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# The Hizmet Movement of Canada's Limitations and Weaknesses for a Healthy Dialogue <sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Social movement sectors within the political economy can be affected either by centralized or decentralized governments, and social structures give shape to contentious politics. It is political and economic factors that spark social movements, because people become either proponents or opponents of current situations and the balance of power in society. Social movements employ tactics to target not only their opponents, but also to attract popular attention to their particular positions, such as individualism, capitalism, and democracy.<sup>2</sup> One of the key tactics of governments is to weaken trust between activists, and thus spread paranoia about surveillance and infiltration to the point where it is not repression but internal weakness that leads to the decline of activism, as for example, in the 1960's social movement.<sup>3</sup> Religion has been the source of both protest and legitimization within capitalism, and has stoked the relationship between religious violence and political goals for the last two centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Fethullah Gülen and the movement he initiated in the late 1960s in Turkey as a faith-inspired group now has millions of participants, and provides an answer to the situation broadly outlined above. The Hizmet Movement began by promoting solutions to three major problems within Turkey in the 1960s: "ignorance" (lack of education), "poverty," and "disunity." It was extended to solve similar problems in other parts of the world through its model of promoting universal education, dialogue and human-centered principles, thereby pursuing social justice within late modernity through a healthy dialogue. This paper will discuss several weaknesses and limitations of the Hizmet Movement of Canada that affect the long-term achievements of its goals in Canada. These include lack of government funds for private education, inability to create a Helping Hands Relief of Canada organization to fight poverty, and the hardships that come with assisting Canadian multicultural society, which has become a huge ghetto: it is hard to unify or establish a collective identity within its socially constructed structure.

Fethullah Gülen's Hizmet Movement has founded and runs hundreds of modern educational institutions, as well as print and broadcast media outlets and dialogue societies. Gülen is considered one of the most influential Turkish Islamic scholars of his generation, with his Sufi-oriented (mystical Islamic) message of love and compassion, and he is the number one contemporary role model in Turkey, as well as in much of the rest of the Muslim world and even non-Muslim countries. In fact, Gülen took first place in the Foreign Policy/Prospect poll of the "World's Top Public Intellectuals" in 2008. The author of more than sixty-five books, Gülen has dedicated a lifetime to promoting peaceful interrelationships within and between different communities, societies, cultures and religious traditions. Gülen changed the movement's name from the Gülen Movement to the

Hizmet (Service) Movement in 2010 as a new tactic which constitutes trust-based relationships, the human right-centered godly work of love, compassion, justice, respect and an enhanced quality of life for all of humanity. New tactics have transformed this local social movement to a global movement that has mushroomed all over the world and is universally accepted. The movement inspires people across the globe, for the universal values it presents are the values of the Divine that are, through this movement, being transmitted and aspired to worldwide. Many objective individuals find the work of Fethullah Gülen much like the work of the Dalai Lama or Mother Teresa, and therefore it captures the hearts of many.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between the global political economy and rebellion and resistance is the tragedy of the common practices of many anti-systemic protests, such as those of peasants, ecology activists, indigenous and ethnic groups, and anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-communist movements in peripheral countries.<sup>6</sup> However, Gülen has taken lessons from the failures, limitations, internal and external weaknesses, and the seditions of past movements such as these to build a strong human rights-based faith-inspired organization on a non-violent and non-contentious basis within civil global society. Conceived as a model for uncivilized societies, it has thus created a new phenomenon, even though Gülen was not aware that he had instigated a revolutionary social movement when he began it. On a personal note, I have personally been involved in this movement since the age of fourteen and internally observed it as a participant, student, reporter, volunteer and now a Master of Social Work student for thirty years.

Until the 1960s, the major sources for the sociological understanding of social movements were Marxist, Psychological, and Collective Theory models. The Hizmet Movement is, however, a new non-contentious collective action and acts as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Three contemporary approaches may help to understand its action in a wider perspective, namely “the political opportunity structure,” “resource mobilization,” and “the frame theory” as multi-polar approaches. Turkish sociologist Muhammed Cetin takes sources from resource mobilization theorists who propose a different social psychology perspective, and these include Gurr, Turner and Killian, Smelser, Byrne, and Eyerman and Jamison,<sup>7</sup> while American sociologist Helen Ebaugh uses the “Organizational Commitment Theory,” which was researched and concocted by the sociologist Rosabeth Kanter in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>8</sup>

I have chosen to apply the Weberian approach to this issue, an approach which shows that the spirit of modernity within capitalism impacts on culture and economic behaviour as the capitalism of products, and unique cultural totality which is the most rhetorical objective of materialism that has established the superiority of idealism, seeks to change the systems. Weber states that the “spirit of capitalism as a Calvinist movement has an ethos and economic action that is peaceful profit pursuit. Acquisitiveness is maximum possible accumulation.”<sup>9</sup> Weber says that capitalism comes from peaceful, rational pursuits and a pure religion, whereas Marx has the opposite idea, seeing religion as an opiate, stating it is acquisitive and reaches for the maximum possible accumulation. “In the history of primitive accumulation, all revolutions are epoch-making;” this is a secret in the political economy.<sup>10</sup> Marxist ideas have shifted under post modernity and have been converted by neo-Marxists such as David Harvey and Naomi Klein, who claim that neo-liberalism – or the restructuring of globalism – does not offer more than the current capitalist economic mode of production and political economic system, which supports a few corporate elites in

owning and creating a media monopoly. By contrast, the Hizmet Movement has provided a new horizon and paradigm as it is a grass-roots non-governmental organization that puts pressure on the political market indirectly and symbolically with its soft power in democracy, domestically and internationally, challenging society through educational initiatives, media organs and network, and with its stern opposition to violent and coercive means and methods, using intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and cooperation on projects and services.<sup>11</sup>

A system of economic global interconnectedness, the culture and system of capitalism and technological interdependence has taken over what we used to call society. There is no one in charge or who claims the sole ownership of wrongdoing or control over self-regulating cultural, economic and political catastrophes.<sup>12</sup> Neither the developed countries from the west nor the third world countries from the rest of the world are providing a sustainable solution to either of these problems.

Neither the Marxist perspective of power and class struggle and using resources for protest, nor the Weberian approach of protestant ethical values are sufficient to explain or describe the Hizmet Movement. Gülen himself opposed their explanations and defends the movement as a self-explanatory phenomenon. On the other hand, Gülen has used “Provos” and “Situationist” terms, agreeing with Engel’s predictions of the future concerning the ideal society cycle, Kants’s social altruism, some of Satre’s ideas, Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus,” and the implicated social, cultural, capital and professional strata terms, by looking at their creative use of tactics and strategies in response to the actions of other political players. In addition, he seeks the “Political Opportunity Structure”: political environment, the media, competing NGOs, counter-movements, and the state, with individual responsibility becoming the center of his attention.<sup>13</sup> Marxist ideas have shifted under post modernity and have been converted by neo-Marxists such as Althusser, Habermas, Foucault, Marcuse, Jameson, David Harvey and Naomi Klein, who have generally claimed that neo-liberalism is associated with “Westernization, Americanization, and the new face of colonialism.”<sup>14</sup>

## Literature Review

The Hizmet Movement has emerged to challenge current ideologies, values and structural forces. Berna Turam studied the Gülen Movement at McGill University for her PhD, and in her main findings contrasts the juxtaposition of Islam and the state in literature. She argues that Gülen creates alternative pathways of engagements with the state, in which the engagement ranges from domestic symbolic politics and negotiations to international alliances. Her thesis examines these engagements in three distinct spheres, i.e. national education, international undertakings and the gender order.<sup>15</sup> Turam criticizes problematic areas according to feminist theories, stating that faith inspired movements, ideas, and beliefs are usually categorized within a patriarchal structure, along with masculinity and cultural relativism that are placed under the same categorization process. Westernized feminists, along with orientalists, make the critique that women remain a disadvantaged group in the Hizmet Movement, because they seem not to be the front-runners and appointed leaders in the organization’s structure.

In his work on the Hizmet Movement, Muhammed Cetin focuses on the motivation for participants that includes spiritual resources and moral values like altruism, which constitute the social capital for the peaceful civil society movement and shows how these are the means by which it develops volunteerism, dialog and relationships to achieve shared goals, competitiveness and non-materialistic and non-contentious services within the nine countries that he studies.<sup>16</sup>

Cetin uses collective action and the frame theory for the collective consciousness to explain this movement, stating that within its NGOs lays the ability to pursue general goals over the long term. Additionally, these organizations are not susceptible to escapism, extremism and violence, and possess simplicity of decision-making and mediation, in their efficiency and effectiveness, and in their work ethics, within which a variety of interests collaborate.<sup>17</sup>

Robbins explains Kant's predictions that any society needs social altruism to be elevated to a virtue of high standing, and to be built in togetherness with others towards common goals, "working hard in the present for a happy future because the world's wealth is good enough for all."<sup>18</sup> By these means the Hizmet Movement gives hope of achieving personal sacrifice in the interest of collective actions and altruism, and of preserving the meaning of human behaviour along with the richness of diversity in a global society.<sup>19</sup> However, there is a remaining controversy and public discourse regarding the economic resources that the movement has been using in its activities, the excessive use of which affect the political economy.

An American professor specializing in the sociology of religion, Helen Rose Ebaugh, examines the financial resources of the movement and sees that it is founded by the controversial Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen as both an opportunity for the west and a serious alternative to religious extremism after the September 11th event, because helping others is the top priority in the movement. Ebaugh states, "A good person should be educated, uphold moral and ethical values, maintain a relationship with God and assume social responsibility."<sup>20</sup> Ebaugh mentions a wide array of financial contributors belonging to different segments of Turkish society, including industrialists, blue-collar workers and graduate students, who have together collected over 25 billion dollars.

## **The Hizmet Movement and Education**

The Hizmet Movement has over a thousand elementary and high schools abroad, nearly two thousand schools in Turkey, and 25 universities in 150 different countries worldwide, "while their participants have expressed trust on how their donations were being used and shown a high degree of legitimacy for the movement's mission."<sup>21</sup> Many Third World countries have provided school buildings at a lesser cost to the movement's organizers. Yet the Hizmet Movement of Canada has struggled to open private schools in Canada because of the lack of government support. From the time of confederation, official bilingualism has been an important factor in Canadian politics, and its government supported schools have been used to create the Canadian identity and integrate Canada's increasingly heterogeneous people's free-of-cost mandatory attendance. These schools have been categorized as public schools, and advocates have pushed for greater centralization and bureaucratic control. Without federal involvement, each state and local

government can decide the best use of public education dollars, whether it focuses on reducing class sizes or implementing choice programs. However, private schools are discouraged, with the exception of Catholic schools that are privileged along with the sixteen charter schools available only in Alberta. Public education in Canada is the sole concern of provincial and local governments. A strategy for the Hizmet Movement of Canada is that social action should be focussed on fighting for better education in Canada and promoting the American charter school model. Unlike the Canadian situation, there are 390 charter schools in Texas, involved in educating more than 90,000 students.<sup>22</sup> The Hizmet Movement of Texas has been granted permission to operate 40 charter schools in that state, schools that serve mostly the segregated Hispanic population located in cities since 2005. In 2010, it also opened a university called the North American College in Houston, Texas, which is highly supported by the Texas government.<sup>23</sup>

The Hizmet Movement of Canada's first school was opened in Toronto, Ontario, in 2005. Named Nil Academy, it operates with its own community's resources to meet the needs for a better education based on the Ontario curriculum. Nil Academy is a private elementary school, and has built its reputation on catering for individual needs and diversity. A second school was opened in Montreal, named Sogut Academy, in 2006, and follows Quebec's curriculum. These two schools opened high schools in 2008 and 2010, respectively, and have enrolled over 400 students with the additional responsibility for collecting their own funding. The Hizmet Movement's schools have in Canada have decided to take in only students originating from Turkey, unlike the other Hizmet schools around the world, including the ones in Texas. In fact, 99% of Hizmet schools give education to a diverse population. The exception to this practice is generally found in Canada. There is therefore an injustice present, and it is an unwise and inequitable decision that allows for Catholic schools to receive government funding in Canada, while all other schools are ineligible. The Hizmet Movement of Canada cannot reach its education goal within a socially constructed structure because political and economic resources are not available in Canada.

In addition, the Ontario Conservative leader John Tory lost the December 10, 2007 election since he had promised to spend \$400 million to fully fund Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and other religious schools, provided they follow the provincial curriculum and comply with Ontario's educational regulations. Currently, Catholic schools in Ontario are the only religious schools to be publicly funded, which has been the case for about fifteen years prior to confederation in 1867. The Conservatives, Liberals and NDP parties support the idea of continuing with the *status quo*, while the Green Party wants funding for Catholic schools abolished and replaced with one public system for French and one for English. Former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty was against segregating Ontario children according to their faith, attempting to justify his position by mentioning that he "cannot jeopardize social cohesion in multiculturalism in Ontario."<sup>24</sup> The movement can use a strategic tactic to legitimate its actions by using the knowledge that the UNHCR declared in 1999 that funding Ontario's Catholic schools to the exclusion of all others is discriminatory and violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Hizmet Movement of Canada has survived its socially constructed and racialized condition with its participants' commitment. The Hizmet Movement has changed its tactics and become involved in some social programs to reduce poverty in Canada and abroad. One of the sister organizations of the movement, the Dicle Islamic Society, has allied with

the Bosnian Toronto Community in organizing a “Moral Values” competition amongst middle and high school students. The donation campaign was organized for Pakistan and Haiti after the earthquakes in 2006 and 2010 for distributing food, clothing, materials, supplies and other types of necessities, and money was collected for poor African countries such as Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.<sup>25</sup>

These organizations allied themselves with the Helping Hands Relief Foundation (HHRF) that is committed to improving individual and community lives at both the local and global levels. The Dicle Islamic Society has also contacted the chaplain services of Ontario to provide, on a voluntary basis, chaplain services in jails, hospitals and to those who are in need. These programs are diffused from the Hizmet Movement of Texas’ successful model from which new tactics and programs were borrowed that display evidence of the need for the Hizmet Movement of Canada to join in alliances and networks in order to succeed. This initiative should be taken to improve the movement’s condition, although its organizations should begin to receive grants from the government or private resources, despite the fear of losing independent status. This is a large debate, dilemma, or contradiction for the future of the movement’s success.

The Hizmet Movement of Canada uses every single one of several different political, economic and cultural opportunities, activities, and existing resources for mobilization, in order to create a rhetorical frame for support of its collective actions. Solidarity is a key tactic in this social movement and, with the augmentation of consciousness raising groups, the campaign for any social movement would be strengthened. Tactics, political opportunities and shifts have relied on human rights instruments in the context of different campaigns to achieve the movement’s objectives. However, the Dicle Society is unable to get franchise agreement with the HHRF to operate anti-poverty programs more effectively in Canada. Due to hiring limited paid or regular staff and relying only on volunteers, weaknesses and limitations for the Hizmet Movement of Canada have arisen. Volunteers might face inequality internally and need to have legitimacy and trusts that provide ongoing support and maintain the movement’s solidarity and continuity of actions. The Dicle Society’s actions are goal-oriented and based on a fairly cohesive and homogeneous identity internally, which strengthens the physical and psychological interaction and, in turn, facilitates collective action. Profits are not the goal in international service projects. Neo-Marxist theorists hold that the representation of movements as largely homogeneous subjects is no longer feasible.<sup>26</sup> Grass-roots organizations are often seen as weak, fractured and disorganized, and are prevented from getting the work done.<sup>27</sup> The Dicle Society is registered as a Non-Governmental-Organization (NGO), although the main weakness at hand is that programs are unable to get or even seek government funding, as funds become a critical aspect in preventing the achievement of the Hizmet Movement’s central goals.

The Hizmet Movement of Canada also focuses on disunity problems in Canada. Since 2005, with several other sister non-profit organizations and nine newly established branches throughout Canada, the Intercultural Dialog Institute (IDI) formed a new organization in 2010. The Canadian Interfaith Dialogue Center had changed its name from “Interfaith” to be replaced with “Intercultural” in 2008, and now has changed to “Institute” as a new tactic. The interfaith area has many limitations and biases related to discrimination and segregation in Canadian society. The unifying concept is fractured and fragmented within interfaith borders based on media, academia and bureaucratic perceptions. The Hizmet Movement of Canada’s division of labour is based on formal rules

in institutionalized organizations, while, in relational networks, tasks are allocated in an informal manner, and mainly according to the skills that each member proves to possess and their willingness to contribute to projects. Team work and competition along with co-operation and consultation among service-projects are encouraged, while competition between individuals is not. There is no official membership for those who do not belong to the movement but rather support its collective action, these supporters are highly diverse and widespread, from engineers, teachers, professors, doctors, and nurses to factory workers or business people. Neither newcomers nor existing participants are disintegrated, excluded or marginalized. Non-Turkish managers and directors can be seen in the Hizmet Movement of Texas and other parts of the world, although this is not yet the case in Canada.

Moreover, this movement is also supported by modest, but crucial financial contributions from members of the Turkish-Canadian community, although not from other nations or the Canadian government. This limitation causes less resource availability. Equally important are the generous contributions of time and talent by a huge number of volunteers dedicated to the movement's vision of a global human solidarity. Some of the activities that are held are dialogue and friendship dinners, talk series and seminars, neighbourhood visits, community-based dialogue programs, courses and learning activities and cultural events that reach out to Canadians.<sup>28</sup> The movement defends the position that a discussion on cultural differences does not have to digress into confusion, fighting, and anarchy, and instead profess to focus on building peace through the willingness of the individual to subordinate the group.<sup>29</sup> Real peace can be achieved by sharing different perspectives and by listening to each other through love, respect, tolerance, mercy, and compassion. Government grants should pose no conflict or threat to the autonomy principle of the movement, because new tactics allow legitimating what the movement offers, i.e. unifying Canadian identity.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

Can a Turkish-origin "Hizmet (Gülen) Movement of Canada" promote transferable universal human-centred moralities through non-political, non-violent and civic collective action across Canada and solve our poverty, ignorance and disunity problems? This Movement has already become diffused, all over the world, and seeks to be empowered to raise hope for justice and the model for a new education with the cooperation of inter-cultural and interfaith dialogue. Turkey offers a new paradigm to the old world which may challenge the new future, because the third world countries will seek justice, happiness and equality through Turkey's miracle model of human centred universal moralities offered by the Turkish originated "Hizmet Movement." Neo-liberal and MNCs policies and globalism are still questionable, because the culture of American consumerism has been invading Turkey for over three decades. The consumption culture of capitalism leads to the increase of both the economic growth and destruction within the Turkish miracle, but the new Turkish model offers social altruism as an escape route. The recent Turkish economic miracle is a state model and it is the Hizmet Movement that has been demonstrated as a civil, moral, holistic engagement model and non-governmental organization which completes the gap between national state goals. Certainly, the Turkish phenomenon could



not exist without the Hizmet Movement's non-political and non-violent enforcements. A neo-liberal economy leads to egoism and self-centred behaviour, and the hybrid hyper-reality in late capitalism is a large dilemma, raising concerns as to whether democracy, liberty and individualism do indeed promote universal common values. The Hizmet Movement targets the real humanization of people and shares common goals for all humanity through educational, social and cultural projects. It has created many sustainable organizations which have been transformed for revolutionary collective action wherein individuals commit themselves to their work. While removing egoism from individuals, it seeks to build a trust that strongly possesses the consciousness to engage in and solve somebody else's struggles.<sup>31</sup> Gülen and the Hizmet Movement of Canada insist on following the non-violent strategy that through education, openness and inclusion, empowerment over oppressors is possible. This strategy resembles Freire's pedagogical method in having the consistency and richness of the types of interaction between many individuals on a multi-scale, and of having strong multiple affiliations that result in an adaptive, spontaneous, and self-organizing network.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>17</sup> Cetin, *The Gulen Movement*, 225.

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