and Sunna. Therefore, the question of what Hizmet thinks about, and how it responds to, violent extremism claiming an Islamic justification is most relevant to those concerned with this issue.

This publication offers researchers, policy makers and journalists a summary of Hizmet’s theological refutation of violent extremism. It shows how Hizmet’s core teachings act as a positive counter-narrative to such extremism, and describes the channels through which Hizmet popularises that counter-narrative among the wider Muslim public. The conclusion draws these three parts together demonstrating how Hizmet undermines violent extremist ideology and tackles some of its root causes: certain mindsets and conditions that violent extremists manipulate to win over new recruits. Finally, the publication concludes with recommendations for Hizmet and other stakeholders.

Drawing attention to the challenges associated with linear, traditional, reactive policy-making directly aimed at defeating violent extremist ideology head-on, the publication explains the nature and features of Hizmet’s *deradicalisation by default* approach which attempts to proactively address both facets of the radicalisation process: ideology and inculcation.