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Activities of the Turkish Maarif Educational Foundation in Confrontation with the Hizmet Movement

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Abstract. Educational programs can be a valuable tool in the cultural diplomacy of modern countries. As a soft power tool, organizations seek to expand their geographic reach by opening educational institutions in different parts of the world in order to spread the influence of their state. In Türkiye, such an organization has long been the *Hizmet* movement, and in recent years it has been a state-owned the *Maarif Foundation*. In the study, for the first time in Russian Oriental Studies, an analysis of the activities of the Turkish state Maarif educational foundation in the confrontation with the banned in Türkiye and a number of countries' Hizmet movements is conducted. Since the declaration of this structure as a terrorist organization on the territory of Türkiye, the Maarif Foundation has been reassigning educational institutions around the world. The most important event in this regard is the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, in which Fethullah Gülen, the ideological mastermind of the movement, was accused. As a result, all schools associated with the Hizmet movement were closed in Türkiye. The relevance of the study is determined by the fact that it considers almost the only case in history of confrontation between two organizations, which are instruments of “soft power” of a country. The purpose of the study is to examine the current issues of the Maarif Foundation's activities as part of the confrontation with the Hizmet movement. The work includes a qualitative analysis of the official documents of the Turkish state foundation, the laws of the Republic of Türkiye, as well as a discourse analysis of Hizmet's media products. As a result, it was revealed that despite the rather successful work of the Turkish state educational organization in question, it is not necessary to speak about the complete defeat of Hizmet by the beginning of 2023. By now Maarif state foundation regulates the activity of educational institutions in 49 countries, while according to our calculations the Gülen movement retains a high status in 60 states. It has been revealed that Hizmet's activities directly or indirectly influence Türkiye's interstate relations with those countries where Gülen schools operate. It has been established that the demands of the Turkish side to close the institutions of the movement have led to short-lived diplomatic crises between Ankara and some of the host countries. It has been shown that the emergence of Maarif in a particular country does not necessarily lead to the closure of Gülen institutions.

Key words: Türkiye, Fethullah Gülen, education, charter schools

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Деятельность турецкого просветительского фонда «Маариф» в контексте противостояния движению «Хизмет»

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Аннотация. Образовательные программы являются важным инструментом культурной дипломатии современных стран. Выступая в качестве «мягкой силы», организации стремятся расширить географию своей деятельности за счет открытия учебных заведений в разных уголках мира для распространения влияния своего государства. В Турции такой структурой долгое время являлось движение «Хизмет», а в последние годы — организация «Маариф». Впервые в российском востоковедении проведен анализ деятельности турецкого государственного образовательного фонда «Маариф» в рамках противостояния с запрещенным на территории Турции и ряде стран движением «Хизмет». С момента объявления этой структуры террористической организацией на территории Турции фонд «Маариф» осуществляет переподчинение образовательных учреждений по всему миру. В связи с этим важнейшим событием является попытка государственного переворота 15 июля 2016 г., в которой обвинялся идейный вдохновитель движения «Хизмет» Фетхуллах Гюлен. После этого на территории Турции были закрыты практически все школы, связанные с движением «Хизмет». Релевантность исследования определяется тем, что в нем рассматривается чуть ли не единственный в истории случай противостояния двух организаций, являющихся инструментами «мягкой силы» одной и той же страны. Цель исследования — рассмотрение актуальных вопросов деятельности фонда «Маариф» в рамках противостояния с движением «Хизмет». В ходе работы проведен качественный анализ официальных документов турецкого государственного фонда, законов Турецкой Республики, а также дискурс-анализ медиапродуктов «Хизмет». Было выявлено, что, несмотря на довольно успешную работу рассматриваемой турецкой государственной просветительской организации, говорить о полном упразднении «Хизмет» к настоящему времени не приходится. По состоянию на сентябрь 2023 г., государственный фонд «Маариф» регулирует деятельность учебных заведений в 49 странах мира, в то время как движение Ф. Гюлена сохраняет высокий статус в 60 государствах. Выявлено, что деятельность «Хизмет» прямо или косвенно влияет на межгосударственные отношения Турции с теми странами, где функционируют гюленовские школы. Сделан вывод, что требования турецкой стороны закрыть учреждения структуры приводили к непродолжительным дипломатическим кризисам в отношениях Анкары с «принимающей» страной. Показано, что появление «Маариф» в конкретной стране необязательно приводит к закрытию гюленовских учреждений.

Ключевые слова: Турция, Фетхуллах Гюлен, образование, чартерные школы

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Introduction

Maarif Foundation is a public institution in Türkiye that is engaged in educational projects in many countries around the world. The organization was established in 2016. The legal framework governing the operations of this organization, denoted as Law No. 6721,¹ was enacted on June 17, 2016, during a regular

session of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT). The second article of the aforementioned law defines the main mission of the organization, which encompasses the opening of educational institutions at all levels, the establishment of libraries, laboratories, and cultural and scientific centers in different countries around the world.²

The primary goal of the Foundation is to counteract the *Hizmet* structure, also known as

¹ Türkiye Maarif Vakfı Kanunu // Resmi Gazete. April 28, 2016. URL: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/06/20160628-17.htm> (accessed: 09.10.2023).

² Ibid.

“Gülenists.” This organization has been establishing educational institutions in various countries around the world since the 1980s. Maarif actively participates in the process of closing Turkish private schools and their reassignment to the educational foundation. Through its efforts, the Hizmet movement, recognized as a terrorist organization in Türkiye and some other countries, has gradually lost its influence in different parts of the world.

In just over six years since its establishment, the Foundation has opened educational institutions in 49 countries around the world. According to the organization’s official reports, by mid-2022, the number of educational institutions under the control of Maarif had reached 427, with a total number of students reaching 49,000.³

Since its establishment, the Maarif Foundation has become an important instrument of Turkish foreign policy, alongside other organizations serving Ankara’s interests — Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Yunus Emre Foundation, Diyanet Foundation, and others.

Extent of Research on the Problem

The activities of the Maarif Foundation have already attracted the attention of researchers studying Türkiye’s educational expansion. Turkish scholars M. Gündüz and A. Erdemir have studied the significance of Maarif colleges for the country’s educational system (Gündüz & Erdemir, 2021). The establishment of the foundation as a state educational organization in Türkiye has been analyzed in the joint work of B. Akgün and M. Özkan (Akgün & Özkan, 2020). A brief overview of the activities of educational organizations, including Maarif, is contained in the article by M. Çelik (2022). The role of the Foundation in Türkiye’s educational diplomacy is explored in the research of a

collective group of Turkish authors (Kaplan, Çimen & Balci, 2022).

Russian historiography is represented by the works of N. Mosaki, who investigated the issues of Türkiye’s educational expansion in Africa (Mosaki, 2013) and analyzed the activities of Maarif and Hizmet in Iraqi Kurdistan (Mosaki, 2020). A group of authors examines the intricacies of Türkiye’s humanitarian policy, where they also consider the activities of Maarif (Belous, Kulieva & Khasanov, 2023). In general, the confrontation between these two instruments of cultural diplomacy and Ankara’s *soft power* around the world remains an understudied issue both in Russia and in Türkiye itself. Consequently, this article aims to fill the gaps in the study of the educational expansion of the Republic of Türkiye within the framework of humanitarian policy.

Maarif and the Gülen Movement

The Maarif’s primary objective was to mitigate the influence of the Hizmet and its mastermind Fethullah Gülen within Türkiye and other countries. This decision was made by the Turkish leadership, which is determined to reduce the influence of the Hizmet and its structures on political and social processes in the country. Particular emphasis has been directed towards institutions and educational establishments that were originally established and managed by representatives of the Hizmet. The establishment of the Maarif State Foundation is one of the ways to neutralize the influence of the Hizmet and its founder. For the Republic of Türkiye, the problem of the functioning Hizmet-affiliated schools is still relevant today. Gülen’s educational institutions are typically considered conditionally “elitist,” given that they traditionally attract enrolment from local elite and “talented” students who pass a series of entrance exams. Many graduates of these institutions have opted to pursue higher education in the liberal arts (law or military) at universities within Türkiye or in other countries.

³ Maarif // Türkiye Maarif Vakfi. 2022. P. 4. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/16436790d02d0.pdf> (accessed: 09.10.2023).

This posed a serious problem for Ankara, as graduates of the Gülen structures eventually obtained high positions in administrative or military spheres directly in the Republic itself (Nadein-Raevskiy, 2016).

Since the focus of Türkiye's Maarif Foundation from 2016 to the present has been to lobby for the closure or reassignment of schools associated with the Gülen movement around the world, it is worth taking a closer look at the educational domain of the Hizmet.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Fethullah Gülen was a prominent religious figure in the Republic of Türkiye. In his sermons and speeches, he repeatedly underlined the significance of education for modern Türkiye, which was to play an important role in the process of the Republic's transition to the new post-industrial epoch of the globalization era (Toguslu, 2017, p. 9). The first Turkish private schools opened abroad, primarily in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as in the Balkan Peninsula, were established by the Hizmet. The ideological proponent behind these educational endeavors was none other than Fethullah Gülen, who, in public addresses conscientiously distanced himself from the organizational apparatus (Avatkov, 2018).

A pivotal endeavor of these educational establishments pertained to the education of the so-called "golden generation" that understood the harmony between science and religion (Altın, 2020, p. 60). At the time of the widespread closure of Gülenist educational institutions in the 2010s, the membership within the Hizmet movement could be roughly estimated at a figure ranging between 200,000 and 6 million people, including both residents of Türkiye and those living abroad.⁴ This wide range of estimates can be explained by the fact that the Gülen movement has no centralized structure and is characterized as a global

community (*cemaat*) with a large number of "subsidiary" organizations and businesses that were not officially affiliated with Hizmet (Tee, 2021, p. 93).

Researchers J. Parkinson and A. Albayrak suggest that schools of the Gülen movement were opened in 160 countries by 2014.⁵ This figure seems to be an overestimate. However, it should be emphasized that calculating the exact number of countries where Hizmet schools functioned or continue to operate is complicated by the fact that the organization's system included educational institutions that did not have the external attributes of Gülen schools and were not explicitly aligned with the movement's ideological orientation (Ivanov, 2014, p. 58).

By spreading Turkish culture, language and often a Turkish interpretation of Islam among their students, these institutions progressively bolstered Türkiye's standing in regions where such educational facilities were established. The courses are taught mainly in English, Turkish and the official language of the host country. In French-speaking countries, the teaching is in French instead of English (Angey, 2022, p. 164).

Gülen schools are gaining considerable popularity in Africa. These schools provided students from many African countries with the opportunity to receive a better level of education than in their home countries. The applicants had the opportunity to enter universities in Türkiye, Europe, and the United States. In fact, these schools turned out to be a tool of Ankara's soft power, as their graduates could become agents of its foreign policy interests (Khan & Hafeez, 2018, p. 186).

Initially, the activities of the Hizmet schools were beneficial to Ankara, despite their predominantly private nature. The special role

⁴ Paul A. Turkey on Diplomatic Push to Close Schools Linked to Influential Cleric // Voanews. August 31, 2017. URL: <https://www.voanews.com/a/turkey-erdogan-gulen-schools/4010073.html> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

⁵ Parkinson J., Albayrak A. From His Refuge in the Poconos, Reclusive Imam Fethullah Gulen Roils Turkey // The Wall Street Journal. January 20, 2014. URL: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304027204579332670740491570> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

of Gülen's educational institutions was recognized by Türkiye's 8th President Turgut Özal (1989—1993). President Özal dispatched official correspondence to the governments of various nations, extending offers to establish educational institutions under the stewardship of Fethullah Gülen. Furthermore, he declared his personal belief in the movement forged by the preacher (Ivanov, 2014, p. 61).

Thus, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Hizmet enjoyed serious administrative benefits in the Republic of Türkiye (Mosaki, 2013, p. 50). Gülen's schools received funding from the so-called "Anatolian Tigers" — a pro-Islamic group of large businessmen from the central and southwestern regions of the Republic that operated in Türkiye after the liberal reforms of President T. Ozal in the late 1980s (Shlykov, 2014, p. 64).

The operation of Gülen schools was of considerable importance to the Turkish authorities, as they effectively projected Türkiye's presence in the respective "host" countries. Representatives of these institutions served as cultural ambassadors for the Republic by orchestrating language Olympiads, festivals, and other events. Hizmet-affiliated executives and businessmen forged close ties with the elites of the countries. The TUSKON institution, the Turkish Businessmen and Industrialists Organization, which was closed after the coup attempt in July 2016, played an important role in this regard (Iag'ia & Kolesnikova, 2018, p. 45).

Hizmet's activities peaked in the 2000s, a period marked by the ascendance of the Justice and Development Party in Turkish politics. This let the Gülen movement to strengthen its position both domestically and on the global stage (Shively, 2016, pp. 189—190). During this period, Turkish private schools were opened in many countries around the world. At the same time, Gülen himself had been in the United States since 1999 for medical treatment. Despite his physical absence the preacher continued to play a pivotal role in the organization he had founded.

In the early 2010s, however, relations between Hizmet and the Turkish leadership deteriorated drastically. One of the possible reasons for this deterioration is the incident off the coast of Gaza in 2010. This event revolved around an attempt to break the blockade of the Gaza Strip to provide humanitarian aid to its residents. As a result of the incident, members of the Turkish passenger ship "Mavi Marmara" were killed. The actions of the Israeli military were condemned by the leaders of many countries and organizations, including the then Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This event caused mass protests within Türkiye. Fethullah Gülen, the mastermind of the Hizmet, said that the attempt to unblock the blockade in the Gaza Strip was a "disgusting decision" and that it was necessary to coordinate with the Israeli leadership before delivering humanitarian supplies to the region.⁶ According to researcher David Tittensor, Gülen's statement in this regard could have served as a pivotal factor contributing to the deterioration of relations with the Turkish authorities (Tittensor, 2018, p. 124).

Another possible factor was the 2013 corruption scandal, in which officials from the Turkish prosecutor's office initiated a probe into systemic corruption allegations, implicating certain ministers and high-ranking officials in the inner circle of Turkish Prime Minister R.T. Erdogan (Emelyanova, 2017, p. 40). The country's leadership claimed that Fethullah Gülen, who by then had established strong ties with the Republic's supervisory bodies, was the mastermind behind these proceedings.⁷

Ultimately, the rift in relations led Ankara to officially designate the Hizmet movement as

⁶ Ignatenko A. Milk and Meat. National Pragmatism and Imperial Romanticism in Türkiye's Foreign Policy // Russia in Global Affairs. August 7, 2010. (In Russian). URL: <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/moloko-i-myaso/> (accessed: 11.10.2023).

⁷ Turkish PM Erdogan and Muslim Cleric Gulen Tangle Over Corruption Scandal // Reuters. December 24, 2013. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUS96584408220131224> (accessed: 11.10.2023).

a terrorist organization in late May 2016 (Drinova, 2022, p. 161). Consequently, the Turkish media began referring to the association of Fethullah Gülen's adherents as "FETÖ," an acronym for "*Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü*" or the *Fethullahist Terrorist Group*.

A few months after Gülen's movement was outlawed, on the night of July 15—16, 2016, a coup attempt was carried out in Türkiye by a group of military officers representing the "Peace in the Country" organization, *Yurtta Sulh Konseyi*. In Turkish public and academic discourse, this event was officially called "15 Temmuz darbe girişim" — the coup attempt on July 15 (Karağöl, 2016, p. 37). The riots took place in some of the major cities of the Republic — Istanbul, Ankara, Marmaris and others. The armed rebellion was ultimately thwarted and its architects were unsuccessful in their attempt.

Although there are many versions of who organized the coup (Azimov, 2017, pp. 81—91), the official stance of Ankara attributes the coup attempt to the Hizmet or FETÖ movement (Muttaqien & Yumitro, 2022, p. 28).

The post-coup events were intertwined with the activities of the Maarif organization. At that time, arrests of Hizmet-related individuals were carried out throughout Türkiye. Civil servants, high-ranking military officers, and representatives of private enterprises were detained. Educational institutions associated with the movement were also subjected to punitive measures. On July 23, 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a decree that led to the closure of 1,043 private schools, 15 universities, 1,229 charitable foundations, 19 trade unions, and 35 medical institutions.⁸

The schools and universities in Türkiye that were closed after July 23, 2016, have been linked to the Hizmet. Such actions were dictated

by the premise of the decree designating the group of Gülen's followers as a terrorist organization. However, it was the failed coup attempt that catalyzed the Turkish leadership's systematic struggle with representatives of educational institutions associated with the Gülen movement, a campaign that continues to this day.

The Turkish Government's Struggle with the Hizmet Before the Establishment of the Maarif Foundation

The first schools of the Hizmet movement were closed long before the events of July 2016. In 1993, i.e. almost a year after the appearance of educational institutions in Uzbekistan, the public discourse in this country began to develop an opinion about the spread of extremist views in Gülen's institutions. This was in response to the rise of religious extremism in the neighboring Republic of Tajikistan during a period of civil unrest. In 1999, all Turkish schools in Uzbekistan were either completely closed or reclassified as general education schools. There were about 65 of them at that time.⁹

About 50 "Gülen" educational institutions have been opened in the Russian Federation since the early 1990s. They were primarily concentrated mainly in the North Caucasus and the Volga region. The process of closing these schools on the territory of Russia was initiated in 2001 after the Federal Service for Supervision of Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor) drew attention to them (Suleymanov, 2016, p. 80). Inspections of Turkish educational institutions were conducted in various regions, including Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Chuvashia, and other federal subjects, ultimately leading to the gradual closure of all "Gülen" educational institutions in Russia. This was prompted by a ruling of the Supreme Court of the Russian

⁸ Jones G., Gurses E. Turkey's Erdogan Shuts Schools, Charities in First State of Emergency Decree // Reuters. July 23, 2016. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-emergency-idUSKCN1030BC> (accessed: 13.10.2023).

⁹ Türkiye's Influence on Islam in the States of Central Asia // Islam in CIS. November 1, 2013. (In Russian). URL: <http://www.islamsng.com/sng/analytics/7367> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

Federation to ban the “Nurdjular” sect in the country. Although Hizmet was not officially recognized as an extremist organization, Russian law enforcement agencies considered it to be part of the Turkish religious sect (Suleymanov, 2016, p. 79).

In 2010, the process of closing the Turkish educational institution Başaran Koleji in Abkhazia began. This school had been established in 1995 following an agreement between the educational association “Chorum” (affiliated with Hizmet) and the Ministry of Education of the Republic. The applicants were subjected to multiple examinations, and those who were admitted to the college embarked on their studies in the 7th grade. Many graduates of the institution were given the opportunity to continue their education in universities in Türkiye, Russia, Poland, Italy and some other countries. Eventually, due to financial problems, the Abkhaz-Turkish College was transferred from private management to the control under the Ministry of Education of the Republic.¹⁰

In addition, even before the events of July 15, 2016, most of the Gülen educational institutions in Azerbaijan were closed. According to V.V. Ivanov, such a circumstance was related to the visit of Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Baku in 2013 (Ivanov, 2014, p. 61). In 2014, an international educational center in Azerbaijan, which included kindergartens, 11 lyceums, and Araz courses, was closed. Many representatives of Hizmet were expelled from the country as accomplices of the “sectarian movement.”¹¹

In the same year, there were reports of pressure being exerted on “Gülenists” in Somalia, Pakistan and Iraq.¹²

¹⁰ Turkish College Closes in Abkhazia // Vestnik Kavkaza. August 2, 2010. (In Russian). URL: <https://vestnikavkaza.ru/news/23408.html> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

¹¹ All Schools of Fethullah Gulen Have Been Closed in Azerbaijan // Haqqin.az. June 18, 2014. (In Russian). URL: <https://haqqin.az/news/24542> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

¹² Agayev Z., Sheikh Nor M., Hacaoglu S. Erdogan Seeks to Vanquish Opponent Gulen in Global

The process of closing “Gülen” educational institutions in Turkmenistan continued. In August 2014, Türkiye and Turkmenistan signed an agreement “On cooperation in the field of education,” which led to the closure of prestigious private Turkmen-Turkish schools in the country (Ivanov, 2014, p. 74).

A year before the events of July in Türkiye, the leadership of Tajikistan publicly announced the closure and mandatory transfer of educational institutions affiliated with the Hizmet to the state structures of the Republic. The Selale educational institutions managed by the organization were renamed “Schools for Gifted Children” accompanied by a significant overhaul in their educational structure.¹³

Turkish Maarif Foundation’s Fight Against the Hizmet After the Events of July 15, 2016

Despite numerous statements by Türkiye’s top officials about the need to abolish Gülen-affiliated educational structures around the world and hand them over to Maarif the global response to Ankara’s requests has been mixed. In certain nations, all Hizmet schools have indeed been successfully transitioned to the Maarif Foundation. In some countries, Gülen’s educational institutions have been reclassified as general schools. Finally, in a third group of countries, the Hizmet movement has managed to maintain its established presence.

From July 2016 to the present day, the process of reassigning Turkish educational institutions abroad has been carried out by Maarif. Representatives of the foundation were supposed to prevent Gülen schools from being called Turkish schools (Toguslu, 2017, p. 19).

Fight // Bloomberg. September 12, 2014. URL: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-09-11/erdogan-seeks-to-vanquish-opponent-gulen-in-global-fight> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

¹³ Tajikistan Greenlights Take Over of Gulen-run Schools // Anadolu Agency. August 8, 2015. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/tajikistan-greenlights-take-over-of-gulen-run-schools/18960> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

At the 14th G20 summit held in Japan in 2019, Turkish President Erdogan mentioned the need to fight the terrorist organization FETÖ (Hizmet movement) around the world, adding that the Maarif Foundation, which was established in 2016, was the main protective body against the activities of this movement.¹⁴

Representing the interests of the Republic of Türkiye, the State Education Foundation began to open branches in countries where the Hizmet movement controlled educational institutions. The organization of the Foundation's activities in a particular country began after the Turkish Government requested that Gülen educational institutions be closed or handed over to Maarif. In some cases, contacts with the leaders of the countries occurred after an official visit by a representative of the Turkish government or embassy, and even personally by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Chronologically, the first Gülen schools on the African continent were closed after the events of July 15, 2016. Turkish schools began to appear in the region in the late 1990s, but most of them were opened in the mid-2000s. In a relatively short period of time, the Hizmet managed to gain serious credibility among local elites, and the privately run schools became the largest educational institutions on the continent (Shinn, 2015, p. 56).

However, in 2016, the process of transferring Hizmet-organized schools in Somalia¹⁵ (Table 1) and Guinea¹⁶ (Table 2) to

the Maarif Foundation began. In 2017, the foundation's sphere of activity expanded across the African continent. At this phase, it initiated operations in countries including Tanzania (Table 1), Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Sierra Leone (Table 2), Tunisia, Republic of the Congo, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Table 3).¹⁷

Since 2018, Maarif has sought to further expand its ties in Africa and dismantle institutions that have relationships with the Hizmet. During this period, branches of the organization were inaugurated in nations such as Burundi, Djibouti, Madagascar, South Africa, Ethiopia (see Table 1), Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire (see Table 2), Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Chad (see Table 3).¹⁸

Between 2016 and 2023, the Maarif Foundation has successfully reassigned Hizmet schools and inaugurated new educational institutions across a total of 25 countries on the African continent. According to the representatives of the Broken Chalk Platform educational project, the success of Maarif Foundation in Africa can be explained by the fact that the Republic of Türkiye pursues a hard power policy in the countries of the region, exerting pressure on different spheres of the economy of a particular state.¹⁹ This is confirmed in the analysis of Türkiye's economic relations with Sub-Saharan Africa, which is carried out by researchers E. Dal and S. Dipama (Dal & Dipama, 2019, pp. 245—246, 249).

¹⁴ Kaplan E. Japan: Erdogan Slams FETO-linked Schools, Organizations // Anadolu Agency. June 30, 2019. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/japan-erdogan-slams-feto-linked-schools-organizations/1519540> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

¹⁵ Hizmet educational institutions were closed in 2016 and handed over to Maarif Foundation. See: Maarif // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2017. P. 11. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164358323125f8.pdf> (accessed: 28.10.2023).

¹⁶ After the Turkish President's visit, schools with over 900 students were handed over to the foundation. See: Maarif // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2017. P. 11. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164358323125f8.pdf> (accessed: 28.10.2023).

¹⁷ Beşinci Yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. P. 148, 165, 166, 176, 178, 180, 188, 190, 194, 197, 198. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

¹⁸ Beşinci Yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. P. 112, 133, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144, 150, 152, 160, 174. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

¹⁹ Baldacchino K. Turkey's Hard Power Turn: Handing Hizmet Schools to the Turkey Maarif Foundation // Brokenchalk. URL: <https://brokenchalk.org/turkeys-hard-power-turn-handing-hizmet-schools-to-the-turkey-maarif-foundation/> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

Table 1

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in Eastern and Southern Africa

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Burundi	3	–	Bujumbura	–	Secondary school Elementary school Kindergarten	–
Djibouti	2	–	Djibouti	–	Kindergarten Elementary school	–
Ethiopia	5	–	Addis Ababa	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Secondary school Educational center	–
Kenya	–	1	–	Nairobi	–	College “Isık”
Madagascar	4	–	Antananarivo	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Secondary school	–
Malawi	–	1	–	Lilongwe	–	Bedir High School
Mozambique	–	3	–	Maputo, Matola	–	2 elementary schools 1 high school
Rwanda	–	1	–	Kigali	–	Children’s Academy
Somalia	7	–	Banaadir, Hargeisa	–	3 lyceums 2 secondary schools 1 kindergarten 1 elementary school	–
South Africa	3	14	Johannesburg	Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria	Lyceums	Organizations (Horizon, Fountain Educational Trust) Primary, secondary, tertiary schools Al-Azhar Institute, etc.
Tanzania	11	–	Zanzibar City, Arusha, Dar es Salaam	–	2 lyceums 3 elementary schools 3 secondary schools 3 kindergartens	–
Zambia	–	1	–	Lusaka	–	Bedir High School
Uganda	–	3	–	Kampala	–	Galaxy Elementary and High Schools

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılda Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

Table 2

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in Western Africa

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Burkina Faso	–	1	–	Ouagadougou	–	College “Horizon”
The Gambia	4	–	Banjul	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Middle school	–
Ghana	2	–	Accra	–	Kindergarten Elementary school	–
Guinea	10	–	Conakry	–	Lyceum for girls and boys 3 kindergartens 3 elementary schools 2 secondary schools	–
Côte d’Ivoire	4	–	Abidjan	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Secondary school	–
Liberia	–	1	–	Monrovia	–	Libero-Turkish school
Mauritania	9	–	Nouakchott, Nouadhibou	–	3 lyceums 3 high schools 3 preparatory departments	–
Mali	21	–	Bamako	–	3 lyceums for boys 2 lyceums for girls 8 secondary schools 4 kindergartens 4 elementary schools	–
Niger	9	–	Niamey	–	Friendship schools French and Arabic language lyceums 2 secondary schools Elementary schools 1 kindergarten	–
Nigeria	–	5	–	Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna, Kano, Yobe	–	“Surat” educational colleges and university
Senegal	13	–	Dakar, Saint-Louis, M’Bour	–	3 lyceums 3 secondary schools 4 elementary schools 3 kindergartens	–
Sierra Leone	2	–	Freetown	–	Kindergarten Elementary school	–
Togo	–	1	–	Lomé	–	International school

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

Table 3

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in Central and North Africa

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Angola	–	1	–	Luanda	–	College
Cameroon	14	–	Douala, Yaoundé, Ngaoundéré	–	Lyceums Kindergartens Elementary schools Secondary schools	–
Central African Republic	–	1	–	Bangui	–	School
Chad	6	–	N'Djamena	–	Boys' lyceum Boys' secondary school Girls' lyceum Girls' secondary school Kindergarten Elementary school	–
Democratic Republic of the Congo	4	–	Kinshasa	–	College Kindergarten Elementary school Middle school	–
Equatorial Guinea	4	–	Malabo	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Middle school	–
Gabon	4	–	Libreville	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Middle school	–
Republic of the Congo	4	–	Brazzaville	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Middle school	–
Sudan	6	–	Khartoum, Nyala	–	2 lyceums for girls 1 lyceum for boys 2 preparatory courses for girls and boys Kindergarten	–
Tunisia	4	–	Tunis	–	Lyceum Kindergarten Elementary school Middle school	–

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

In other parts of the world, Maarif faces certain difficulties. In fact, the leaders of several Asian states (Table 4, 6) have refused to transfer the rights of Hizmet educational institutions to the Turkish state foundation. At the same time, some countries have initiated procedures to close them down. In Mongolia, the activities of the leaders of the Hizmet education institutions have caused a crisis in the relations between Ulaanbaatar and Ankara. The country's leadership accused the Turkish side of kidnapping a shareholder of one of the "Gülen" schools, which was considered an attack on state sovereignty. After the crisis was resolved, the Mongolian government agreed to close the private schools.²⁰ However, content analysis of the media products of Turkish-Mongolian schools suggests that some may remain open to date.²¹ Hizmet schools in Cambodia have been transferred to the Ministry of Education. Despite attempts to entrench Maarif in the country, official Phnom Penh has refused to hand over the educational institutions to the foundation's management.²²

Among the South Asian countries, Pakistan stands out as the nation where the Maarif Foundation has established a strong presence. In Pakistan, there are currently 83 educational institutions under the control of the Maarif Foundation, and the Gülen movement is legally banned in the country.²³

In February 2018, Türkiye signed a memorandum of understanding with the Afghan leadership outlining the procedures for the transfer of Gülen schools to the Maarif

Foundation.²⁴ Over the years, the Afghan Ministry of Education has handed over approximately 16 educational institutions affiliated with Hizmet to the Turkish side.²⁵ Currently there are 49 schools under the Foundation's control in Afghanistan.²⁶

The situation is slightly different in Central Asian countries (Table 5), where there were about 75 private Turkish educational institutions in the early 2000s (Kudayarov, 2021, p. 49). The first and so far the only branch of the Maarif Foundation in Central Asia appeared in Kyrgyzstan. After the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the Turkish government issued what could be described as an ultimatum to Kyrgyz President A. Atambayev, demanding the closure of Gülen-affiliated schools in the Republic. In response, President Atambayev stated that Kyrgyzstan had no intention of closing private Turkish schools but would instead exercise control over them.²⁷

Subsequently, the tensions between Ankara and Bishkek decreased. The Kyrgyz government and Maarif representatives negotiated the establishment of a legal entity in the Republic and the emergence of a branch of the Foundation. In 2020, Maarif organized 4 educational institutions in the country. Nevertheless, the Gülen-affiliated organization "Sapat," which maintains control over as many as 15 educational institutions in the Republic, continues to have a significant presence in Kyrgyzstan.²⁸

²⁰ Mongolians Close Schools for Erdogan // Rambler. September 5, 2018. (In Russian). URL: <https://news.rambler.ru/middleeast/40733785-mongoly-zakryvayut-shkoly-dlya-erdogana/> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

²¹ Ulaanbaatar International School. URL: <http://elite.edu.mn/> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

²² Turetken M. FETO-linked Schools Closed in Cambodia // Anadolu Agency. December 25, 2018. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/feto-linked-schools-closed-in-cambodia/1348603> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

²³ Beşinci Yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. P. 182—184. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

²⁴ Afgan-Türk Maarif Okulları. URL: <https://www.afganturkmaarif.org/Home/tr> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

²⁵ Beşinci Yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. P. 17. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/16435836e8ffcf.pdf> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

²⁶ Ibid. P. 114—116.

²⁷ Atambayev on the Statement of the Turkish Foreign Minister: Don't Scare Us, We Are Scared // Sputnik Tajikistan. August 1, 2016. (In Russian). URL: <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/20160801/1020395309.html?ysclid=lf10qe0pez575807000> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

²⁸ Aliev N. Kırgızistan'da FETÖ Tehlikesi Devam Ediyor // Anadolu Ajansı. 12.07.2019. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/kirgizistanda-feto-tehlikesi-devam-ediyor/1529974> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

Table 4

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in South Asia

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Afghanistan	49	–	Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif	–	Lyceums for girls and boys Kindergartens Primary schools Secondary schools	–
Bangladesh	–	9	–	Dhaka, Uttara, Chittagong	–	Lyceums for girls and boys Education centres Secondary schools Kindergarten
India	–	9	–	Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata	–	The educational institutions of the Panturk school's organization
Maldives	–	1	–	Malé	–	Lale Youth School
Pakistan	83	–	Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, Karachi, Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Khairpur	–	Preparatory programs Primary schools Secondary schools	–
Sri Lanka	–	1	–	Colombo	–	International school

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

It is worth mentioning that new Turkish lyceums may be opened in Uzbekistan in the coming years. In February 2022, representatives of the Maarif Foundation held negotiations with the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting the possibilities of bilateral cooperation in the field of education were considered.²⁹ Until now, private Turkish

educational institutions operating in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan remain inaccessible to the educational foundation.

In the South Caucasus, Maarif's activities started with the opening of its first school in Tbilisi in 2017. During his visit to Georgia in 2019, Turkish Foreign Minister M. Çavuşoğlu visited this educational institution and assured

²⁹ Uzbekistan, Turkey Consider Strengthening Cooperation in Education // Kun.Uz. February 14, 2022. URL: [https://kun.uz/en/news/2022/02/14/uzbekistan-](https://kun.uz/en/news/2022/02/14/uzbekistan-turkey-consider-strengthening-cooperation-in-education#)

[turkey-consider-strengthening-cooperation-in-education#](https://kun.uz/en/news/2022/02/14/uzbekistan-turkey-consider-strengthening-cooperation-in-education#) (accessed: 10.10.2023).

that Maarif Foundation will organize training in even more educational establishments in the country.³⁰ Despite the activities of the Turkish foundation, 15 institutions continue to operate in the Republic under the auspices of “Educational and Training Institutions of Georgia” owned by “Chagla LLC.” This organization is indirectly linked to Hizmet. Since 1995, the International Black Sea University has been functioning in Georgia (Aleksanyan, 2016, p. 75). After the emergence of the Turkish foundation in Georgia and the expansion of ties with the Turkish leadership, the “Gülen” schools gradually began to close.³¹ However, the confrontation between Maarif and Hizmet in this country continues to this day.

The Gülen movement was practically abolished on the territory of Azerbaijan even before the events in Türkiye in July 2016. However, the last functioning educational institution in the country was the Caucasus University, which was closed in 2017 at the numerous requests of Turkish organizations.³² In February 2021 Maarif President Birol Akgün met with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Ceyhan Aziz oğlu Bayramov. During the bilateral talks, it was decided to open a branch of the Foundation and a specialized school in Baku.³³

In the Middle East, Maarif branches are currently open in Iraq and Jordan. The Gülen movement in Iraq was active until 2018. Private schools in the city of Erbil were taken over by the Maarif Foundation. By 2023, there were 15 Turkish schools operating in Iraq.³⁴ There was no broad representation of the “Gülen” movement in Jordan. Prior to Maarif, there was only one Jordanian-Turkish center in the country. In 2019, representatives of the foundation organized a student hostel in the capital city of Amman.³⁵

Maarif schools have begun to appear in countries in South and North America, as well as Australia. The closure of Gülen schools in Venezuela began after the visit of the Turkish President in December 2018. There are currently two Maarif International Schools operating in the country.³⁶ In Bogota, the capital of Colombia, two universities were founded in 2023.³⁷ A branch of the Foundation opened in 2022 after a delegation from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited the country. Four educational institutions were opened in the American state of New Jersey. An international school operates in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, and a kindergarten and elementary school were established in Sydney, Australia (Table 7).

³⁰ Kachkachishvili D., Rehimov R. Turkey’s Maarif Foundation to Open Schools in Georgia // *Anadolu Ajansı*. December 23, 2019. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/education/turkey-s-maarif-foundation-to-open-schools-in-georgia/1681483> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

³¹ Georgia Cracks Down on Another Gulen-linked Private School // *Democracy and Freedom Watch*. August 25, 2020. URL: <https://dfwatch.net/georgia-cracks-down-on-another-gulen-linked-private-school-54202> (accessed: 06.07.2023).

³² Caucasus University Finally Closed // *Haqqin.az*. January 18, 2017. (In Russian). URL: <https://haqqin.az/news/90288> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

³³ Turkey’s Maarif Foundation, Azerbaijan Sign Cooperation Protocol // *Daily Sabah*. May 21, 2021. URL: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkeys-maarif-foundation-azerbaijan-sign-cooperation-protocol> (accessed: 10.10.2023).

³⁴ Beşinci Yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // *Türkiye Maarif Vakfı*. 2022. P. 158. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/16435836e8ffcf.pdf> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

³⁵ Turkish Maarif Foundation Jordan. URL: <https://maarifjordan.com/> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

³⁶ Venezuela Maarif Okullarında Mezuniyet Heyecanı // *Türkiye Maarif Foundation*. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/news/venezuela-maarif-okullarinda-mezuniyet-heyecani> (accessed: 13.10.2023).

³⁷ Bernat E. J. Visita del Canciller Turco a Colombia Culmina con la Apertura Oficial de la Sede de la Fundación Maarif // *Anadolu Agency*. May 14, 2022. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/es/cultura/visita-del-canciller-turco-a-colombia-culmina-con-la-apertura-oficial-de-la-sede-de-la-fundacion-c3%B3n-maarif/2574826> (accessed: 13.10.2023).

Table 5

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in the Middle East, South Caucasus and Central Asia

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Azerbaijan	1	–	Baku	–	International School	–
Georgia	4	15	Tbilisi, Batumi	Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi, Batumi	Lyceum Kindergarten Primary school Secondary school	Schools International Black Sea University Higher schools Primary schools
Jordan	1	–	Amman	–	Dormitory	–
Iraq	15	–	Erbil, Kirkuk	–	Lyceums Kindergartens Primary schools Secondary schools	–
Kazakhstan	–	31	–	Almaty, Esik, Kyzylorda, Astana, Aktobe, Atyrau, Shymkent, Kokshetau, Taraz, Jezkazgan, etc.	–	Universities, high schools, lyceums for girls and boys have been organized under the leadership of the Katev International Foundation
Kyrgyzstan	4	27	Bishkek	Bishkek, Jalal-Abad, Karakol, Kadamjay, Kyzyl-Kyya, Tokmok, Osh, Talas	Kindergarten Preparatory school Primary school Secondary school	Sapat organization High schools Lyceums for boys and for girls, etc.
Saudi Arabia	–	2	–	Riyadh, Jeddah	–	International schools
United Arab Emirates	–	5	–	Abu Dhabi	–	Concept schools International Polaris schools Academies and colleges
Yemen	–	3	–	Sanaa	–	International schools

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

Table 6

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in East and South-East Asia

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Japan	–	4	–	Osaka, Sendai, Nagoya, Okayama	–	Baharu Education Corporation
Indonesia	–	8	–	Depok, Semarang, Bandung, South Tangerang, etc.	–	Educational institutions of the PASAID organization
Malaysia	–	2	–	Kuala Lumpur	–	Schools
Mongolia	–	5	–	Ulaanbaatar, Erdenet, Darkhan, etc.	–	Lyceums Colleges
Myanmar	–	1	–	Yangon	–	Educational centre
Philippines	–	3	–	Manila	–	Language academy Tolerance school Educational centre
South Korea	–	1	–	Seoul	–	International school
Thailand	–	3	–	Bangkok	–	Marmara educational company Colleges Bilingual school
Vietnam	–	1	–	Hanoi	–	International school

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

Table 7

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in South America, North America and Oceania

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Argentina	–	1	–	Buenos Aires	–	College
Australia	2	–	Sydney	–	Kindergarten Primary school	–
Bolivia	–	2	–	La Paz, Santa Cruz de la Sierra	–	Universities of the “NUR”
Brazil	–	1	–	Brasília	–	College
Canada	1	–	Ottawa	–	International school	–
Colombia	2	–	Bogotá	–	Secondary schools	–
Mexico	–	1	–	Mexico City	–	College
New Zealand	–	1	–	Wellington	–	Turkish school of the Pearl of the Islands Foundation Organization
Papua New Guinea	–	1	–	Port Moresby	–	College “Paradise”

End of the Table 7

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
USA	4	167	New Jersey	In different cities and towns	Lyceum Kindergarten Primary school Secondary school	All educational levels
Venezuela	6	–	Caracas	–	Colleges	–

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

Table 8

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in Southern and Eastern Europe

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Albania	6	–	Tirana, Elbasan	–	University Lyceum Kindergarten Primary school Secondary schools	–
Belarus	1	–	Minsk	–	Turkish language courses	–
Bulgaria	–	4	–	Sofia, Plovdiv	–	Friendship schools
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	6	Sarajevo	Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica	Lyceum Kindergarten Primary school Secondary school	International schools Colleges
Hungary	2	–	Budapest	–	Lyceum Preparatory school	–
Greece	1	–	Athens	–	Luxury language centre	–
Cyprus	–	2	–	Nicosia	–	College University
Poland	–	3	–	Warsaw, Łódź	–	Primary schools Secondary school
Romania	7	11	Bucharest	Bucharest, Constanța, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Ploiești, etc.	Lyceums Primary schools Secondary schools	Lumina Educational Institutions organization schools, educational centres, universities
North Macedonia	4	8	Skopje, Tetovo	Skopje, Struga, Strumica, Tetovo	Lyceum Kindergarten Primary school Secondary school	International University Higher schools
Serbia (Kosovo)	8	3	Pristina, Prizren, Gjilan	Pristina, Prizren	2 lyceums Kindergarten 2 primary school 2 secondary school Education centre	Education centre College International school

End of the Table 8

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Slovakia	–	1	–	Bratislava	–	Educational centre
Croatia	–	1	–	Zagreb	–	Educational centre
Montenegro	–	1	–	Podgorica	–	University
Czech Republic	–	1	–	Prague	–	Educational centre

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

As of 2018, Maarif is starting to make its way in Europe in a big way. Only a few educational institutions have been closed during the Foundation's activity, either due to operational problems or due to the refusal of licensing.³⁸ So far, the Turkish state foundation has organized educational institutions of different levels in the following European countries: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, North Macedonia, Serbia (Kosovo), Greece, Romania (Table 8), Germany, Austria, France and Belgium (Table 9). Thus, in the approximately six and a half years since its establishment, the Maarif Foundation has made significant progress in its mission by successfully opening educational institutions in 49 countries around the world. This demonstrates the Foundation's commitment to expanding its presence and promoting Turkish educational and cultural ties on an international scale.

Challenges faced by Maarif Foundation

Despite the rather rapid geographical expansion of Maarif's activities on different

³⁸ Turkey at a Glance European Lawmakers Urge PACE to Examine Albania's Closure of Gülen-linked School // Turkish Minute. October 21, 2022. URL: <https://www.turkishminute.com/2022/10/21/to-examine-albanias-closure-of-gulen-linked-school/> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

continents, we cannot speak of the complete elimination of the Hizmet schools. For example, in 2016, there were about 160 private Turkish schools associated with the Gülen movement in the United States,³⁹ while Maarif controls the activities of only 4 institutions in the state of New Jersey (see Table 7).

Private schools also continue to operate in many European countries. For example, in Germany, where a large Turkish diaspora live. Maarif has opened a center in Cologne, while 50 private Turkish schools operate in other parts of the country (see Table 9). In Belgium, Maarif operates two educational centers, while the Gülen-affiliated Lucerna Group Colleges have elementary schools, kindergartens, and high schools in cities such as Antwerp, Genk, and Gen.⁴⁰

³⁹ Strum B. Gülen Movement's Charter Schools May Be Caught Up in Turkey — U.S. Standoff // The Wall Street Journal. July 19, 2016. URL: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gulen-movements-charter-schools-may-be-caught-up-in-turkey-u-s-standoff-1468967536> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

⁴⁰ Wie is toch die Fethullah Gülen? door Ides Nicaise (reto 1972) // Alumni. May 9, 2017. URL: <https://www.alumnizevenkerken.be/speakers-corner/193/wie-is-toch-die-fethullah-gulen-door-ides-nicaise-reto-1972> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

Table 9

Maarif and Hizmet Educational Institutions in in Western and Northern Europe

Country	Number of schools		Cities		Types of schools	
	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet	Maarif	Hizmet
Austria	1	–	Vienna	–	Educational centre	–
Belgium	2	6	Brussels	Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Genk	Educational centres	Lucerne group colleges and high schools Boarding schools
United Kingdom	–	3	–	Bradford, London	–	Colleges
Germany	1	52—55	Cologne	Berlin, Mannheim, Munich, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Hanover, Freiberg, Nuremberg, Kreuzberg, etc.	Educational centre	All levels of education from kindergarten to university
Latvia	–	1	–	Riga	–	International school
Norway	–	1	–	Oslo	–	OKUF Educational and Cultural centre
France	1	2	Strasbourg	Paris	Educational centre	School Educational centre
Switzerland	–	6	–	Basel, Zürich, Olten, etc.	–	International schools
Sweden	–	1	–	Stockholm	–	Dialogue educational centre

Source: compiled by the author on official communications from the Turkish State Educational Foundation Maarif: Beşinci yılında Türkiye Maarif Vakfı // Türkiye Maarif Vakfı. 2022. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/uploads/editions/files/164367ea1867df.pdf> (accessed: 13.10.2023) and according to data from online publications: Education // Gülen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gülen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List // Slideshare. January 25, 2016. URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/GulenCemaat/gulen-schools-worldwide-list> (accessed: 26.10.2023); Gülen Schools Worldwide List updated // Gülen Schools Worldwide. October 1, 2018. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 26.10.2023).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Foundation opened schools in Sarajevo, but in other cities such as Tuzla and Zenica there are still about 6 Hizmet-affiliated educational institutions.⁴¹ In France, Maarif organized a school in Strasbourg and two “Gülen” educational institutions continue to operate in

⁴¹ Nurduhan A., Adilovic Z. Bosna Hersek'te FETÖ Bağlantılı Okullar Vergi Borcu İçinde Yüzüyor // Anadolu Ajansı. February 13, 2022. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/bosna-hersekte-feto-baglantili-okullar-vergi-borcu-icinde-yuzuyor/2501561> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

Paris.⁴² In Georgia, the International Black Sea University continues to operate, and many of the schools where Gülen-linked figures work have not yet been handed over to the Maarif. In Northern Macedonia, 4 educational institutions have been organized by the Foundation, but Hizmet maintains its position in 8 higher schools in different parts of the country.⁴³

⁴² Le Bien Être Devos Enfants Est Notre Priorite // Educative. URL: <https://educative.com/> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

⁴³ Fazlagikj A., Aliju D. FETÖ'nün Kuzey Makedonya'daki Yapısı ve İşleyişi Meclisin Gündeminde // Anadolu Ajansı. 30.03.2021. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/>

Of all the 49 countries where Maarif schools are currently represented, only 25 countries in Africa, as well as Pakistan, Venezuela and several others, have closed Hizmet educational institutions since 2016. This shows that the struggle for educational institutions that Maarif is waging against the Gülen movement is not over.

It is extremely difficult to determine the exact number of Hizmet-affiliated schools and the countries where they operate. By comparing data from the annual reports of the Turkish Maarif Foundation and content analysis of some Gülen-related websites,⁴⁴ it is possible to conclude that Hizmet schools currently exist in 60 countries around the world.

Based on a large number of statements by officials of the Republic of Türkiye,⁴⁵ the fight against private schools of the Gülen movement remains an important area of the country's foreign policy activities. The reassignment of private schools to a state body should solve the problems related to the diplomatic crisis in Türkiye's relations with "host" countries, as the existence of Gülen schools contributes to their growth. In this context, it is worth mentioning the tensions in Ankara's relations with some states related to the "Gülen" movement. For

tr/dunya/feetonun-kuzey-makedonyadaki-yapisi-ve-isleyisi-meclisin-gundeminde/2192531 (accessed: 12.10.2023).

⁴⁴ See: Gulen Movement. URL: <https://www.gulenmovement.com/> (accessed: 13.10.2023); What Is the Gulen Movement? // Hizmet Movement (Gülen Movement). URL: <https://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/what-is-gulen-movement.html> (accessed: 13.10.2023); Gulen Schools Worldwide. URL: <https://gulenschoolsworldwide.blogspot.com/2015/01/gulen-schools-worldwide-list.html> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

⁴⁵ See: Gunerigok S. Türkiye Expects US's Cooperation in Fight Against PKK/YPG, FETO: Erdogan // Anadolu Agency. September 19, 2022. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/turkiye-expects-uss-cooperation-in-fight-against-pkk-ypg-feto-erdogan/2688361> (accessed: 09.07.2023); We Will Continue Our Struggle Until the Last FETO Member Is Brought to Justice // Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. July 15, 2020. URL: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/120638/-we-will-continue-our-struggle-until-the-last-feto-member-is-brought-to-justice-> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

example, there was a brief crisis in Türkiye's relations with Kyrgyzstan,⁴⁶ Mongolia,⁴⁷ Indonesia⁴⁸ and so on.

Maarif's activities are certainly important for the further strengthening of Türkiye's influence in the "host" countries. After the tensions between the Republic's leadership and the Hizmet organization began, Ankara could not properly control both education and the conventional ideological component of the educational process in many Turkish educational institutions. Despite various activities and efforts by organizations such as TİKA, Yunus Emre Institutes, and other Turkish institutions to engage with countries where Gülen-affiliated schools have been established, the Hizmet movement has proven resilient in some regions. This underscores the significance of an educational foundation like Maarif for Türkiye.

At the same time, the transition of Gülen-affiliated schools to Maarif's control in various host countries can pose a number of challenges for Ankara. One significant challenge is the perception of these schools as "elitist" institutions, often catering to the children of local elites in their respective regions. This is particularly prevalent in African and some Asian states. As these schools shift under Maarif's management, the educational landscape is gradually evolving. Institutions are being converted to Turkish educational standards. At the same time, Türkiye is currently ranked 54th in the world according to the education

⁴⁶ Kyrgyzstan Will Not Close "Gülen" Schools // RIA Novosti. December 1, 2016. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20161201/1482581293.html?ysclid=lnrnwsbnz82439913> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

⁴⁷ Sosorbaram M. Ankara Attacks "Turkish" Schools in Mongolia // ARD. February 7, 2018. (In Russian). URL: <https://asiarussia.ru/news/18929/?ysclid=lnro537j4e721778783> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

⁴⁸ Indonesian Authorities Refused Türkiye's Request to Close Gulen Schools // TASS. August 3, 2016. (In Russian). URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/3505814?ysclid=lnrn65394d216960833> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

index,⁴⁹ which is certainly higher than many African and Asian countries, but still lower than a number of countries where the Gülen movement is still functioning. This could reduce the credibility of the Maarif Foundation in the “host” countries if the level of education in the schools is perceived to be significantly lower than it was when Hizmet was active.

Conclusion

Established in June 2016, the Turkish State Education Foundation Maarif was designed to address issues related to the functioning of educational institutions that had direct or indirect links to the banned Hizmet movement in the country, which is referred to in official Turkish literature under the term “FETÖ.” After the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, most Gülen-affiliated educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities) in Türkiye were closed. The Republic’s leadership approached the leaders of the countries of the world where Hizmet schools were located with requests (and sometimes demands) to close private Turkish educational institutions or hand them over to the Foundation. Over the course of more than 6 years, with the broad support of the country’s leadership and the Turkish embassies and consulates in the “host” countries, the Foundation succeeded in closing or transferring many of the educational institutions under its control. As of September 2023, the state organization has opened or “restarted” educational institutions in 49 countries around the world.

In a number of countries (Pakistan, Iraq, Venezuela and many African countries), the process of requalification of private Turkish

schools has been accelerated and prioritized. In some African countries (Ethiopia, South Africa), the transfer of educational institutions was delayed and completed by 2021—2022. In most cases, Maarif has had no problems in opening branches and establishing schools. To date, the foundation has organized training in 25 states on the African continent. In most of them, Hizmet training institutions have been closed.

The situation is different in other parts of the world. For example, Türkiye’s demands to close Hizmet schools initially failed to resonate in Mongolia and Cambodia, leading to a brief diplomatic crisis between Ankara and the “host” countries. Kyrgyzstan refused to close Gülen educational institutions, viewing the Turkish recommendations as interference in the state’s internal affairs. As a result, the leadership of this Central Asian country decided to establish a Maarif branch. Nevertheless, the Gülen movement still has strong ties and a social base in the country. It is still unable to gain a foothold in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, where Hizmet educational institutions used to operate. In Azerbaijan, all Hizmet educational structures have been liquidated in favor of the state, and Turkish soft power tools continue to struggle in Georgia.

The deterioration of Türkiye’s relations with some “host” countries shows how serious the functioning of Maarif and its confrontation with Hizmet is for Ankara.

The confrontation between the two instruments of Turkish influence in Europe and the United States is interesting. It is known that despite the functioning of Maarif in 12 European countries, Hizmet has quite serious positions in the same countries. The example of the USA is also indicative, where the Foundation has established only 4 schools (and all of them in one state — New Jersey), while “Gülenists” control up to 170 educational institutions in different states of the country.

⁴⁹ Calculated by the author on the basis of Human Development Reports (HDR) data. See: Human Development Reports // UNDP. URL: <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads> (accessed: 12.10.2023).

The elimination of all private Gülen schools in Türkiye, as well as the TUSKON organization, which financed a large number of educational institutions, has caused enormous damage to the Hizmet movement. Nevertheless, the continued presence and influence of Hizmet in more than a quarter of the world's countries demonstrates that the Maarif Foundation remains relevant to the Republic of Türkiye and that the Gülen movement will not be defeated in the short term.

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