

PRI5054 - The History and Politics of Modern Turkey

Dr. Karabekir Akkoyunlu
karabekir.akkoyunlu@uni-graz.at

IRI – USP 2018

This course introduces the main themes for, and provides a critical assessment of, Turkey's society, politics and international relations from the late 19th century to the present day. It engages with the key domestic and international events, dynamics, actors and critical junctures that have shaped the modern history of Turkey. The critical approach is meant to question, deconstruct and offer an alternative to both Turkey's officially sanctioned nationalist historiographies and dominant Western narratives of Turkey's history and society.

Turkey is a strategically important country located at the intersection of multiple geopolitical neighbourhoods. It is also one of the successor states to the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over much of the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Europe for centuries. Understanding the conditions for the emergence of Turkey as a nation-state in the early 20th century and its subsequent socio-political and geopolitical evolution will give students an insight not just into an emerging power with growing regional influence, but also to the historically-rooted themes and dynamics prevalent in a wider geography, including secularism vs. religion, nationalism and minorities, democracy vs. authoritarianism, military tutelage vs. populist majoritarianism.

The course encourages, and will include whenever possible, a comparative perspective, striving to analyse Turkey not in isolation, but in its proper historical, geopolitical and ideological contexts and by comparing it with cases across Europe, Middle East, Asia and Latin America.

Assessment:

Assessment will be based on three criteria:

1. Class Participation (20%)
 - Attendance to lectures and participation in class discussions.
 - Students are expected to complete the required readings ahead of the lectures for a lively and informed discussion. All the readings will be available online.
2. Presentation: (30%)
 - Students will be asked to pick a presentation topic (of your choice OR picked from amongst the 'discussion questions' provided under each lecture) and prepare a 15-min presentation to be delivered in class.
 - Students are strongly advised to meet with the instructor at least one week ahead to assign supplementary reading and for advice on structuring their presentations.
3. Final Essay (50%)
 - 3,000 words.
 - Due midnight Thursday, 11 October.

Lecture Outlines

1. Introduction / From Empire to Nation-State

16 August

This Introductory lecture will provide an overview of the Ottoman Empire, its long existence, gradual decline and the attempts to reform and salvage the state from above during the 19th and early 20th centuries. We will discuss the socio-economic, political and ideological consequences and legacies of the empire's messy collapse and the emergence of modern nation-states, including the Republic of Turkey, after World War I.

Questions for discussion:

“The 19th century Ottoman reform attempts were overall unsuccessful.” Discuss.

Think about the decline and fall of major empires in history: How do they usually happen—any common reasons? What happens when the long standing imperial order disintegrates and then collapses?

Readings:

- Feroz Ahmad (2014) *Turkey: The Quest for Identity*, London: Oneworld, Chp. 1, 2 and 3.
- “Introduction” in Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem and Maurus Reinkowski (eds) (2015) *World War I and the End of the Ottoman World: From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide*, London: I.B. Tauris.

2. Atatürk and the Legacies of Kemalism

23 August

An officer in the Ottoman army and charismatic war hero, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk declared Turkey a republic in 1923, became its first president and set out to reconstruct the country as a modern, western, secular nation-state out of the empire's ruins. In the process he amassed dictatorial powers and suppressed societal and political opposition to his rule. We will discuss the successes and shortcomings of the Kemalist project of the 1920s and 30s, the conflicts it generated and the socio-political, institutional and ideological legacies that are still with us.

Questions for discussion:

Was the Kemalist project a ‘revolution’? Discuss in comparison with major historical revolutions, and in reference to ruptures and continuities between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

In retrospect, did the Kemalist reforms achieve their intended results or not? Discuss in comparison with other projects of national modernisation the 20th century.

Readings:

- Ahmad, Chp. 4.
- Baskın Oran and Karabekir Akkoyunlu (2018) “Kemalism and the Republican People’s Party” in E. Özyürek, G. Özpınar and E. Altındis (eds) *Authoritarianism and Resistance in Turkey: Conversations on Democratic and Social Challenges*, Cham: Springer.
- Zeynep Kezer (2010) “The Making of Early Republican Ankara”, *Architectural Design*, 80: 1, pp. 40 – 45.
- Mustafa Tuna (2018) "The Missing Turkish Revolution: Comparing village-level change and continuity in Republican Turkey and Soviet Central Asia, 1920-1950", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 50, pp. 23-43.
- Mesut Yeğen (2007) “Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30:1, pp. 119 – 151.

3. Turkey in the Cold War

30 August

The advent of the Cold War, Turkey’s position on the frontline of the East-West divide, and Ankara’s membership in NATO brought numerous changes and challenges to the country. Chief among these changes, which this lecture will cover, are the end of the Kemalist one-party rule, the introduction of multiparty elections, the switch to capitalist economic policies, as well as from the 1960s onwards rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Over the course of the Cold War, democracy became institutionalised, but so did the undemocratic tutelary role of the powerful military, which carried out periodic coups and influenced politics behind closed doors as the “guardians” of the Kemalist ideals.

Questions for discussion:

“The Cold War and Turkey’s participation in the NATO alliance had a [beneficial / detrimental] effect on the country’s democratic development.” Discuss in comparison with the impact of the Cold War on democracy in Latin America.

How did military ‘guardianship’ in Turkey function? Discuss in comparison with military regimes in Europe and Latin America during the Cold War.

Readings:

- Ahmad, Chp. 5 and 6
- Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu (1997) The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy”, *Comparative Politics*, 29: 2, pp. 151-166.

4. Turkey and the European Union

6 September

Ever since Turkey first applied for membership in the European Economic Community in 1959, Turkey and the EU have experienced an awkward relationship: not managing to formally unite, yet unable to wholly separate either. Between the late 1990s and mid-2000s, a reformist drive in Turkey and expansionist momentum in Europe made the prospect of Turkey's liberal democratisation and membership in the EU appear closer than ever. But this has become an increasingly distant possibility since. This lecture will cover the core dynamics, causes for the ups and downs, and future scenarios of Turkey's engagement with the European Union.

Questions for discussion:

“Turkey can never be a member of the European Union, because it's a populous Muslim nation”. Do you agree?

“Turkey should stop seeking membership in the EU and instead aim for an alliance with its Eurasian neighbours, such as Russia, Iran and China.” Discuss in reference to changing geopolitical power structures, dominant ideologies and systems of government.

Readings:

- Ahmad, Chp. 7
- Meltem Müftüler Baç (2008) “The European Union's Accession Negotiations with Turkey from a Foreign Policy Perspective”, *Journal of European Integration*, 30:1, pp. 63-78.
- Nathalie Tocci (2014) “Turkey and the European Union: A Journey into the Unknown”, Turkey Project Policy Paper, *Brookings Institute*, November.
- “Turkey's bid to join the EU is a bad joke; but don't kill it”, *Economist*, 13 Oct 2016.

5. The AKP and the Rise and Fall of the ‘Turkish Model’

13 September

For a decade after 2002, Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government was widely portrayed as a viable model for the Muslim world: an economically liberal, constitutionally secular, geopolitically pro-western Muslim majority country, governed by a competent and democratically elected “moderately Islamist” government. But the Turkish model collapsed spectacularly in recent years as Turkey descended into conflict and authoritarianism amidst domestic and regional crises. This lecture explores the geopolitical and socio-political causes and interests behind the rise and fall of the “Turkish model”.

Questions for discussion:

Turkey in the late 2000s aspired to become a “central player” in a changing world order. Did it achieve this goal? Discuss in reference to former FM and PM Ahmet Davutoglu's “zero problems with neighbours” policy.

“If ever there was a chance for Turkey’s democratic consolidation, the ‘Arab Spring’ and the conflicts it generated killed it.” Discuss in the context of the impact on regional instability and Turkey’s domestic and foreign policy.

Readings:

- “Introduction” in Cihan Tuğal (2016) *The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprisings Brought Down Islamic Liberalism*, London: Verso.
- Karabekir Akkoyunlu, Kalypso Nicolaidis and Kerem Öktem (2013) *The Western Condition: Turkey, the US and the EU in the New Middle East*, Oxford: SEESOX Book Series.
- Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero-Problems Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Policy*, 20 May 2010.
- Karabekir Akkoyunlu “The ‘Turkish model’ isn’t good for Turkey”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 8 February 2012.

6. Changes and Continuities from Atatürk to Erdoğan

20 September

What’s new and what’s not in Erdoğan’s “New Turkey”? This final lecture will explore the ruptures and continuities in Turkey’s political system, institutions and societal dynamics as Turkey transitions from a tutelary democracy into a competitive authoritarian system under the populist leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. We will discuss this transition in light of some of the key milestones in recent Turkish politics, such as the conflict between the Gülen movement and the AKP; the revived war between the Turkish state and Kurdish guerrillas; the crackdown following the failed coup attempt of July 2016, and regime change.

Questions for discussion:

“Erdoğan’s ‘New Turkey’ looks less like a 21st century version of the Ottoman Empire and more like the single-party era of the early Kemalist regime.” Do you agree?

Evaluate Turkey’s “exit from democracy” in the context of the crisis of liberal democracy and the rise of populist movements in the world today.

Readings:

- Kerem Öktem and Karabekir Akkoyunlu (2016) “Exit from democracy: illiberal governance in Turkey and beyond”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 16:4, 469-480.
- Karabekir Akkoyunlu and Kerem Öktem (2016) “Existential insecurity and the making of a weak authoritarian regime in Turkey”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 16:4, pp. 504-527.
- Dexter Filkins, “Turkey’s Thirty Year Coup”, *The New Yorker*, 17 October 2016.