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Resilient non-radicalisers: beating the odds through non-radicalisation despite significant suffering

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how and why some individuals are resilient to radicalisation by focusing on individuals who were labelled "terrorists" for their alleged involvement or support for an attempted coup that took place in Turkey on 15 July 2016, yet who have shown no sign of violent radicalisation since. Drawing from 15 interviews, it assesses both the potential radicalisation risk factors that the participants display, such as political persecution, imprisonment, torture, social pressure and forced migration. Then, it explores participants' explanation for why they have not become radicalised, including the role of the *Hizmet* doctrine, their religious adherence, individual personality traits and resources (e.g. social capital) through a socioecological framework. While terrorism studies have focused extensively on pathways towards radicalisation and countering radicalisation, this study contributes to a small body of research to explore the notion of "non-radicalisation", informing the literature on resilience and protective factors towards larger populations.

Introduction

Minutes after the July 15 coup attempt in 2016 in Turkey, President Erdogan declared that members of the Gulen Movement (a popular religious movement)[1] in the military were responsible for it and started to round up not only those officers allegedly involved with the coup attempt but also civil servants and ordinary citizens who were thought to be linked to this movement, but indeed had nothing to do with the coup. In a period of 7 years, more than 175,000 civil servants were dismissed from their jobs, more than 300,000 people were detained and nearly 150,000 people – including hundreds of pregnant women and more than 10,000 women with minors – were imprisoned. Most of these took place under the State of Emergency that was in effect between 2016 and 2018. In addition, around 1,500 institutions (mostly schools) were shut down and more than

300,000 passports were invalidated (Solidarity with Others 2023). Dozens of individuals lost their lives in prison (largely due to dire conditions, mistreatment or torture), while fleeing the country or by committing suicide (Globe Post Turkey 2018). Despite such suffering, there appears to be no symptom that these individuals react in violent ways (e.g. against the Erdogan regime in the name of "the Gulen Movement") or even get radicalised in terms of their narratives or discourses. On the contrary, they have shown notable resilience in the face of these difficulties.

In terrorism studies, there is a rich body of literature on both violent and non-violent radicalisation (Khalil, Horgan, and Zeuthen 2019). Accordingly, only a small portion of individuals progress to commit violence among those who share the same grievances (McCauley and Moskalenko 2017). Researchers have tried to understand what factors lead individuals towards these pernicious pathways. Malthaner (2017) claimed that the pathway to radicalisation is not an isolated psychological outcome but rooted in social interactions and relationships. Horgan (2008) put forth other factors that include profiles, root causes and routes. The diversity of approaches notwithstanding, a common theme in much research is what are called the "drivers" of radicalisation. To this end, scholars and experts highlighted the importance of i) structural *push factors*, such as political grievances; lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalisation and discrimination; violations of human rights and the Rule of Law; and ii) psychological *pull factors*, like individual backgrounds and motivations; victimisation from domination, oppression, subjugation and foreign intervention; and respect from peers and a sense of belonging (USAID Policy 2011, iv). A relatively recent phenomenon in discourses of preventing radicalisation and/ or violent extremism has been to turn to resilience, which is often thought as a protective "shield" against radical influences. While the *aims* of resilience have been stated in various policy documents as, for example, resilience to "propaganda," "extreme views," "extremist messaging," and "violent extremism," there is little detail in these documents on *how* this resilience should emerge (Stephens and Sieckelinck 2019).

The paragraph above discussed potential radicalisation and resilience at the micro/ individual level. This study adds to the small body of research which seeks to understand the factors that may present a blockage or brake to violent extremism in a holistic approach via a socioecological framework, i.e. at the macro, exo, meso and micro levels. Until recently, there has been little academic literature on this topic. For example, Busher, Holbrook, and Macklin (2019) offered a typology of what they call the "internal brakes" on violent extremism. Using three case studies in the UK (jihadism; the far-right; and the animal liberation movement), they devised five categories of brakes: (i) strategic logic, such as violence not being effective; (ii) moral logic, like the construction of moral norms that inhibit certain forms of violence; (iii) logic of ego maintenance – e.g. being in a group that identifies as nonviolent; (iv) logic of out-group definition, such as softening feelings towards out-groups, and finally; (v) an organisational logic, like deprioritising revolutionary goals for intermediate ones.

Since Busher and colleagues developed these frameworks, they have been adapted to help to explain non-violence in other contexts. Bjørgo and Ravndal (2020) used it to discuss the Nordic Resistance Movement, a group who explicitly *do not* disavow mass murder, yet actually undertake little political violence, thinking that it would be counterproductive for their goals. Similarly, Dowling (2023) used this lens to analyse the Provisional Irish Republican Army's limited use of violence in the run up to and aftermath

of the Good Friday Agreement. As Bjørgo and Ravndal, she found that the best explanation is one of strategic logic, such as a weakened capacity to fight, waning popular support, and an opening up of political opportunities. Both Bjørgo and Ravndal and Dowling also pointed to organisational logic as a minor factor, such as the effort put into building a legal structure and the creation of spaces for non-violent activism.

Beyond the "Brakes" framework, a small number of other scholars also have sought to understand non-violence. Reidy (2018) conducted six interviews with British Muslim aid workers in conflict zones, finding that participants' socialisation was the key distinguishing factor rather than descriptive risk factors such as ideology or moral outrage. Kocmanová (2023) undertook 54 interviews and 40 questionnaires to explore the resilience of Romani in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, finding that their strong sense of belonging, in-group solidarity, and social cohesion prevent them from conducting violence. Finally, in a more recent study, Schuurman and Carthy found how involvement in terrorist violence is associated with the absence of protective factors such as "parenting children during radicalisation, self-control, and participation in extremist groups with a strategic logic that was not exclusively focused on violent means" (2023, 1).

There is another body of research striving to explain the factors that differentiate violent and non-violent actors in terrorist organisations (Knight, Keatley, and Woodward 2022; LaFree et al. 2018; Snook et al. 2024; Thijs et al. 2024). Unlike our study, these studies do not directly attempt to explain non-violence. However, their primary focus on differentiating violent from non-violent extremists suggests that the presence or absence of certain factors associated with violence could be relevant to understanding non-violent behaviour.

This research will build on but revise the current ways of thinking on the drivers of radicalisation as it explores why and how individuals do not become radicalised in spite of the existence of numerous push and pull factors. To achieve this task, it will focus on the lives of individuals who have had many of the foregoing push and pull factors due to being labelled "terrorists" for their alleged involvement or support for a coup attempt that took place in Turkey on 15 July 2016, yet who have shown no sign of violent radicalisation since. With a focus on the notion of non-radicalisation, this research would thus enhance current approaches to resilience by deconstructing *how* individuals demonstrate resilience in the face of personal and structural stressors that can bolster and feed into political violence.

This research contributes to the critical terrorism studies literature in two important, and interrelated, ways. Firstly, while the focus of this research is on "non-radicalisation", which may be interpreted as a "problem-solving" activity, it goes beyond the typical positivist and objectivist paradigm of explaining and defeating "the terrorist other" by using interpretative or ethnographic methods (Gunning 2007). To put it another way, we do not offer this research as a way of understanding the radicalisation puzzle (Hafez and Mullins 2015), but rather to explore how individuals construct their own meaning in the face of oppression. Secondly, and relatedly, this research highlights both the power of the defining agency of terrorism and its effects on those who are subject to it. Terrorism definitions and designations fulfil the interests of power holders in both domestic and international systems, particularly given the legal instruments that are available in countering it and the emotive nature of the topic (Schmid 2004), leading to states targeting those who challenge this power and exclude themselves (Stohl 2008). This article

empirically studies a group of individuals who have been subjected to this label and explains the ways in which they draw from their shared worldviews and social capital to opt for a non-violent path.

The remainder of this article is divided into five parts. In the first part, we outline our study population and the methods. In the second part, we provide a brief background on the socio-political context of the events of July 2016 in Turkey. The next two parts are dedicated to the "results" of this study. Part three focuses on the "risk factors", i.e. push and pull factors that our participants outlined that could potentially radicalise them. The fourth part provides the main findings of this research as we explore factors that contributed to our subjects' resilience and non-radicalisation. In the fifth and final part, we provide a discussion and conclusion.

Study population and methods

We use purposive sampling and focus on three groups of respondents – dismissed and/or imprisoned civil servants, dismissed and/or imprisoned individuals from private sector, and family members of individuals from these two groups. The first three authors identified initial informants through their personal social networks, while the remaining interview participants were identified through snowballing. Snowballing is a qualitative research method in which original participants recommend other participants, forming a recruitment process akin to a chain reaction. When researching difficult-to-reach populations, this approach is frequently employed (Parker, Scott, and Geddes 2019). Among the 15 participants, we studied, eight were civil servants, six were from the private sector and one was the family member of a civil servant. Two of them are still living in Turkey, while others are currently living abroad as they were forced to emigrate to escape further persecution. It was relatively easier to recruit these 13 participants, as they are living outside Turkey, and they were eager to make their voices heard. However, it was harder to find more interviewees who are currently living in Turkey, as they fear for their personal and family safety. This, unfortunately, led to a limited number of participants from within Turkey. The average age of our participants was 43 (min = 35, max = 52), and there were five teachers, two police chiefs, three army staff officers, one doctor, one judge, one engineer, one journalist and one businessperson among them. Finally, all but one of our participants had a university degree, while two had a master's degree and five had a doctoral degree (Table 1).

We employ qualitative research methods, utilising in-depth semi-structured interviews in Turkish with 15 individuals from the foregoing three groups. The interviews usually took around 3 h (the shortest being 1 h and the longest being 5 h) and were split up over several days. The total length of the interviews was about 50 h, which we recorded by phone or on zoom. We use a qualitative phenomenological approach to analyse the common experience of resilience and non-violent responses of these individuals to their ordeals. Phenomenology is a qualitative method that focuses on people's experiences related to a common phenomenon, including how those experiences intersect and diverge for each individual (Creswell and Poth 2018). As 13 of 15 participants of this study had to become immigrants, this strategy is in line with recommended techniques for interacting with immigrant populations, which include gaining a thorough grasp of their particular circumstances, cultural environments, and experiences (Bartholomew,

Table 1. Information about the participants.

Code	Gender	Y.O.B	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Type	Marital Status
Judge	Male	1987	36	Undergraduate	Judge	Civil Servant	Married
Soldier3	Male	1981	42	Undergraduate	Staff Officer	Civil Servant	Married
Doctor	Male	1974	49	Doctorate	Assoc. Prof. & Medical Doctor	Civil Servant	Married
Police1	Male	1971	52	Doctorate	Police Chief	Civil Servant	Married
Businessperson	Male	1985	38	Undergraduate	Businessperson	Private Sector	Married
Teacher1	Male	1977	46	Master	Teacher	Civil Servant	Married
Engineer	Male	1980	43	Undergraduate	Engineer	Private Sector	Married
Teacher2	Male	1974	49	Undergraduate	Teacher	Private Sector	Married
Teacher3	Male	1988	35	Undergraduate	Teacher	Private Sector	Married
Journalist	Male	1979	44	High School	Journalist	Private Sector	Married
Teacher4	Male	1979	44	Master	Teacher	Private Sector	Married
Police2	Male	1974	49	Doctorate	Police Chief	Civil Servant	Married
Teacher_5_F	Female	1982	41	Undergraduate	Teacher	Family Member	Married
Soldier1	Male	1978	45	Doctorate	Assos.Prof. & Staff Officer	Civil Servant	Married
Soldier2	Male	1987	36	Doctorate	Asst. Prof. & Staff Officer	Civil Servant	Married

Gundel, and Kantamneni 2015). In addition, we applied the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method used in psychology, as described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The dual hermeneutics of (a) the participant's interpretation of their experience and (b) the researcher's interpretation of the participant's interpretation are the focus of IPA. To comprehend the participants' experiences (i.e. participants' meaning-making) and to find meaning that went beyond what was expressly expressed (i.e. researcher's interpretation), the first three authors therefore used both an empathic and an inquiring mindset.

Data collection and analysis were a collaborative effort of all authors, whereas interviews were conducted by three of the four authors whose native language is Turkish and who are fluent in English. The primary author, and authors 2 and 3, identify as Turkish, received their graduate degrees in the United States, and have prior experience and training in qualitative research. Author 4 identifies as British, who also has prior experience and training in qualitative research. Author 4 also served as peer debriefer in the study design, analysis and interpretation of the interview data. Peer debriefing involves reviewing the coding scheme, techniques, and conclusions with an unbiased colleague or colleagues, hence improving the reliability and trustworthiness of findings (Janesick 2015, as quoted in Alshabani et al. 2023, 1103).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and content-analysed with Nvivo Qualitative Analysis Software. Content analysis involved a process of thematic coding by the three authors who are native Turkish speakers. The categories of themes related to risk factors as well as socioecological and protective factors emerged as a result of this thematic coding. Due to the subject-matter expertise of the authors, there was high agreement among the coders, and minor differences among them were consolidated via verbal discussion. During the coding process, the authors placed emphasis

on combining the *emic* (participant or insider view) with the *etic* (researcher or outsider view). Furthermore, given the sensitivity of the research topic, interview respondents were informed and reassured about the protection of their confidentiality and/or anonymity, and their consent for participation was obtained (see Appendices 1 and 2). Ethical approval for this research has been obtained by Swansea University's Research Ethics Committee.

The socio-political context of July 15 coup attempt

Described by its adherents as a civil society movement, the Gulen Movement is led by Fethullah Gulen, a charismatic scholar living in self-imposed exile in the USA for more than two decades. According to Fitzgerald (2017), the movement per se is a controversial civil society movement with elements of religion, social activism, and politics due to various reasons. Operating globally in over 160 countries and with a focus on individual transformation, social change, and institutional outreach in areas such as education, healthcare and media, the movement tried to establish positive relationships with various governments in Turkey, employing a strategy of negotiation and avoiding confrontation (Turam 2006), which some scholars called "strategic non-confrontation" (Gürbüz et al. 2012). Despite the common belief in the Turkish media, the movement's alliance with Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) was not based on shared ideology, but rather on strategic considerations, as the movement provided political support to Erdogan while benefiting from the opportunities offered in civil and political society. This symbiotic relationship dated back to 2002 when Erdogan came to power and began to decline starting around 2011 due to a series of events.

The last and most serious conflict between the Gulen movement and Erdogan was the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. The coup attempt constituted a significant turning point within the country's socio-political milieu, exerting a lasting influence on its political landscape and societal fabric. The events of 15 July served to exacerbate existing tensions within society, as Erdogan and his administration promptly attributed the coup attempt to the Gulen movement, which they accused of orchestrating a parallel state within Turkey. The traces of Erdogan's turn to harsh measures after the coup attempt are hidden in a series of investigations that exposed corruption, which Erdogan argued was a coup against himself by police officers and prosecutors affiliated with the Gulen Movement. The 17 December scandal in 2013 revealed the involvement of an Iranian facilitator, Reza Zarrab, in breaking international embargoes. This investigation implicated four ministers and family members of Erdogan. The 25 December scandal in 2013 involved Erdogan's son and uncovered evidence of corruption.

Soon after the military uprising on 15 July, the government constructed a narrative of the attempted coup, attributing the blame to foreign elements, particularly Americans, Gulenists, United Arab Emirates, Western Powers, and so forth (Cengiz 2019). The coup attempt served as a catalyst for Erdogan to consolidate power, leading to a totalitarian regime with widespread purges and the transformation of state institutions (Karademir and Cengiz 2021). In summation, Erdogan arguably won his tug of war with the Gulen

movement as he suppressed the movement by all means inside and outside the country and left the followers of the movement to civil death.

Results

"Risk factors" for radicalisation within the context of July 15 coup attempt

In this section, we discuss the ways in which our participants displayed factors that the terrorism literature highlights as "risk factors" for radicalisation. Wolfowicz et al. broadly defined these as "vulnerability, predisposing and preceding factors, and predictors" (2019, 4). In a field-wide systematic study of factors for radicalisation outcomes, they identified three types of outcomes: attitudes, intentions and actions, and conducted meta-analyses to quantify the relative effect of all factors (Wolfowicz 2020, 1). The authors found a total of 62 factors; the significant factors we included below are the ones that we found in our research. Furthermore, terrorism scholars and researchers view radicalisation as a complex process involving multiple factors working in tandem to produce extremist outcomes. Victimisation plays a notable role in this process. As Jensen et al. put it, "a sense of community victimisation and a shift in individuals' cognitive frames are present in most pathways and act as near necessary conditions for violent extremism" (2020, 1067).

In addition to individual risk factors like being male or religious identity, our participants reported strong feelings of victimisation caused by government practices and societal pressures due to their alleged involvement in and support for the July 15 coup attempt, as well as support or positive views for the outlawed Gulen Movement. These feelings manifested themselves broadly as pull factors such as human-rights violations, forced migration, job loss, and push factors like demonisation, discrimination and stigmatisation. We will examine each of these factors below and in so doing add the voices of our participants as much as possible.

Human rights violations (pull factor)

Research has shown that human rights abuses are among the most significant drivers of radicalisation and terrorism. Walsh and Piazza (2010), for example, argued that the abuse of and threats to physical integrity rights fuels terrorism by complicating individuals' search for non-violent means of redress. Similarly, Van Den Bos (2020) opined that people may radicalise when they are treated in blatantly unfair ways, and that human rights violations can contribute to this sense of unfairness and injustice. Among our participants, five of them reported that they have been subject to torture, while most others said to have received threats to their physical integrity. Also, the sense of unfairness and injustice was quite significant in all of our participants. One participant described his experiences of torture by saying,

> When my first statement was taken, they seriously beat me. They battered. My hands are in reverse handcuffs. They slap and punch me in the face. They're kicking me in the stomach, in my cavities. They hit my kneecaps from behind . . . I'm trying to stand up and resist . . . If I don't speak, they cover my eyes and go on again. And I passed out after that.[2]

Another participant pointed to importance of the psychological effects of human rights violations. While he was in prison, he had to make a tough decision to send his wife and children abroad, lest they face the abuses that many others faced, e.g. children being sent to child protection agencies because of the imprisonment of both parents. In describing his feelings about this, he said:

> Their [Gulen-linked arrestees'] children were given to the orphanages, and we were very saddened by what these people went through. We didn't want our children to live the same thing. Therefore, even that decision alone was one of the biggest *tortures* done to me in this process. In other words, if you physically torture a person, yes, it does not mean torture alone. . . . even the positions you leave people in and the movements or transformations you make in people's lives are great *tortures* to people. [emphasis and explanation added].[3]

Furthermore, human rights abuses in the form of humiliation and attacks on one's dignity can lead to radicalisation and terrorism. Lindner (2002), 125), for instance, argued that humiliation is a core factor in conflicts that results in cycles of violence, e.g. terrorism, where feelings of humiliation make people feel entitled to retaliate with violence. While in prison, one participant, for example, heard from another inmate that the latter's wife was sexually assaulted in front of him to make him bend to prison guards' will. He was then released on bail, but he could not forget this event. His fears came true when he was rearrested after several months as he said:

> When I was taken for the second time, they told me that we would bring your wife, we would rape and harass her . . . They used expressions like *"we will f.ck her to the point that she cannot be f.ed."* They threatened even with this. They made life unbearable [emphasis added].[4]

On the other hand, for some of our participants, human rights abuses took the form of threats on being abducted by the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT) while living abroad. In 2018, the Turkish government had publicly admitted to abducting over 100 members of the Gulen Movement outside the country (Al Arabiya 2020). Evidence from open sources suggest that most of these abducted people were subject to inhumane treatment and torture.[5] While living in a country in Latin America, one of our participants received such threats of being abducted, which culminated in death threats he received by an MIT agent. He explained his ordeal with the following words:

> You know, Mr. . . . , he says these things are very easy in this country. Before you even realize, you may find yourself being pushed to the front of a bus. He says, while trying to give alms to someone begging, he may put a knife into your stomach. You do know that these things do not cost even $50 here, right?[6]

Forced migration (pull factor)

Forced migration refers to involuntary or coerced movement of people from their homes for various reasons such as conflict, persecution, environmental disasters, or violence. The link between forced migration and radicalisation and terrorism is not straightforward, but forced migration can exacerbate political grievances that contribute to radicalisation and varying forms of political violence. When asked about their feelings on their forced migration, all of our participants expressed great sadness for reasons such as leaving behind their families and friends, prosperous careers and the country that they love so much. The heavy emotional weight of being forced to migrate and not knowing when they will be able to go back to their homeland was something that we observed on all of

them during our interviews. Besides such emotional effects, forced migration also had effects on physical well-being of some participants. To exemplify, we provide the following examples.

To avoid persecution, one of our participants decided to escape Turkey and made a deal with people who promised to help him. He was able to exit the country with their assistance but was later handed over to the Turkish Intelligence by the same people. He described the horrors of his captivity as follows:

> Now they came to me, they blindfolded me again. They covered me with something like a big towel . . . They keep behaving like animals. That's why I said they're probably going to kill me . . . They put a towel in my mouth like this from the bottom. God my mouth is foaming . . . You know, when you press it from above, the lungs are not functional . . . I say I can't breathe . . . One side of my body is completely numb, they are pressing.[7]

In his journey for freedom, another participant, who crossed the Maritsa River (the border between Turkey and Greece) with his family with a deflating boat, described their terrifying experience by saying,

> We were thirteen of us. Two boats and thirteen people. We were caught as soon as we passed, by a Greek military police. They put a gun to my head. They shouted, yelled. . . My eldest daughter is crying. My little daughter is crying. My son says 'I am afraid, I am afraid'. . . My head is facing down, so I don't see anything. OK, I said they will push us back to Turkey. They will return me and my wife. They will most likely arrest us, so what will happen to these three children in Edirne? These thoughts were crossing my mind.[8]

Job loss (pull factor)

Research has shown that losing one's job can have significant negative effects on various aspects of people's lives including mental health, well-being and social integration (e.g. Brand 2015; Pohlan 2018). So, although there is limited research on the direct effects of job loss on radicalisation and terrorism, Freytag et al. (2011) argued that losing one's job can contribute to the environment within which terrorism and terrorists emerge.

After the July 15 coup attempt, more than 175,000 civil servants were summarily dismissed from their jobs, for alleged membership in or relationships with "terrorist organizations" by emergency decree-laws (Turkish Minute 2023). Eight of our 15 participants were among the dismissed civil servants, but the remaining seven also lost their jobs, for the institutions they worked at were shut down with the emergency decrees because of their presumed links with the Gulen Movement. Losing their jobs led to a significant economic loss but it has also taken a heavy toll on their reputation, relationships and overall emotional and mental well-being.

One participant, who had a successful career as a police chief and academic, recounted his feelings of social exclusion associated with his job loss by saying,

> Look, I am an academic, but universities do not accept me. I have a security background, but no private security will take us. I am also a public internal auditor. Normally, every municipality must hire a public internal auditor. I can get in with a very high salary. But they don't take me there. I want to give private lessons, and gave some lessons. But when they learned about my situation, they let me go. So, they left us to a civilian death.[9]

Demonisation and stigmatisation (push factors)

The effects of demonisation and stigmatisation on radicalisation and terrorism are well-researched. Comparing the counterterrorism policies of France and Germany, for example, Witold (2017) argued that stigmatisation of Muslims leads to their alienation, which may in turn facilitate their recruitment or sympathy for terrorist groups. Similarly, examining the impacts of treating Irish and Muslims as "suspect communities" in the UK on social cohesion, Hickman et al. (2011) argued that stigmatisation because of being "suspected" induces a range of feelings and responses, e.g. anger, alienation, fear and resistance, all of which may undermine their feelings of acceptance and thus render them vulnerable to be sympathetic to extremist groups or violent acts.

The feelings of demonisation and stigmatisation were perhaps the biggest difficulties that our participants have faced for being labelled as a terrorist. The designation of the Gulen Movement by the government as a terrorist organisation under the name "FETO," and the construction of the same word as a discursive strategy to create the Gulen Movement as an "out-group" are quintessential for understanding why and how the alleged perpetrators/supporters of the July 15 coup attempt, including our participants, have strong feelings of victimisation caused by demonisation and stigmatisation. To specify, the otherwise peaceful movement's depiction as a terrorist organisation occurred within a span of several hours right after the start of the coup attempt, which has been taken by many as a "shocking" event. The real negative impacts of such depiction, however, have been felt because of being labelled as a "FETOist," as it became the transmitter of hate towards the members of the Gulen Movement since the coup attempt. The following narration by one of our participants summarises the effects of the said demonisation and stigmatisation:

> The term FETO they used... Gradually, they injected this polarizing word into the society. And it was very well accepted in society. All this filth, dishonesty, immorality and dishonor were accepted by the society ... Millions of people, including people who know me very well, including my students, *demonized* me. So as a family, we feel very, very heartbroken. [emphasis added].[10]

Another participant had similar experiences even when living abroad. He described the rapid downward shift in his life after the coup attempt as follows:

> When we learned that our visas were canceled, and we can no longer ensure your safety from the highest intelligence authority of the country ... of course we had a great crisis of confidence ... A group of a hundred people on an island in the middle of the ocean had no ties to anyone anymore, was *constantly isolated in the society and in the media and was branded as a terrorist*... We *stumbled*. [emphasis added].[11]

Undoubtedly, people currently living in Turkey who are thought to be affiliated with the Gulen movement are in a more vulnerable situation vis-à-vis this stigma and demonisation. More importantly, the family members of such people are not immune from negative effects of being labelled as a terrorist or "FETOist." One of our participants, for example, is the wife of a staff officer who is currently in prison for his alleged involvement in the attempted coup. The difficulties she has had attests to the aforementioned vulnerability, which she described as follows:

He had a credibility in society. All of a sudden, you fall for one thing. The word "terrorist" weighs heavily on me . . . People write to me, or they text my children as *the bastard of Pennsylvania* on Twitter . . . They say that *you are a filthy FETOist*. So, it is what makes me upset more than anything else. [emphasis added].[12]

In this section, we sought to demonstrate various drivers of radicalisation that could potentially lead our participants towards radical and/or violent pathways. Considering that our participants bear no signs of ideological or behavioural radicalisation and actively disavow violence against those working for the Turkish security services, we now turn to the question of "*how and why do these individuals not radicalize or turn to violence despite significant suffering?*"

Understanding non-radicalisation through socioecological framework

Analysing the contents of the interview data, we have found four major factors that could be attributed to the resilience and non-radicalisation of our participants: 1) *the doctrine of the Gulen Movement* (*The Hizmet* doctrine hereafter)[13]; 2) *strong religious beliefs* (e.g. belief in God, fate and Prophets); 3) *personality traits* (i.e. having both external locus of control (invoking God, Quran, fate, etc.) and internal locus of control (as manifested in their belief in non-violence and proclivity towards pacifism/legitimacy and altruism); and 4) *resources* as human capital and social capital.

As theoretical constructs to explain these factors, we will use a socioecological framework, the notion of protective factors and the theory of inoculation. Socioecological framework, as described by Bronfenbrenner (2005), views the environment as multiple interdependent systems (i.e. micro, meso, exo and macro) with concentric relations (see Figure 1). Microsystem refers to an individual's interaction with their immediate environment; mesosystem is known as microsystem interactions; resources that either increase or weaken mesosystem relationships are known as exosystem relationships; and ideological, societal and cultural elements are known as macrosystem interactions (Alshabani et al. 2023, 1099–1100).

We conceptualise the experiences of resilient non-radicalisers by this socioecological framework that addresses the interaction of multiple systems. It is within these systems that we argue protective factors interact and render our study participants resilient and non-radical/non-violent. For Marshden and Lee, protective factors are broadly understood as "features of an individual or their context that reduce the likelihood they will engage in extremism or violence" (2022, 1). Lösel and Farrington described protective factors in a criminological context by saying that protective factors mitigate the impact of risk factors and help explain "why offending is less likely amongst individuals who might otherwise be considered high risk" (2012, 8). At this point, it is important to note the difference between *direct* protective factors from *buffering* protective factors. As Lösel and Farrington argued, the former "predict a low probability of future problem behavior without taking other factors into account," whereas the latter refers to "a low probability of a negative outcome in the presence of risk factors" (2012, 9). In this sense, factors that explain non-radicalisation of our participants manifest themselves as buffering protective factors due to the existence of risk factors affecting their lives. Figure 2[14] describes the
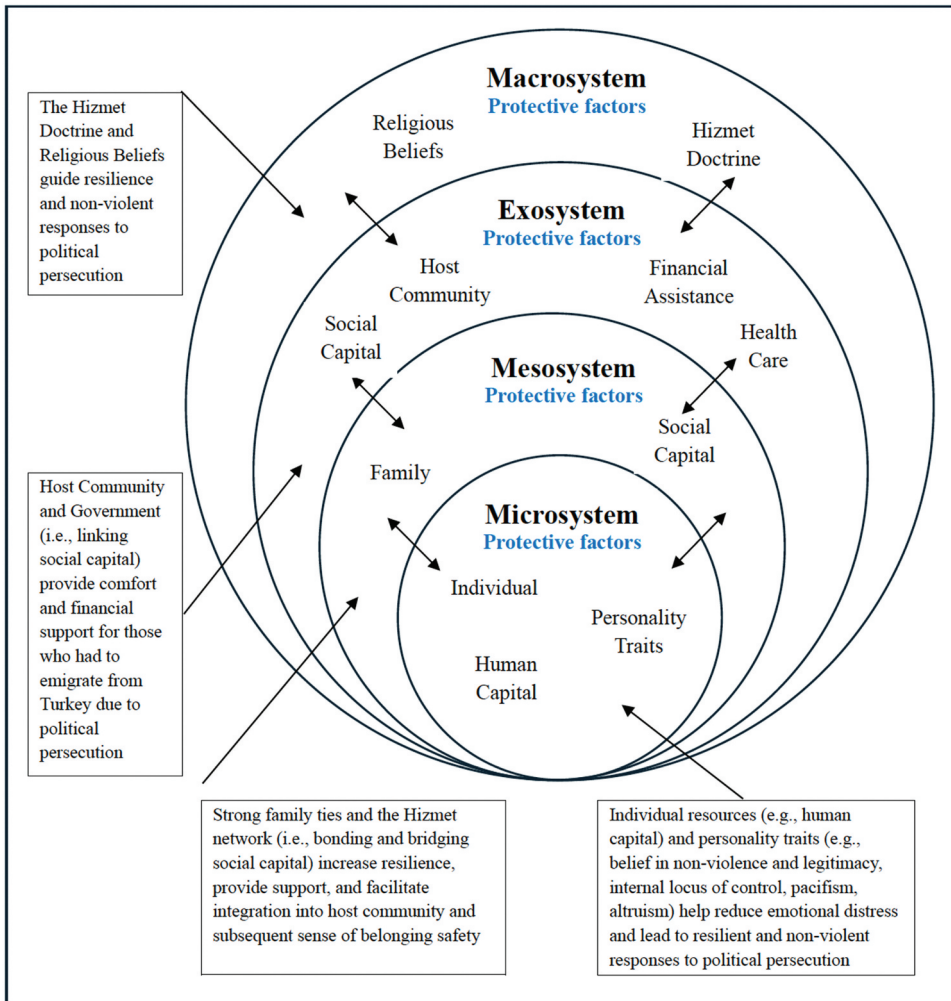
Figure 1. Socioecological framework for non-radicalisation and resilience[28].

effect of buffering protective variables. As it shows, the buffering protective factor nullifies the impact of a risk factor.

In terrorism studies, the number of studies focusing on protective factors is notably fewer than those focusing on risk factors. Therefore, our findings below will be an initial step to fill this gap by providing examples of protective factors in understanding why and how individuals remain resilient and non-radical/non-violent despite facing myriad risk factors. Furthermore, the first buffering protective factor listed above – the Hizmet doctrine – seem to be functioning as attitudinal inoculation against radicalisation and violence.

Inoculation theory proposes that individuals can be protected against harmful persuasive attacks in the same way the body is protected against viruses (Ivanov et al. as cited in Braddock 2023, 3). Attitudinal inoculation follows the same rule. A powerful pre-emptive message that encourages people to fortify their defences
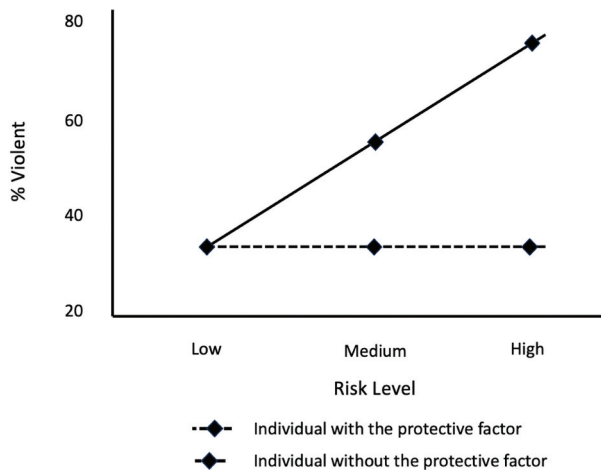
Figure 2. Effect of buffering protective factor on violence.

and better equip themselves for the possibility of encountering potential challenges to their beliefs or attitudes could be "injected" into "healthy" individuals who possess the "right" belief system, attitudes, ideas, or behaviours (Ivanov 2012). In our research, by injecting pre-emptive messages (e.g. suffering of the Prophets and their companions) as well as their responses (e.g. pacific reactions or counterarguments) into its adherents' hearts and minds during their adolescence, the Hizmet doctrine appears to have strengthened their resilience against potential vulnerabilities and challenges.

In the next section, we explicate the abovementioned four factors by providing several examples which we examine through the lens of the foregoing socioecological framework.

Factor one: macrosystem protective factors

The impact of the hizmet doctrine

Discussing the Hizmet Movement, Orofino and Cobanoglu (2023) highlight the importance of ideology in remaining non-violent. They note that even though individuals are persecuted, tortured, and jailed, members hold a strong sense of social identity, which is clearly linked to the ideology of the movement and its founder. In response to the question, "how can you remain resilient despite having so many difficulties within the context of the July 15 coup attempt," one participant said:

> In fact, the best answer to this is perhaps Hodja Efendi's[15] article of "The People of the Hizmet." Even in our high school years ... we were already ready for this. Because we know from the stories in the Qur'an. So, the prophets were those who suffered the most. They were the ones who were persecuted the most; they were exiled from their homes. They had to migrate. They lost their families. Therefore, when we read the Hodja Efendi's article about the People of Hizmet, the Hizmet person is ambitious and determined to go through the seas of

blood and pus. And when he arrives at his destination, he is humble enough to give every-thing to Him (God). So, everything is from Allah.[16]

Here, the participant not only ties religious references (i.e. viewing his suffering as fate) to the Hizmet movement but he also points to the inoculating effect of Gulen's teachings by saying that "we were already ready for this." More interestingly, the members of the movement were bracing themselves for some kind of suffering, which would signify an attestation of their acceptance by Allah as well as a testing mechanism that would winnow out bad ones from the good ones in the movement.[17]

In relation to a more specific question on non-radical/non-violent responses to the ordeals Gulen followers have faced, another participant also stressed the importance of the Hizmet doctrine as he stated:

> It is because it was nothing different from what we were taught . . . There is no destructive attitude in the teachings of these people . . . It is interesting that these people seek law even in the midst of lawlessness in Turkey . . . Therefore, I think they behave in this way because this is embedded in their DNA. They become unable to act differently, which is perhaps the point you call the *ideal person*. In other words, living a *prophetic life*, and keep being hopeful from the law still . . . In brief, this is in Gülen's teachings. There is no destruction, no rebellion, but only having patience when faced with such hardships... There is thankfulness to one's current state...[emphasis added].[18]

These explanations are consistent with similar studies that focus on the notion of *path dependency* in examining non-violent radicals. Studies on path dependency have shown that "there may be a moment when people have more room to choose between violence and nonviolence, but outside of that 'critical juncture', they are unlikely to switch paths, due in important ways to increasing returns that make it more cost effective or simply easier to remain on the established trajectory" (Pierson 2000, as cited in Jaskoski, Wilson, and Lazareno 2020, 270). It seems, for our participants, that joining the Hizmet movement was a "critical juncture," which led to the institutionalisation of their non-violence. Furthermore, the participant's allusion to the concepts like "ideal person" and "prophetic life" is linked to accepting one's life as it is and not being rebellious regardless of the severity of suffering, and it was one of the recurring themes in our interviews. These analogies were also invoked when participants made religious references to describe how they remain resilient in the face of difficulties in their lives, which we examine next.

The role of religious references

Religion and other related factors (such as religiosity and religious identity) have signifi-cant ramifications on individuals' paths *to and from* extremism and terrorism (Wolfowicz et al. 2020). Our findings show that religious beliefs and religious identity appeared to be among the most significant factors with regard to understanding our participants' non-radicalisation. The following excerpt clearly demonstrates how our participants drew parallels between their lives and the lives of prophets:

> What do we see when we look at the life of our Prophet? Which prophet had a dominant life? Apart from Solomon, which prophet had such comfort? Prophet Musa had a hard time. Jesus Christ suffered. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) experienced many

hardships . . . Which one do we see resorting to violence?. . . Now, these are examples for us. Exemplars behaved in these ways.[19]

The same participant stressed the notion that the lives of prophets and the Holy Quran were two of the most important sources of the Hizmet. He stated that although one can find these references elsewhere, it is Fethullah Gulen who conveys and interprets those religious references for them, the Hizmet followers.

Another religious reference, which most of our participants made, was the belief in *fate*. The following narration from one participant, who suffered from purge, torture, imprisonment and forced migration, clearly shows the importance of fate as a coping mechanism:

> In other words, we normally have a belief in fate. That is, even a leaf cannot move without the will of Allah. Since this is a certain belief, it is not reasonable to be very sad or very happy in the face of events. So, I did not commit a crime as they claimed that would justify what I have been through.[20]

When asked "how can you reconcile with the idea of being punished, if you believe that you did not commit a crime," the same participant rationalised his ordeal by linking his belief in fate to the idea of "paying the price," citing several historical cases as examples:

> Now, this is the issue of having a stance . . . For example, Hazrat (honorable) Hasan, Hazrat (hororable) Hussein . . . They represented the truth. Indeed, they did not surprise us. And they bore the consequences . . . So, I think of this process [his ordeal] as a price. In other words, although I have a very serious resentment towards the country and the nation, I think it will be a reward in the future. So, I think this suffering will pay off.21

Another participant who had been tortured when he was under custody also described how he coped with the situation by taking refuge in *fate*, as he said: "I told to myself: Allah sees me here. If He is content that I am here [under custody, being tortured], then I am also content. For this reason, from that point onwards, I did not bother myself with legal documents or the law."[22] Interlinked with his belief in fate, the same participant interpreted the hardships he and his friends faced as a test from Allah by saying:

> It is written in the Qur'an that calamities will certainly come in return for so many misdeeds, persecutions . . . When we observe this, people say that we are innocent, why do we get these calamities? But there he [God] does not look at innocence anymore after a certain time.

To sum up, to overcome their difficulties, our participants took refuge in religion. In particular, the ways previous Prophets demonstrated patience in the face of difficulties, their strong belief in fate and the Quran helped our participants in staying away from rebellion, radicalisation or violence despite having significant sufferings because of their alleged involvement in or support for the July 15 coup attempt.

Factor two: exosystem protective factors

Prior studies on migrants have shown that when the exosystem (e.g. host community, neighbours, community organisations, social services) provide resources, access to these resources have contributed to migrants' resilience capabilities (e.g. Alshabani et al. 2023). As mentioned before, in our study, 13 of the 15 participants have become immigrants in various countries in Europe. Our interviews showed that at least four exosystem factors

have played an important role in their non-radical attitudes and resilience: treatment by the host community, financial assistance, access to healthcare and social capital. The first three are mostly related to the fact that all 13 participants have settled in (granted refugee status) in countries that are social welfare states, where the governments provide social safety nets, public services (healthcare, housing and decent standard of living) and redistribute income. At the time of our interviews, all but one of our participants were unemployed, but they did not have any concern with the abovementioned affordances provided by their host countries. In addition, all participants stated that they have been treated by their host communities extremely well.

The fourth factor, social capital, is largely related to the social capital of our participants in the form of having access to a supportive social network, i.e. the Hizmet movement. Despite being designated a terrorist organisation in Turkey, the Hizmet movement is still alive, or growing much faster than before as some argue, outside of Turkey. Our observations from the interviews suggested that all of our 13 migrant participants have enjoyed the psychological and social support and comfort provided by the Hizmet network in their current countries. In particular, social connectedness via participating in regular physical or virtual gatherings (WhatsApp Groups) seem to have had the largest impact on their coping with the difficulties stemming from their victimisation within the context of the July 15 failed coup attempt. Taken together, all of the four exosystem factors seem to have played a positive role in our participants' non-radicalisation/non-violence and resilience.

Factor three: mesosystem protective factors

The role of "social capital" and family

The term of social capital refers to "the ability to secure benefits or resources through one's memberships and relationships in social networks" (Portes 1998). Social capital has also been conceived as a prerequisite to resilience (Grossman et al. 2017) and for individuals to be fully resilient, three types of social capital must be in place: bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding social capital is the strongest of the three types and involves relationships with family, friends, and those with common characteristics (e.g. religion, ideology, ethnicity) (Ali et al. 2019). The term "bridging social capital" refers to establishing connections with different groups. It necessitates having faith in and respect for people from different communities, interacting with them and forging connections with them, and respecting harmony and inter-community relations (Ali et al. 2019, 4). Finally, linking social capital is about the relationship between people and authorities, such as the government. It requires trust and confidence in government and institutions, and skills to utilise institutions and organisations outside of one's local community (Ali et al. 2019, 5).

In light of the foregoing, we argue that the focus group of this study, our participants in particular, have strong social capital. In terms of bonding social capital, they all feel family as a sacred value. They reported that family is one of the most important factors for their resilience and non-radicalisation. Our informants also feel that they are part of a *divine selection* (i.e. The Hizmet movement), which aims to contribute to global peace and dialogue through education and spirituality, while being subjected to various tests by God just like Prophets and their companions before them. This perceived selectness of

their "imagined community" *à la* Anderson (Anderson and Richard 1991) eases their suffering within the context of the July 15 coup attempt, but their physical or virtual participation in various Hizmet networks and activities also plays an important role in their non-radicalisation and resilience during their reintegration processes into society wherever they are living today. As per bridging and linking social capital, since we had only two participants who are currently living in Turkey, we do not have enough data to comment on these issues. Given that the movement is designated as a terrorist organisation in Turkey, and the stigma of being called a "Fetoist" or "Gulenist" renders relationships with other groups almost impossible, it will not be erroneous to suggest that individuals who are labelled as such and are currently living in Turkey cannot capitalise on their bridging and linking social capital, even if they wanted to. Their bonding capital as part of the movement still facilitates their lives, however, and it contributes to their non-radical responses to social, psychological, and financial hardships they have while living in Turkey.

Factor four: microsystem protective factors

The role of personality traits

Personality traits are crucial not only for understanding how people become radicalised, but also how they disengage from extremist groups or stay away from extremism in the first place. Though there may be a multitude of personality traits, the notion of the *locus of control* was the most prevalent personality trait in making sense of our participants' non-radicalisation. To explicate, Harrington and Boardman suggested that it is useful to differentiate "two major attitudes people entertain about the causes of things that happen to them and others" (Harrington and Boardman 2000, 18). Based on such a division, they argued that those who take the view that they are the causes of things that happen to them seem to have "internal" locus of control; while others who believe that forces external to themselves are more likely to exert the most important influence in terms of what happens to them.

Looking into the ways in which our participants remained resilient and not radicalised, we perceived that they had mixture of both internal and external locus of control. In terms of explaining *what happened to them*, almost all of them cited external factors that we explained in the previous section, i.e. the experiences of Prophets, calamities described in the Quran, the notion of "a test from God," the belief in fate, etc. When it comes to *what they did* in the face of their ordeals, i.e. their non-radical/non-violent responses to persecution, torture, imprisonment and forced migration, the most influential factors they reported pointed to their internal locus of control. We will explain two of these factors here: i) their belief in non-violence and proclivity towards pacifism/legitimacy, and ii) altruism.

When asked, "you think that Hizmet followers were not behind the coup attempt, but do you think the difficulties the Hizmet faced would justify a military coup," one participant responded by saying: "No . . . Because violence breeds violence. Because we are not people trying to change things with violence. If we want to reach a result that we believe is right, our paths should also be right."[23] When we continued with a provocative

question, i.e. "but people are hopeless, democratic routes are blocked, what should people do," the same participant replied as follows:

> It looks like people are waiting for this right now: Someone will come with a magic stick. He will strike it, and everything will be alright. But this is not the case. Society must change. We will change ... We can't do that with a coup. We cannot do this with violence. We cannot do it with street actions. Violence only breeds violence.[24]

Another conspicuous personality trait in our participants was their proclivity towards *pacifism* and *legitimacy*. As opposed to people who argue that each life situation requires a new assessment of the locus of control, Harrington and Boardman suggested that the locus of control as a personality variable was fairly stable overtime (Harrington and Boardman 2000, 18). In this respect, our participants' non-violent tendencies and belief in legitimacy were also stable during their life course. It is noteworthy that our participants have maintained a non-violent stance and sought legitimate solutions for the injustices they have been facing since the July 15 coup attempt. One participant, who was subjected to torture while in custody, for example, was asked "what would you do to your torturer" and he responded with the following statement:

> Torture has no statute of limitations and is punishable ... But I would not want to torture them... I want them to be punished within the framework of the laws and regulations. I do not want to go outside of the law at all.[25]

There were numerous such individual responses to injustices, but our participants also believed that legitimacy and rule of law were essential in finding solutions to the collective problems, i.e. mass persecution, purge or incarceration. When we asked a participant, who adamantly defended the ballot box, 'do you believe in the ballot box and democracy despite the existence of unfair elections in Turkey, one participant (a former staff officer) stated that:

> I am still a person who believes in the ballot box and democracy ... The coups have always taken away many things from countries. So, it did not bring any gain. It took away democracy.[26]

In response to a question about "what should be done to Erdogan and his supporters," whom all of our respondents view as the actors of their suffering, another participant said:

> I can't think of anything other than the law. In other words, whatever the laws order, I want them to be tried and accounted for. I want the state to make up for the damage they have done to the nation ... I want them to apologize to people that they hurt ... And I want slanders [about the Hizmet movement] to be cleared. I definitely want my friends to be cleared.[27]

Finally, another personality trait that was conspicuous in our participants was *altruism*. Harrington and Boardman viewed altruism as a type of coping style that help individuals in overcoming stressful situations, and it is defined as "as vicarious but gratifying service to others" (Harrington and Boardman 2000, 158). Most of our participants linked their altruism to the doctrine of Hizmet, alluding to several of the Gulen's dictums such as being "handless to the beater, tongueless to the curser and even not resentful to the heartbreaker (Herkul.org 2011) and "live, so others may live" (Gülen 2019). As most of them became involved with the movement at a young age, often around their primary

school years, altruism seems to be embedded in their personalities. Our findings therefore suggests that all our participants, regardless of their personal differences, have used altruism to deal with the difficulties they have been experiencing since the July 15 coup attempt in 2016.

All this may sound paradoxical since altruism and pro-social behaviour are usually thought to originate in positive experiences and processes, "whereas violence and anti-social behavior is often rooted in negative life experiences" (Berger and Zimbardo 2012, 3). However, as Staub (2005) suggested, adversity and suffering may contribute to increased violence and antisocial behaviour, but it may also enhance the motivation to help others. He called this phenomenon "altruism born of suffering" (ABS) and suggested that some people reinterpret the significance of prior suffering and encourage psychological shifts towards compassion rather than hostility towards others (as quoted in Berger and Zimbardo 2012, 3). Our participants are exemplars of this phenomenon.

The role of "human capital"

Another factor that seems to have contributed to our participants' non-radicalisation is linked to their human capital. Human capital involves skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities possessed by individuals in a workplace or population, which increase their productivity (Marginson 1993, as cited in; Tan 2014, 413). In addition to increased productivity, the individual who devotes the necessary time and resources to accumulating this capital benefits in the form of increased income, a more fulfilling or esteemed position, or even just the enjoyment of gaining a deeper understanding of the world around them (Coleman 1988, 116). These qualities are embodied in people and thus cannot be separated from them. As shown in Table 1, our informants possess significant human capital given that they are highly educated and skilful individuals who have had many years of experience in their respective jobs. In brief, our informants' resources in the form of human capital seem to have a significant positive impact on their non-radical/non-violent behaviour despite having significant grievances.

Discussion and conclusion

Our findings suggest that despite the existence of drivers of radicalisation highlighted in the extant literature, members of the Hizmet movement displayed a distinct inclination towards non-radicalisation. In furthering this question of why this is the case, we discovered that non-radicalisation and resilience of the members of the Hizmet movement were the product of *interactions* between various protective factors at different systemic levels (macro, exo, meso and micro), such as the teachings of Gulen encapsulated in the Hizmet doctrine; reference to the religion (Islam), treatment by the host country, personality traits and resources in the form of human and social capital.

Participants drew upon references from the Quran and stories of prophets to find meaning in their sufferings. They pointed to these sources to explain their peaceful and composed response to the dramatic events they have endured, thereby avoiding any inclination towards extremist rhetoric or violent acts in seeking retribution against those responsible for their suffering. However, we are well aware that verses of the same Quran have been frequently utilised to mobilise Islamic militants, insurgents, and/or terrorists to

rationalise naked violence, radicalise recruits, and even mobilise crowds for jihad. The existence of diverse interpretations of sacred texts is not exclusive to the Muslim population, nor is it a recent phenomenon. However, what stands out in the present study is the participants' compelling ability to rationalise their non-radicalisation by appealing to the religion of Islam.

The Hizmet doctrine, another main theme identified in this study, comprises a set of principles and worldviews that originated from Gulen's interpretation of Islam. It acts as a buffering factor against radicalisation. In the early stages of establishing his congregation, Turkey was deeply divided along ideological lines, with both the left and right-wing factions engaging in ruthless killings. Despite Gulen's conservative and nationalistic leanings, he explicitly urged his followers, who could potentially align with the right-wing, to refrain from participating in any form of violent confrontations, street protests, or heated verbal debates. Instead, he referred to them as "guardians of love" and emphasised the significance of promoting love, peace, and tolerance to advance their objectives (Ergene 2008). Ideology is key when thinking about the distinction between radicalisation and non-radicalisation, as Neumann (2013) notes:

> What made Irish Republican Army recruits blow up police stations in Northern Ireland while Tibetans have resisted the "occupation" of their homeland peacefully needs to be explained, at least in part, with reference to the different ideologies that members of the two nationalist movements have come to accept as true . . . Whereas "physical force Republicanism" teaches potential recruits that constitutional Irish nationalism is ineffective because the British government will "not be moved by anything [but armed struggle]", Tibetan separatists regard the use of violence as the ultimate betrayal of their movement's principles.

Despite the Tibetan movement remaining non-violent, other Buddhist movements, most notable in Myanmar/Burma, nationalist monks instigated violent attacks against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state (Morada 2023).

Individual resources also manifested themselves as protective factors. Our informants' statements indicated that most of them acquired their human capital (e.g. education) largely through their involvement within the movement. Similarly, their engagement with and support from the Hizmet-related social networks are essential social capital resources our informants use in dealing with the difficulties associated with their victimisation.

It appears that the Hizmet doctrine, as we presented analogically as a type of inoculation in the form of indoctrination, serves as a vaccination for his followers to take a non-violent stance no matter under what kind of circumstances they are in.

We advise caution when interpreting our findings based on the existing literature discussions. Some researchers argue that there may be a discrepancy between the public statements and private actions of the group and its members. The lack of transparency and secretive organisational structure poses challenges in fully grasping the group's dynamics (see, for example, Van Bruinessen 2014; Weller 2022; Yavuz 2018). Conversely, others contend that there is no evidence supporting these claims (e.g. Balci and Miller 2012; Taş 2018; Tittensor 2014). Our study does not aim to definitively answer whether a substantial gap exists between public and private expression. Drawing upon this historical debate, it is worth considering that participants may not have expressed their true thoughts, which is a limitation when working with human subjects as data sources. We have not

witnessed any radical action stemming from the group before and afterwards of the coup attempt. On top of clear findings of non-radicalisation apparent in interviews, through an extensive review of Gulen's sermons, writings, and recordings from prominent figures on social media associated with the group after 15 July, our findings do not indicate signs of radicalisation, advocacy for violence, or any illegal means of resistance and intention of retribution. However, it is palpable that they strongly oppose Erdogan and his partners in power.

Despite our caution in over-interpreting these findings to the wider literature, it is clear that our findings can offer some insights to the wider discussion of why some individuals radicalise and some do not. For example, in "internal brakes" typology of Busher, Holbrook, and Macklin (2019), we can see many similarities, as our participants demonstrated what they would describe as a "moral logic" which constructs social norms that inhibit certain forms of violence and a logic of "ego maintenance" by identifying as a non-violent group. Similarly, Kocmanová (2023) points to a sense of belonging, in-group solidarity and social cohesion help to explain the resilience of her participants. In other places, it deviates from the literature, such as Bjørgo and Ravndal's (2020) and Dowling's (2023) discussions of groups that condone violence but do not participate for strategic purposes. Both of these convergences and divergences demonstrate the need for treating different groups and movements as distinct when it comes to counter-terrorism interventions.

The study obviously has a limitation in its ability to generalise its findings because of its qualitative nature, sample size, and sampling technique. We cannot be sure considering the sample size that there might be some members who hold radical views and embrace extremist ideas that our sample unintentionally excludes. The question of why some individuals radicalise and others do not, despite similar circumstances, remains one of the most pressing questions within terrorism studies. It is a multi-faceted question that encompasses everything from macro-level factors such as government repression and foreign policy to group and environmental dynamics to individual predispositions and vulnerabilities. It is a complex puzzle that is unlikely to be solved any time soon. While most research on this question focuses on the indicators that are prevalent within radicalised populations, our intention has been to do the opposite: to assess which factors may have provided resilience and contributed to our participants' *non-radicalisation*. We hope that our findings offer food for thought for those researching resilience factors as well as those studying the Gulen Movement.

Last but not least, if future research were to adopt a longitudinal approach, it could look into the dynamic process of non-radicalisation over time within Hizmet Movement and similar groups. Alternatively, this can be achieved by employing mixed-methods research to obtain a more comprehensive understanding regarding the interplay of protective factors at different levels such as vaccination for non-violence and social interactions (Malthaner 2017). Our research team proposes to use quantitative data in the future which may aid in revealing patterns and correlations, whereas qualitative insights could provide deeper insights into personal and collective narratives that reinforce non-radical ideologies.

Notes

1. Given that the Gulen Movement was seen to be behind the attempted coup, the movement was designated as a terrorist organisation called "FETO", i.e. "Fethullahist Terrorist Organization." The members of the movement, and people who have positive views about it, do not accept this categorisation and argue that the movement aims to bring peace in the world through education, spirituality and dialogue. See, for example, Keles and Sezgin (2015) and Weller (2022).
2. Teacher 1, age 46, male.
3. Soldier 1, age 45, male.
4. Teacher 1, age 46, male.
5. See, for example, Ahval News (2023).
6. Teacher 2, age 49, male.
7. Police 1, age 52, male.
8. Doctor, age 49, male.
9. Police 2, age 49, male.
10. Police 1, age 52, male.
11. Teacher 3, age 35, male.
12. Teacher 5, age 41, female. The word Pennsylvania is used as a "synonym" for Fethullah Gulen, because he currently lives there.
13. The Gulen Movement is also known as *Hizmet*, which means "Service" in English, as well as *Cemaat* (read as "Jamaat"), meaning "Community" in English.
14. This figure is adopted from a graph produced in Lösel and Farrington (2012), 9).
15. *Hizmet* followers generally call Fethullah Gulen as "Hodja Efendi" as a sign of respect. It roughly means "honorable teacher" in English.
16. Teacher 2, age 49, male.
17. Teacher 2, age 49, male.
18. Soldier 1, age 45, male.
19. Doctor, age 49, male.
20. Police 1, age 52, male.
21. Police 1, age 52, male.
22. Teacher 1, age 46, male.
23. Doctor, age 49, male.
24. Doctor, age 49, male.
25. Teacher 1, age 46, male.
26. Soldier 1, age 45, male.
27. Teacher 2, age 49, male.
28. This figure is adopted from Alshabani et al. (2023), who used a similar approach to explain resilience among Arab and Middle Eastern Migrants living in the United States.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

Bilgilendirilmiş Onay Formu

Araştırma Projesinin Başlığı:

Türkiye'de "15 Temmuz Darbe Sonrası Rejimi" Bağlamında Yaşanan Önemli Acılar Karşısında Bireylerin Yaşantılarını Anlamak

Baş Araştırmacının Adı: Dr. Kamil Yılmaz

Bu proje için Katılımcı Kimlik Numarası:

1. Yukarıdaki araştırma projesini açıklayan xx / xx / 2021 tarihli bilgi formunu okuyup anladığımı ve proje hakkında soru sorma fırsatım olduğunu ve bunların tatmin edici bir şekilde cevaplandırıldığını teyit ederim.

2. Katılımın gönüllü olduğunu, herhangi bir sebep göstermeksizin ve herhangi bir olumsuz sonuçla karşılaşmaksızın istediğim zaman geri çekilebileceğimi, istemediğim takdirde belirli bir soru veya sorulara yanıt vermemekte özgür olduğumu, yanıtlarımın kesinlikle gizli tutulacağını, ismimin araştırma materyalleri ile bağlantılı olmayacağını ve araştırmadan kaynaklanan rapor veya raporlarda kimliğimin tanımlanmayacağını veya tanımlanabilir olmayacağını anlıyorum.

3. Araştırma ekibinin anonim (isimsiz) yanıtlarıma erişmesine ve benden toplanan verilerin bu projenin amaçları için kullanılmasına izin veriyorum.

4. Görüşme kayıtlarımın bir belgeselde kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.(Evet / Hayır).

5. Yukarıdaki araştırma projesine katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Katılımcının Adı	Tarih	İmza

Dr. Kamil Yılmaz	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Baş Araştırmacı	Tarih	İmza

Appendix 2: Participant Information Form

<div align="center">

Katılımcı Bilgi Formu

(Mülakatlar için)

Türkiye'de "15 Temmuz Darbe Sonrası Rejimi" Bağlamında Yaşanan Önemli Acılar Karşısında Bireylerin Yaşantılarını Anlamak

Dr. Kamil Yılmaz: kamil.yilmaz@swansea.ac.uk

</div>

15 Temmuz Darbe sonrasi oluşan rejimin Türkiye'de hedef aldığı bireyler üzerinde oluşturduğu etkiyi daha iyi anlamak için bu araştırmayı yapıyoruz. Özellikle 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi sırasında ve sonrasında ne gibi zorluklar yaşadığınızı ve bu zorluklar karşısındaki tepkilerinizi anlamak istiyoruz. Araştırmamız bu konuda ve bu özel gruba yönelik literatürdeki bilinen ilk bilimsel çalışma olacağı için katılımınız bizler için çok önemlidir.

Veriler analiz edildikten sonra, akademik yayınlarda kullanılacaktır. İzninizle, görüşmeniz videoya kaydedilecektir. Yayınlarda kimliğinizi açığa çıkarabilecek hiçbir bilgi kullanılmayacaktır. Ancak, kabul ederseniz, mülakatınız akademik yayınlardan sonra, daha sonraki bir aşamada, bir belgeselde kullanılabilir (bununla ilgili soru için lütfen ekteki onay formundaki kısma uygun şekilde "evet" veya "hayır" ı işaretleyin).

Araştırma neler içermektedir:

• Bu çalışma, derinlemesine mülakat ve anket yöntemiyle katılımcıların Türkiye'deki 15 Temmuz darbe sonrası rejimle ilgili deneyimlerini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir.

• Tüm Katılımcılar takma isimleriyle tanımlanacak, böylece bu araştırma boyunca anonim (isimsiz) kalacaklardır (Görüşme kayıtlarının bir belgesel için kullanılmasına onay veren katılımcılar hariç).

• Bu araştırma Swansea Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi ve Kriminoloji Etik komitesi ile Kriminoloji Derneği (2018) kılavuzunun etik kısıtlamalarına uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır. Hazırlanan araştırma önerisi, Swansea Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi ve Kriminoloji Etik komitesi tarafından incelenmiş ve etik kurallara uygunluğu onaylanmıştır.

• Katılımınız, araştırmacılar Dr. Kamil Yılmaz, Joe Whittaker, Dr. Alper Sözer ve Dr. Niyazi Ekici ile şifreli bir Zoom toplantısı ve/veya bir anket doldurma biçiminde olacaktır. Görüşmelerde sorulacak sorulara yanıt verip vermemekte özgürsünüz.

• Bu araştırmaya katılımınız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır ve herhangi bir aşamada bu araştırmadan çekilme hakkına sahipsiniz.

• Araştırmayla ilgili herhangi bir sorunuz için baş araştırmacı Dr. Kamil Yılmaz'la kamil.yilmaz@swansea.ac.uk adresinden iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

<div align="center">

Araştırmacılar: Dr. Kamil Yılmaz

Joe Whittaker

Dr.Alper Sözer

Dr.Niyazi Ekici

İşbirliğiniz için teşekkürler!

</div>