

Erdogan's Grand Plan For Turkish Schools In France

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is never happy unless he is promoting his own neo-Ottomanism, has come up with a new way to maintain Turkey's hold over Turkish citizens living abroad. He wants to establish a series of Turkish schools in France that will follow the curriculum of schools in Turkey..These schools will be open to Turkish nationals living in France.

The story, which has received no attention in the West, [appeared in Le Figaro here](#)

“Erdogan plans to open Turkish high schools in France

“A Turkish delegation will visit France on 20 and 21 May. Turkish school curricula, including those teaching “good jihad,” have already elicited many reactions. President Erdogan makes no secret of the fact that he has views on

French schools. In an article published on Friday, May 3, *Le Point* revealed that the Head of State plans to open Turkish schools in France. During the month of April, the heads of French high schools in Turkey received several “moderately courteous” visits from Ankara officials.

“These representatives of the government are said to have come to “challenge the legal foundations of the schooling of Turkish children in these schools,” *Le Point* adds. The French high schools in Turkey not only welcome the children of expatriates from France, but also those of the leaders of the AKP, Erdogan’s party defined as “Islam-nationalist” and conservative. Recep Tayyip Erdogan has asked a Turkish delegation to visit France on May 20 and 21 to observe international high schools. The objective would then be to require the creation of Turkish high schools on French territory. “French people are under pressure in Istanbul and Ankara from the government of Erdogan, which is seeking to establish Turkish schools in France, and the Quai d’Orsay is not moving,” worries someone deeply involved in the issue, cited by *Le Point*. The decision to open such institutions will probably be taken not only by the Turkish President, but also by the Ministries of National Education and Foreign Affairs. Contacted by *Le Figaro*, they have not yet provided the expected details on the subject. “French people are under pressure[...] and the Quai d’Orsay is doing nothing.”

The French Minister of National Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, has not hesitated to carry the flag in his fight for the secular nature of education, even if it meant attracting the wrath of religious institutions such as the Muslim school in Échirolles, which he intended to close because of its “Salafist inspiration”. The opening of these Turkish schools in France could well be reflected in this policy, at least if the content of the courses is modelled on that in force in Turkey. The Islamisation of Erdogan’s

programs in his country has already raised concerns in the French media in recent years. As early as February 2012, the President of Turkey declared that he wanted to “form a pious generation”. A statement followed about the creation of three optional courses in religion in high schools (Mohammed’s life, reading the Koran, basic religious knowledge) in the summer of 2012. These subjects, focused on the Sunni version of Islam, have now become mandatory in many institutions due to the lack of other options.

“Subsequently, the Turkish government gradually replaced the predominance of “classical” [i.e., secular] public high schools with Imam-Hatip high schools, intended for the training of imams and preachers. Students who failed the public high school entrance exams are now automatically enrolled in these religious schools (although not all of them become imams upon graduation). There were 1408 such high schools in Turkey in 2017, with 517,000 students. With a new program broadcast in July 2017, the government has introduced the concept of “jihad” in most Turkish schools. “Jihad exists in our religion and it is the duty of the Ministry of Education to ensure that this concept is taught in a fair and appropriate manner,” said Turkish Minister of National Education Ismet Yilmaz. He made it clear that it was not a question of holy war but of “good jihad,” exalting “the love of the country.” This program also marked the disappearance of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution; the specious reason given was that the concept of evolution went beyond the “level of students’ understanding.” A large part of the program that had formerly been devoted to Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Turkey, was replaced by the study of the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016.

What does all this mean? Erdogan not only has neo-Ottoman fantasies about leading the Islamic world, but he is also trying to project his power over the minds of Turks living in the West, beginning with those in Germany (where his AKP

actively canvassed for votes in the last election), and France. If the French in Turkey have been allowed to have their own schools, he wants Turkish schools to be allowed in France. Amusingly, it turns out that some members of his party, the AKP, send their own children to French schools in Turkey; they want only the best for their children, whatever the Turkish masses must endure.

The French Minister of Education is wary of Erdogan's intentions. Under Erdogan's rule, a very large number of imam-hatip schools, theological academies that also teach some secular subjects,, have been built; there are now more than a half-million students in these imam-hatip schools. And even in the regular schools, significant changes have been made, signifying greater islamization. One important change is that evolution is no longer being taught in most Turkish schools, as it clashes with Muslim religious doctrine. A second change will now reduce to a bare minimum the attention given to the life and achievements of Kemal Ataturk, the father of Turkish secularism. Instead, students will study the failed coup attempt of 2016, undoubtedly learning all about the heroism of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who foiled the sinister coup attempt hatched by an alliance of Gulenists and Kemalist secularists.

The French government is unlikely to want to give its imprimatur to schools where evolution cannot be taught, and who knows what else is being left out that contradicts orthodox Islam? And hero-worship of the despotic Erdogan, on the other hand, should not be part of the curriculum. And what about Islamic doctrine in these schools? The Turks are claiming these schools in France would teach only "good Jihad." But that does not tell us very much. What constitutes "good Jihad"? Erdogan has spoken enthusiastically of creating a pan-Islamic army that would be able to destroy Israel – is that an example of "good Jihad"? Is building even more mosques, and madrassas, all over Europe, what Erdogan thinks of as "good Jihad"? French authorities need more information

as to what the Turks plan to teach in these schools, and what they will refuse to teach, and above all, need to hear a good deal more about "good Jihad."

If these Turkish schools are allowed in France, how many students will they attract? Not the children of Turkish secularists, who may be living in France precisely because they found the re-islamization of Turkish society antipathetic. Other Turks, simple souls who moved to France because they found employment, may also want only the best schooling for their children, and will therefore choose to keep them in French schools,, just the way that AKP officials in Turkey choose to do.

Here's my prediction: the French Minister of Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, will demand to see a sample curriculum for these Turkish schools before he can approve them. Erdogan will bristle, but have his officials comply. Blanquer will make an issue of the evident refusal to teach evolution. "In France, evolution must be taught. There are no exceptions, none." He will also want a comprehensive list of what is considered to be part of the "good Jihad" that the Turkish educational authorities plan on teaching. Would teaching "good Jihad" include, inter alia, any of the following: violent Jihad against non-Muslims, especially those in Israel, severe punishments for anyone leaving Islam, aggressive campaigns of Da'wa, the mandatory imposition of cover for all female students, any Islamic teachings that suggest the inequality of the sexes, any teaching of homophobia. That's a start, in making sure that this "good Jihad" really remains "good."

My further prediction: like Erdogan's grand plan for a pan-Islamic army to crush Israel, a plan which got nowhere because none of the Arabs could stomach the idea of Turks presuming to lead such a force, these Turkish high schools will not be able to meet the minimum curricular standards of the French Minister of Education. But even if, somehow, they did manage to do so, very few Turkish parents in France, faced with a

choice between superior French schools, and the Turkish schools that under Erdogan's islamizing influence have become even worse than before, would choose the latter. Like his pan-Islamic army, Erdogan's Turkish-schools-in-France will be, if not dead, at least moribund upon arrival.

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