

The Turbulence between *AKP* and *Hizmet*: **The African Case**



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The African Case

By Erkan Toguslu

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Foreword

The Hizmet movement is a transnational movement that emerged in Turkey and is inspired by Turkish Islamic values.

Its main focus is to fight ignorance with education, poverty with sustainable charity, and discrimination with dialogue. The education initiatives and activities that underlie all the movement's activities can probably be considered as its core or spine. Participants have established schools, tuition centres, community centres, dialogue centres, and charities all around the world.

The movement has reached a point where its very existence is being threatened by Erdoğan, the Turkish president, who enjoyed the support of the movement when he was a shining example of the way 'Islam and democracy can live together'; but relations between Erdoğan and the movement have fallen apart since he has been trying to follow a more Islamist agenda rather than the 'conservative democracy' he used to advocate.

In the last five years we have witnessed how Erdoğan has tried to suppress the Hizmet movement and its members, as well as other dissenting voices in Turkey. The Hizmet movement is strategically an important obstacle for Erdoğan as it addresses the same demographic groups as he does. Thus, Erdoğan cannot risk allowing this 'dual narrative'; he needs to suffocate all alternative narratives. In this way he will be able to establish a monopoly over the majority of the Muslim population without any challenge from inside. With that majority he can easily suppress secularists and other opposition by using the tools of majoritarianism.

The process of silencing the opposition gained a very different pretext after the curious incident of the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. Erdoğan's efforts against the movement both in Turkey and abroad proliferated with this new development.

This report discusses the history of the Hizmet movement and its establishment of schools around the world, specifically in Africa. Then it explores Erdoğan's efforts to take over these schools, especially in weak

African countries, by incentives or diplomatic pressure and to transfer their assets to the Maarif Foundation. The paper explains the nature of the Maarif Foundation, its aims and relationship with the Turkish government, and also highlights some possible outcomes from this strange 'de-privatisation' move by the Turkish government.

The Centre for Hizmet Studies is proud to present this report to shed some light on on-going issues about the Hizmet movement.

Hizmet Schools' Ordeal at the Hands of Erdoğan

After closing down all its media outlets, schools, associations, and charities, jailing any businessmen related in any way to the movement, and cancelling the teaching licenses of the teachers in Turkey, Erdoğan's next goal is to end the movement's existence abroad.

The Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has been personally attempting to close down the schools of the Gülen Movement across the globe. Erdoğan, who increased his assault on the schools following the coup attempt on 15 July, puts his intention to close the schools on the agenda on each of his

visits abroad. After closing down all its media outlets, schools, associations, and charities, jailing any businessmen related in any way to the movement, and cancelling the teaching licenses of the teachers in Turkey, Erdoğan's next goal is to end the movement's existence abroad. He is particularly focusing his attention on African countries and making very strong lobbying efforts there.

How can we define these schools that are found in many areas in Africa? What is the pedagogy and philosophy of these schools? How are they received in the countries where they are opened? What kind of results should be expected in the short term if the schools are closed down or transferred to the control of Turkey?

The Gülen Movement or Hizmet is known across the world for its work in education and for the schools founded by its participants. When it comes to Hizmet schools, the 'Turkish' connection is more apparent in Africa, where the schools are better known as 'Turkish schools', rather than 'Hizmet schools'. To give some examples, there are the 'Chad-Turkish' schools, the 'Turk-Gabon' schools, the 'Nigerian-Turkish' schools, and so on, while the school in Senegal is called 'Yavuz Selim' (the name of an Ottoman sultan). While some schools have preserved their 'Turkish' nomenclature, others had their names changed before the rift with Erdoğan. Where Turkish names are

not used, names with symbolic meaning inside the Hizmet movement are used, such as 'Horizon', 'Dawn', 'Amity', 'Dialogue' and 'Light'. Such names, which reflect light and movement rather than inactivity, are chosen to reflect the philosophy of the movement.¹ Other than obvious examples such as these, it is sometimes not easy to discern whether a school is a Hizmet-affiliated school or not; although the schools do not reject their inspiration, they may not always declare openly that they are 'Hizmet schools'.

Before looking at the time when the schools were opened in Africa and the clash between Erdoğan and the Hizmet movement in Africa, it will be helpful to first take a look at the educational work of the movement in Turkey, so as to understand the educational model and the aims of the schools.

1 Marcia Hermansen, 'The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community', in Conference Proceedings, *Muslim world in transition: Contributions of the Gülen movement*, London, SOAS and LSE, London, 25–27 October 2007, Leeds Metropolitan University, London, 2007.

Hizmet Schools

The education model expressed and formulated by the movement addressed the middle classes and helped them to move upward in terms of societal and cultural class. The emphasis on English-language education, technology and science and moral and character education would constitute the tripartite education model of the movement.

Fethullah Gülen worked at mosques as an imam and a preacher in the 1960s and 1970s, providing spiritual prescriptions to people in western and central Anatolia who would later transform into the volunteers of an education movement. His fluent and impressive style, his competent knowledge in religious sciences, and his eloquence were received very

well by the conservative and religious society of Anatolia. His talks and ideas that prioritise action spread rapidly among university students and businessmen alike. Gülen, who had been prioritising education since the 1970s, encouraged the people around him to support students. This way, he believed that society could fight against ignorance and backwardness.

In the 1980s the Gülen Movement founded educational institutions, and conservative people in Turkish society (known as 'the Anatolian tigers') funded schools. The education model expressed and formulated by the movement addressed the middle classes and helped them to move upward in terms of societal and cultural class. The emphasis on English-language education, technology and science and moral and character education would constitute the tripartite education model of the movement. By the 1990s the movement had created a web of education across Turkey through supplementary schools and high schools.

The movement was preparing the conservative segment of society for the outer world and globalisation with its education model that is open to globalisation and cultural interchange. Gülen, also benefiting from the liberal economy of the 1980s, embraced an entrepreneurial Islam. The conservative segment of society in Turkey found the movement convincing because of

its religious language and terminology. The movement was successful in mobilising people in educational, charity and humanitarian work. The movement's understanding of Islam was far from political Islam, which prioritised the state. From this perspective the movement was preferred over political Islam by the secular segments too, although they still had questions about the religious motivation of the movement.

The children taught at the schools were exposed to the teaching of a more global and civil Islam. Interreligious dialogue was a showcase for this. The schools, despite remaining under the influence of a nationalist education system in Turkey, followed a more global model and understanding. The aim of education was to bring up a 'golden generation'. The idea of a golden generation was a reflection of an understanding that foresaw harmony between religion and science, and emphasised that spirituality has a place in the modern world. The union of religious and hard sciences, and the co-development of secular and religious ethics were going to be the characteristics of the golden generation.² This model was actually created and developed against a positivist, Kemalist model of modernism.³

The Gülen Movement has been opening schools beyond the borders of Turkey since the 1990s, firstly in Russia, Central Asia, and Australia, and later in Africa and other regions. The schools provide modern, secular education and follow the curricula of the countries where they are based.⁴ The schools provide English-language education in anglophone countries and French-language education in francophone countries.

The answer to whether Islam and religion are taught in the schools is not negative. Fethullah Gülen saw the opening to Central Asia as a responsibility; however, in Bayram Balci's research on the schools in Central Asia, he argues that the schools were more like Turkish missions rather than religious missionary schools⁵. It was almost impossible not to have an element of

2 Bekim Agai, Fethullah Gülen and his movement's Islamic ethic of education Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies, No. 11, pp. 27–47, (2002).

3 Hakan Yavuz, *Towards an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülen Movement*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013.

4 Bayram Balci, Les écoles néo-nurcu de Fethullah Gülen en Asie centrale: implantation, fonctionnement et nature du message véhiculé par le biais de la coopération éducative, *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, No. 101–102 pp. 305–330, (2003).

5 Bayram Balci, *Missionnaires de l'Islam en Asie centrale: les écoles turques de Fethullah Gülen*, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003.

Islamic da'wah or missionary activity is not part of the schools' curricula.

The aim is not to propagate Islam but to represent Islam as observant Muslims. The school and its educational activities have a spiritual and religious aspect which is called Hizmet, meaning 'service to society and to humanity in general'.

cultural nationalism in Central Asian countries, where the Turkish people have cultural and historical connections.

David Shinn came to the same conclusion as Balci; he adds that the language of the movement has become more globalised.⁶ From the 2000s onwards the language of

education in the movement became more globalised and the idea of reviving common universal values became more emphasised. The references for education were modern educational standards. Science and new techniques in education are prioritised, with character education being part of the educational programme. Islamic da'wah or missionary activity is not part of the schools' curricula. The aim is not to propagate Islam but to represent Islam as observant Muslims. The school and its educational activities have a spiritual and religious aspect which is called Hizmet, meaning 'service to society and to humanity in general'. This Islamic ethic, which can be called Weberian in its worldly asceticism, also promotes an action-based secular education and economic activity.⁷ However, this does not mean that religion has no place in this equation. The movement develops an ethos based around concepts of coexistence, tolerance, dialogue, and social responsibility, embedded with Islamic concepts. The participants of the movement represent this ethos in the schools.

Instead of missionary activity, the emphasis is on representation of this ethos to the students and their parents.⁸ Some countries also have religious schools. The Nizamiye Schools in South Africa are a good example. Islamic theology and ethics are taught in these schools, along with a secular curriculum. Given the parents' preferences, extracurricular activities can include readings

6 David Shinn, *Hizmet in Africa, The Activities and Significance of the Gülen Movement*, Tsehai Publisher, 2015.

7 Elisabeth Özdalga, 'Secularizing trends in Fethullah Gülen's movement: impasse or opportunity for further renewal?', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 11 i pp. 61–73, (2003).

8 D. Tittensor, *The House of Service, The Gülen Movement and Islam's Third Way*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

on Islam, on the movement or books by Gülen. The movement does have religious activities but these activities have a low profile. There are local religious circles where Gülen and Nursi's books are read.

Hizmet Schools in Africa

Educational activities in Africa had already started by 1993. The first schools in Africa were opened in Algeria (1994), Senegal (1997), Nigeria (1998) Kenya (1998) and Tanzania (1998). The 2000s saw a further increase in the schools and educational activities. The AKP's coming to power initially had a positive impact on the work of the movement abroad. However, the movement had already proven its success in education in Turkey, the Far East, Central Asia, Australia and Russia. The opening in Africa had followed the examples in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia. In some countries the number of schools was greater than 100 before they were closed down. English- and French-language education is provided in these countries, where there are girls' and boys' schools as well.

The movement has educational activities in Morocco, Mali, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Congo, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Egypt, and Angola, and it develops economic ties with businessmen in some other countries. The opening of schools stimulates business activities and employment in their environments and builds both local and international trade links.

The schools were opened before diplomatic missions. While Turkey had consulates in 12 African countries before 2009, after 2009 it had consulates in 40 African countries.⁹

In fact, the movement was not expanding thanks to the AKP; it was Turkey as a country which was following the expansion of the movement.

In fact, the movement was not expanding thanks to the AKP; it was Turkey as a country which was following the expansion of the movement. This was actually a result of globalism and neo-liberalism. Countries engage in economic-cultural-

9 David H. Shinn, *Hizmet in Africa: The Activities and Significance of the Gülen Movement*, Tsehah Publishers, 2015.

The schools were organising Turkish days and festivals, Turkish cuisine, trips to Turkey, and they encouraged studying in Turkey; these were becoming indispensable aspects of Turkey's foreign relations.

religious diplomacy more, rather than plain diplomacy.¹⁰

The new method used in diplomacy is first business and later political relations. The schools were in a way doing the cultural-economic diplomacy for Turkey. The existence of the schools was

making it easier for Turkey to build a visible, official presence in these countries, since the schools were already engaging with the local political elite, and the businessmen were making economic connections through TUSKON, the confederation of Turkish businessmen.¹¹ The political and economic elites preferred the schools for their children. The schools have now been operating for 20 years and they have developed a well-connected political-economic-cultural network. The schools also operate as cultural ambassadors for Turkey by promoting Turkish culture and history.¹²

The schools were organising Turkish days and festivals, Turkish cuisine, trips to Turkey, and they encouraged studying in Turkey; these were becoming indispensable aspects of Turkey's foreign relations. The movement started the Turkish Language Olympiads in 2003 and the International Turkish Olympiads began to expand in size and influence thanks to the schools. This was soon transformed into the Festival of Languages and Cultures. Thus the language of the Olympiad rapidly transformed from one of cultural nationalism to one that prized diversity.

However, even back then, the movement's relations with the state were not as good as they seemed, either in relation to the Kemalists or to the

10 Shaun Riordan, Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: a New Foreign Policy Paradigm?, in *The New Public Diplomacy Soft Power in International Relations*, edited by Jan Melissen, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 182–195. D. Lee, & Hudson, D. (2004) *The Old and new Significance of Political Economy in Diplomacy. Review of International Studies* 30 (3), 343–360.

11 Gabrielle Angey-Sentuc, Le mouvement musulman turc de Fethullah Gülen en Afrique subsaharienne: faire l'école au transnational, *Politique africaine*, Vol. 139(3), 2015.

12 Bill Park, The Fethullah Gülen Movement as a transnational phenomenon, *Muslim world in transition: contributions of the Gülen Movement*. Conference proceedings. Ed. Ihsan Yilmaz et al , pp. 46–59, Leeds Metropolitan University, London, 2007

AKP decision makers. It looked as if there were no issues with the AKP but problems began to surface in the 2010s. The Turkish Olympiads, which later became the Language and Culture Festival organised by the movement, were being supported by the AKP government; however, it was becoming clear that the AKP had reservations and it was starting to perceive the Olympiads as a threat. The visibility of the movement and its organisation of large-scale economic summits and cultural festivals were not well received by the AKP elite. Yet, although there were ups and downs in relations, the schools were generally accepted and supported by the AKP government. So why does Erdoğan want to close down the movement's schools, particularly in Africa?

Turkey: Erdoğan's dreams of becoming the 'one man'

When the AKP first came to power it already did not have much of a liking for the movement's schools and educational institutions.

In a 2004 National Security Council document whose contents were revealed later, it was written that there was an action plan in preparation to take precautions against the Gülen movement in the country and abroad.¹³ The document was signed by Erdoğan and his ministers. As is clear from the document, when the AKP first came to power it already did not have much of a liking for the movement's schools and educational institutions. It was trying to develop alternatives.

In 2010 the rift widened between the AKP and the Hizmet Movement as a result of the Mavi Marmara incident. Erdoğan, who also blamed the movement for the Gezi Park protests, used it as a scapegoat, alleging that the police and attorneys involved in the corruption probes of 17–25 December were 'Gülenists'. Afterwards, the movement was designated the number 1 enemy of Erdoğan and source of all problems.

Earlier, Erdoğan had supported the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases and had supported the trials of military officers. Later the AKP cooperated with the officers and generals whom they had previously accused of coup plotting, and started to work together against the Gülen Movement. Erdoğan then indicated Gülen as the mastermind of the failed coup on 15 July, 2016, declared a state of emergency, and closed down many media outlets, schools, universities and businesses, leaving more than 100,000 people unemployed and 50,000 people jailed pending trial. So why did this change happen between these two actors?

The presidency crisis in 2007 was a turning point. Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, had been nominated for the presidency of Turkey by the

13 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/row-between-turkish-government-and-gulen-heats-up-with-new-document.aspx?PageID=238&NID=58670&NewsCatID=338>

ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). He seemed certain to become president of the Republic by parliamentary vote. This alarmed the Turkish military. Abdullah Gül won 357 out of a possible 550 parliamentary votes. The opposition Republican Party filed a lawsuit at the Constitutional Court claiming a quorum for the vote was not reached. On the night of 27 April, the Turkish military published a memorandum on its website. The general staff declared its opposition to the nomination of Abdullah Gül as presidential candidate and published their concerns. The Constitutional Court approved the Republican Party's lawsuit and canceled the election. However, this intervention failed. Erdoğan opposed it strongly. The AKP opted for early elections, and won with 47 percent of the vote. As a consequence, the AKP had a big enough majority in the parliament to change the constitution, which opened the road to the presidency to Erdoğan himself.

The constant meddling of the military in politics was disturbing liberals, leftists, and conservatives. People of different ideologies supported Erdoğan and the AKP to end the tutelage of the military. Indeed, Erdoğan had cooperated with the Gülen Movement to end the tutelage. However, after the 2010 referendum, when the AKP decided that military tutelage was over, he stopped supporting the Gülen Movement and the liberals. Erdoğan's desire for unchallenged personal and political dominance made him authoritarian. Progress towards democracy and EU membership stopped. In the 2011 election campaign Erdoğan promised to change the constitution and began to show signs that he wanted to hold the executive presidency. The Hizmet movement with its education network and media was seen as a hindrance on his way to the executive presidency.

At the beginning of this crisis, the rift with the AKP was not felt in the places where there are Hizmet-affiliated schools; however, as the AKP

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became stronger and won further elections in Turkey, it increasingly polarised society. It first took control of the judiciary, then the military. Erdoğan deepened the struggle with the movement by using the 15 July coup attempt as an excuse, blaming the coup on the movement

and as a result uniting all his opposition against it. Next, Erdoğan began to take aim at the schools abroad. He began to make calls to presidents and heads of state heads to demand closing down the schools.

Erdoğan has pursued this struggle abroad by founding the Maarif Foundation and is now working on having the movement's schools abroad handed to the Maarif Foundation. It should be noted that according to this plan the schools are to be supported and run through pro-AKP Islamist associations.

Maarif Foundation: a Parallel Education Ministry

On 17 June 2016, by the decision of the cabinet and confirmation by the President, the Maarif Foundation of Turkey was founded. The foundation's aim is listed as organising educational activities domestically and abroad. These educational activities include opening schools, educational and cultural centres, organising courses, and founding libraries, labs, arts, and sports facilities. One of its aims is to work upon the directives of the Turkish National Education Ministry.

The foundation appears at first sight to be a normal educational institution; however, the proposed range of operations of the foundation is so comprehensive that it seems to have been founded to become a parallel education ministry. The biggest difference it has with other foundations in Turkey is that it will also work abroad and will take over educational activities abroad in the name of the Turkish state.

Erdoğan and the government appoint the board. The trustees are 12 people: four are appointed by the President, three by the cabinet and the rest by the Education Ministry, Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Higher Education Council and the Economy Ministry. Erdoğan is creating an education system parallel to National Education. What the Education Ministry should be doing

Maarif Foundation was not set up for its stated aims of increasing education quality and particularly not providing education abroad. The obvious aim is to replace and become an alternative to the schools of the Gülen Movement, which Erdoğan declared a traitor after the Gezi Protests in 2013.

is being handed over to a foundation. The foundation will take over all the schools abroad when it becomes active. Its budget comes from the state.

However, Maarif Foundation was not set up for its stated aims of increasing education quality and particularly not providing education abroad. The obvious aim is to replace

and become an alternative to the schools of the Gülen Movement, which Erdoğan declared a traitor after the Gezi Protests in 2013. Erdoğan is giving directives to the Maarif Foundation to close down the schools. In his directives he says, ‘You will be in 193 countries. You are going to prioritise countries where FETO is more effective and known. Do not let the FETO schools be called “Turkish schools.”’¹⁴

In the countries that are persuaded, the schools’ licenses are going to be cancelled and they are going to be illegally handed over to the Maarif Foundation working under the supervision of the Turkish Republic. Erdoğan has managed to persuade Pakistan and Somalia, and more recently Senegal declared that they are going to transfer the schools to the Maarif Foundation. What will happen if the schools are shut down and they are handed over to the Turkish government?

14 FETO (Fethullah Terrorist Organisation) is an acronym invented by Erdoğan to label the Gülen Movement as a terrorist organisation.

Potential Vacuum after Closure of the Schools

Thus far, as private entities, the schools have been working hand in hand with the host country's education policies. If taken over, the schools will be used as extensions of the political and ideological positions of the Turkish government.

The countries that close the schools down will confront these sets of problems in the immediate future:

First, the diplomatic crisis between Turkey and the host countries will cease to some extent since the schools were one of the reasons for these

diplomatic crises. For now, very few countries have accepted the Turkish government's demands to close down the schools, and some countries like Kyrgyzstan and Indonesia have rejected the Turkish government's proposals.

Countries that may open the door for Turkey to take over the schools have the very real concern of allowing another country to meddle in their educational policies and their domestic politics. Thus far, as private entities, the schools have been working hand in hand with the host country's education policies. If taken over, the schools will be used as extensions of the political and ideological positions of the Turkish government. When the Yavuz Selim schools in Senegal are handed over to the Turkish government, the teachers will completely follow the Turkish state's directives. Turkey will want to use these schools to become a traditional power in Africa. The schools with their ties to Senegal's political and economic elite will create a Turkish 'diaspora'. In the next phase the Turkish government will transfer the domestic politics of Turkey abroad. Countries wishing to end the current political quagmire by handing over the schools will actually open the door to a new problem. Turkey has long been sending teachers and imams abroad to Europe to meet the demands of Turkish communities abroad. These imams work as the political long arm of the AKP today, and the media has recently exposed their activities as information-gathering agents in the countries they work in.

Second, the schools are currently known for their contributions to the education systems of the host country. Research shows that the education provided is in general above the country's regular educational level. The high

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level of education provided, the academic success, the satisfaction of parents, the English-language education are not likely to be sustained if the schools are handed over to the Maarif Foundation, since the Turkish state will

send its own teachers from Turkey and will export Turkey's own chronic education problems to the receiving countries.

Recently in the Pisa research prepared by the OECD the problems of Turkey in the area of education have been discussed.¹⁵ According to this research the country has several problems in its education system, and it is questionable how Turkey can contribute to education in Africa in this situation. As such, it is clear that it cannot replace the successful education model of the Movement. The schools with their successes in maths and physics and their openness to cultural exchange will be staffed with and managed by opportunist people. Thus, when these schools are shut down or taken over there will be a lacuna in the quality of education. Turkey is far from solving its own chronic problems in education. Especially in cities where income is low, levels of educational achievement are very low and according to the data provided by the OECD these problems will only be exacerbated over time.

Another problem in education in Turkey is violence and sexual harassment against children. The AKP has failed to prevent sexual harassment against children; such sexual crimes have particularly begun to surface in the Ensar Foundation, which is known to be close to Erdoğan's AKP.¹⁶ It is seriously questionable how the schools that will be handed over to Maarif Foundation will deal with the issue of children's health, safety, and character education.

Third, a number of Muslim families send their children to Hizmet schools in Senegal, Chad, Mali and Nigeria. The main factors in their choice of these schools are the successful education and the teachers, whose motivation comes from their interpretation of Islam. The way the movement represents

15 <http://www.compareyourcountry.org/pisa/country/TUR>; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-plummets-on-oecd-wide-education-test-pisa.aspx?pageID=238&nID=106997&NewsCatID=341>

16 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36071773>

Islam and presents an understanding far from radicalism and terrorism fills an important lacuna in the Muslim world. It is questionable how effective the Turkish government can be in the education they are going to provide with these schools given the fact they have regularly turned a blind eye to the actions of ISIS. Especially in Africa, the schools run by the AKP will have an unsettling effect in breaking the balances and the ethnic-religious-cultural sensitivities in Muslim-majority countries. Voice recordings leaked in 2014 when Erdoğan was the Prime Minister exposed Mustafa Varank (Erdoğan's principal consultant) talking with a Turkish Airlines executive assistant about weapons shipping to Nigeria on Turkish Airlines.¹⁷ It is possible that the Turkish government may use the schools for its own political aims and in ethnic and religious clashes, just as it used Turkish Airlines to ship weapons to an African state.

Fourth, alongside Iran and Saudi Arabia, another country is being added to the list of those exporting their own understanding of religion. It is certain that they will emphasise the tolerance of Turkish Islam, and will argue that this version of Islam is the most appropriate for Africa, but it is doubtful how this version will be suitable for the local religious and cultural fabric. The official Turkish interpretation is one which sanctifies the state and is replete with nationalism. While the Gülen Movement demands a separation between politics and religion, the AKP government has been moving towards an Islamism that emphasises politics. It is not clear what the AKP government's Islamic model will bring to African Islam. Turkey ranks as one of the countries with the highest number of ISIS recruits.¹⁸ Turkey is also criticised for lacking in preventive measures against the activities of groups like ISIS.¹⁹ Turkey, with such a political attitude, may follow a political route in which it fuels tensions between tribes and religions in Africa.

Fifth, Turkey has long been projecting its desire to be the leader of the Islamic world. Religious councils and the work of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation are steps towards this end.²⁰ Many religious leaders are

17 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nT4-IwEKts>

18 The Soufan Group, Foreign Fighters: an Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters to Syria and Iraq, December 2015

19 <http://fpc.org.uk/articles/558> http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/30/world/middleeast/turkey-a-conduit-for-fighters-joining-isis-begins-to-feel-its-wrath.html?_r=0

20 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/africa-seeks-turkish-islamic-education.aspx?pageID=238&nID=7725&NewsCatID=338>

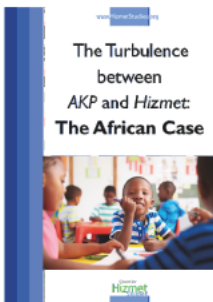
hosted in Turkey.

The path being followed is that of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, including attaining the loyalty of Islamic movements through offering them funds. This method is used in Africa through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency and the Maarif Foundation. Erdoğan will use the means he attains by taking over the Gülen schools to attempt to gain leadership of the Islamic world. He will also want to improve his image as the 'Caliph of Islam' through the children of the political elites attending the schools. This will have an effect on the masses that believe in the image of Erdoğan as the leader of all Muslims. 'The saviour of Palestine', 'the leader of the downtrodden in the Muslim world' — such slogans about Erdoğan will have the support of some people with religious sensitivities. It is not yet known whether Islamist populism will have an effect in Africa, since the 'Arab spring' did not spread to Africa. It is not clear what kind of repercussions such leadership will have.

Sixth, the movement does a great deal of work on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. As a result of the dialogue philosophy of the movement and its openness to cultural interaction, the schools also embrace this approach. There are lessons on coexistence in the schools' curricula. Especially in countries where there is conflict between Muslims and Christians the schools contribute positively to the prevention of such clashes. The schools develop a pedagogy and method in accordance with coexistence. The Turkish government as it plans to take over the schools does not have intercultural and interreligious dialogue on its agenda. While there is no improvement in Turkey in terms of the rights of non-Muslim minorities, Erdoğan also openly declared on his last visit to Pakistan that there can be no dialogue between Muslims and Christians. It is therefore possible to guess what kind of pedagogy and understanding the Turkish government will develop according to Erdoğan's anti-dialogue rhetoric, when the schools are handed over to them. The AKP will replace with Islamist rhetoric the positive contributions of the movement to preventing clashes in countries where there is Christian-Muslim tension, and will create conflict rather than dialogue.

Lastly, civil society movements will have to review their financial investments in countries where the schools are handed over. If, in countries like Senegal, where there is a functional democracy compared to other African countries, the licences of Gülen schools are cancelled without any legal decision, and if the schools are handed over to a foundation of the Turkish government,

this will deter any firm or civil society group considering working in Senegal. In an environment where Erdoğan's authoritarian attitude and his actions amounting to despotism are noted by human rights organisations, it is obvious how the level of democracy and rule of law in such a country will be perceived.



The education initiatives and activities that underlie Hizmet movement's activities can probably be considered as its core or spine. Participants have established schools, tuition centres, community centres, dialogue centres, and charities all around the world.

In the last five years we have witnessed how Erdoğan has tried to suppress the Hizmet movement and its members, as well as other dissenting voices in Turkey. The Hizmet movement is strategically an important obstacle for Erdoğan as it addresses the same demographic groups as he does. Thus, Erdoğan cannot risk allowing this 'dual narrative'; he needs to suffocate all alternative narratives. The process of silencing the opposition gained a very different pretext after the curious incident of the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. Erdoğan's efforts against the movement both in Turkey and abroad proliferated with this new development.

This report discusses the history of the Hizmet movement and its establishment of schools around the world, specifically in Africa. Then it explores Erdoğan's efforts to take over these schools, especially in weak African countries, by incentives or diplomatic pressure and to transfer their assets to the Maarif Foundation. The paper explains the nature of the Maarif Foundation, its aims and relationship with the Turkish government, and also highlights some possible outcomes from this strange 'deprivatisation' move by the Turkish government.