Turkey, Democracy and Governance: 596F03L

Summer Session II (July 1- August 8, 2013)

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Introduction

This online course traces the origins of the modern Turkish state and internal political dynamics by focusing on the evolving nature and character of Turkey’s democratic system at least since the republic was founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The course also takes up the issue of good governance, the rule of law and changing civil-military relations. The main theme will revolve around Turkey today being at a critical crossroad or juncture domestically (due to its growing economy), regionally (due to its expanding and effective soft power), and internationally. With regional pressures mounting due to unintended consequences of the Arab and Islamic popular uprisings in 2011, Turkey’s political institutions, leadership, and social dynamics are facing complex and difficult national security choices. Will Turkey continue to identify with its Islamic tradition or with Western Europe? Will it maintain its strategic relationship with Israel or will it continue to drift towards the Palestinians and Iran? Will it resolve its Kurdish, Armenian, and other internal sectarian challenges peacefully or will it be torn apart by internal conflicts and political violence?

Course Overview

Turkey is far too complicated domestically and strategically to be explained on the basis of any single factor. Its rich culture, language, government institutions, and Islamic heritage form the basis of the nation-state today. This proposed traces the origins of the Turkish state formation and governmental institutions as indicators shaping the Turkish character, personality and political dynamics today. Turkey, Democracy and Governance is a course on the new Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) of PM Erdogan. It assesses comparatively the current complexities surrounding Turkey's internal political dynamics and their remarkable transformation from military to civilian rule. These factors are critical in explaining regional dynamics and global issues. The focus of the course will be Turkey at the cross roads—a comparative politics and analysis approach to nation-building using the following organizational structure: State Formation (the key historical factors); Political economy; Political Dynamics including structures, processes and institutions; and Social dynamics including political integration of women, and ethnic, religious, and national minorities in politics. Turkey wants to be a great regional power and it is using all its instruments of national power to achieve this end. Will this new strategy work? If so, at what cost?"

The fact that Turkey has been governed for the last ten years by a moderately Islamic party has significantly improved Turkey’s image in the Muslim World, yet Turkey is a very complex country that often escapes easy generalizations. For instance, the same moderately Islamic party, the AKP, is also active pursuing Turkey's European Union membership. As tensions increase in relations to Israel at the national level, key supporters of AKP want to maintain the strategic partnership with Israel while at the same time opening the door to Israel's regional adversaries for more trade and better relations. This is why this course will cover Turkey’s domestic politics, geostrategic environment and its relations with neighbors by carefully examining the inner tensions between Turkey's multiple identities. Increasingly domestic issues— unlike the previously dominated Kemalist military rule/regimes – are determining regional and international outcomes. The rise of domestic religiosity cannot be ignored.
The founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, commonly known as Ataturk, founded the modern Turkish state in 1923 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and a decade of war. At its height the Ottoman Empire’s reach had extended from the Crimea and Southeastern Europe to the Middle East and North Africa. Geographically, Turkey is at the junction of three distinct regions: Europe, Asia and the Middle East, but more importantly, it straddles – as Huntington alludes to in his discussion of the “clash of civilizations” – two distinct, and some argue, conflicting civilizations. By any measure this is a challenging geographic location to be in. Turkey itself reflects this cultural and developmental divide as the western part of the country is more secular and European, while eastern Turkey tends to be more traditional and religious.

In many ways Ataturk’s legacy (Kemalism) still dominates and defines the Turkish state, with the Turkish military viewing one of its primary roles as defending that legacy, which includes the Turkish form of secularism, nationalism, and western orientation. Turkish secularism, more accurately state control of religion, is challenged by the growing influence of Islam in Turkish life and the political success of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP): a political party “with Islamic roots.” To some extent, as Turks continue to debate the role of religion in politics and society, Turkish identity is in some flux. Another challenge is state control of the economy and the requirement for liberalization if Turkey is to meet the demands of global competition and of European Union membership. The Kurds, twenty percent of the Turkish population, represent another challenge for Kemalism – the notion that there is a single Turkish nation. Kurds in the Middle East have long fought to separate and create a Kurdish state, something that Turkey continues to oppose strongly as evidenced by the recent increase in tensions and violence near the Iraqi border.

With regional pressures mounting because of the ongoing Arab Spring, Turkey’s political institutions, leadership, and social dynamics are being challenged in more ways than one. This course will attempt to link the Arab Spring popular uprisings and quest for political change to the transformation of governance and the rule of law within Turkey. What is ultimately at stake is whether democracy will survive the above challenges and whether Turkey will remain a secular model for other Islamic neighbors given its successful ability to balance security with freedom and liberty at home.

**Course Objectives**

- Analyze the major cultural, economic, historical, military, political, social and technological issues and trends in Turkey,
- Analyze the interaction between domestic trends and regional challenges that shape the global context,
- Examine the ongoing transformation of domestic security in Turkey,
- Understand the factors that influence Turkish leaders view of their neighbors, of Europe, and of the United States,
- Examine global trends shaping policy and strategy.

**Course Questions for Discussion**

1. What are the factors that shape Turkey’s domestic political dynamics?

2. Can Turkey’s domestic political dynamics ever reach the liberal democratic and constitutional high bars of the European Union?

3. How has the AKP viewed the Arab Spring in selected Arab states, particularly Syria?

4. To what extent is democratic rule consolidated in Turkey? What reaction can be expected from the military if the AKP moves further towards weakening secularism? What are the governance issues involved and potential impact on EU accession and security cooperation with the US and Europe?
5. What impact does conflict against the Kurds in southwest Turkey and northern Iraq have on Ankara’s relations with the West?

6. What are the domestic roots of current Turkish-Israeli tensions? Will this tension lead to regional conflicts?

Course Requirements

Readings for specific topics are organized by week. Many of the readings are recent, and will be supplemented as relevant commentary is published. Older selections are also included because of their value in establishing the background and context for Turkish politics. Each student will also write short analytical paper essays weekly using the required readings to support his/her position on a specific essay problem (s) and questions as appropriate. There will also be a final comprehensive essay (6-8 pages in length).

Weekly Contact and BB input

Students are requested to contact the faculty via internet link weekly on Mondays starting on July 1, 2013 until the course ends on August 8 between the hour of 2-4 pm EST. Students are also highly encouraged to respond to the course blog by engaging in BB discussion regarding specific events and ideas. I will start the Blog ball rolling during the first week’s session. Note that Google Alert can be designed individually to provide daily event coverage on Turkey and Turkish-related issues.

Grading Policy

Students must meet all stated course objectives. In determining the student’s final grade, I as the course faculty will evaluate weekly submissions, overall commitment, timely submission, and most importantly the quality of analysis and reflections. Students will strive to develop analytical skills that dissect concepts and ideas related to the course at different levels of analysis. Essays should be logical, coherent, and original in which ideas flow logically from one another.

Grading System

60% of the grade will be based on the weekly submissions with the remaining 40% allotted to the final essay. Students must submit all required papers to earn a grade in the course. Failure to submit assignments will result in either a failing or “I” grade.

Reading Requirements

Students are required to draw on required purchased texts and electronic links. The latter are uploaded by the AU Closed Reserve Unit at the Main Library. The Point of Contact in the latter unit is Abbey or Donna.

The following PAPERBACK texts are required:

• Andrew Finkel, Turkey: What Everyone Needs To Know (Oxford University Press, 2012)


TOPIC: Ottoman Legacy

The Ottoman Empire existed for over 600 years and spanned seven centuries. Its place in world history rests with other notable imperial systems like the Roman, Byzantine, and Greek empires. Although it spanned from Southeast Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, its influence is not fully understood in the West. Conversely, its legacy continues to influence culture, religious views, social frameworks, political systems, prejudices, and resentments in the modern day countries of Egypt, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Hungary, Israel (Palestine), Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, portions of Arabia, and the Northern Coast of Africa.

During the foundation of the Ottoman legacy and throughout its rise and decline, Islam and Islamic institutions inspired and sustained the empire. Author L. Carl Brown states that, “…it was certainly the most imposing and arguably the most influential political system over the course of more than a millennium of Islamic history.” One argument is that the demise of Ottoman rule has left the Islamic world void of a “Great Power” that could exercise leadership and speak for the collective Muslim community, thus the Islamic world fractured into secular, moderate, and extremist camps. Since the end of the Ottoman Empire early in the 20th century, Britain, France, and the United States have attempted to exert direct and indirect influence in former Ottoman lands, but often with questionable results.

To begin a course of study on modern Turkey and its neighbors, it is important to gain an appreciation of the Ottoman legacy and its influence, and not only in geopolitical terms, but also from a cultural and ideological perspective.

Weekly Essay: Write and submit 2-page essay on ONE of the following questions

1. How has the Ottoman Empire influenced the modern Republic of Turkey? Turkey’s Middle Eastern neighbors? The relationship between state and religion?

2. What factors contributed to the Ottoman Empire’s rise and decline? What lessons, if any, may be applicable today?

3. Do fears of foreign domination still persist in former Ottoman possessions? If so, how are they manifested?

Required Readings: Ottoman Legacy


Week 2: July 8

**TOPIC: Ataturk and Kemalism**

“Loaded with follies, stained with crimes, rotted with misgovernment, shattered by battle, worn down by long disastrous wars, his empire falling to pieces around him, the Turk was still alive. In his breast was beating the heart of a race that had challenged the world, and for centuries had contended victoriously against all comers. In his hands was once again the equipment of a modern army, and at his head a Captain, who with all that is learned of him, ranks among the four or five outstanding figures of the cataclysm.”

– *Winston Churchill, The World Crisis: The Aftermath*

“For Turkey's intellectuals Ataturk has been like an elephant sitting in the living room. Whether one likes the elephant or not, it is very difficult for others in the room to see around it or to speak about anything else. More than half a century after his death, Ataturk has continued to set the agenda, provoking ongoing veneration along with a sometimes vituperative opposition.”

– *Joel S. Migdal, “Finding the Meeting Ground of Fact and Fiction: Some Reflections on Turkish Modernization,” in Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*

Far more than George Washington in the American pantheon, Mustafa Kemal, commonly known as Ataturk, is exalted by Turkey and its people as “Father of the Turks” and modern Turkey. His legacy still dominates – indeed, defines – modern Turkey. There is a cult-like quality to that legacy. Whenever Turks gather, the visage of Ataturk is usually in prominent view, as are his injunctions to the Turkish people – e.g., “Peace at home, Peace in the world,” “Turkey has no perpetual enemies, friendship with every nation, and happy the man who calls himself a Turk.” Faced with the shambles to which the Ottoman Empire had been reduced by defeat in World War I (occupation of Istanbul and the Turkish Straits and signature of the never ratified Treaty of Sevres that divided Anatolia into seven parts), Ataturk managed in a few years to drive out all occupation forces, negotiate acceptance of the new order with states which had recently been at war with the Ottoman Empire and occupied its lands, and build a secular, ethnically homogeneous nation-state that abjured territorial claims on its neighbors. Historians have
compared that record to the nation-building legacy of Peter the Great in Russia. As partisan leader and statesman, Ataturk blended idealism and ruthlessness, profound nationalism and belief, in a single, universal Western civilization to which Turkey should belong; and great generalship and reconciliation with former enemies. His latest biographer, Andrew Mango, describes him as a “conservative revolutionary.” All subsequent leaders of Turkey – Ismet Inonu, Adnan Menderes, Turgut Ozal, and Suleyman Demirel – have embraced his legacy and adapted it to their times.

This topic covers Ataturk's role in creating the modern Turkish state, elements of his legacy – the six arrows of secularism (or laicism), republicanism, populism, nationalism, statism, and reformism – and their relevance. That legacy includes: systemic tensions between resurgent Islamic feelings of the Turkish people and rigid commitment to secularism; an official ideology of homogeneity at odds with the reality of great ethnic diversity; desires for economic liberalization and a state-centered economy based on autarky; a major political role for the Turkish military and requirements of parliamentary democracy; the neuralgic issue of relations with Greece; Syrian resentment over annexation of the Hatay province during the last years of the French Mandate; and the unresolved Kurdish issue.

For modern Turkey the legacy of Kemalism serves as both a hobble and a shield. It blurs, but does not erase the major fault lines represented by the Kurdish and Islamist realities. Some observers argue that Kemalism has kept Turkey hostage to imagined enemies, by drawing on and reinforcing a folk memory that is replete with grievances and threats from yesteryear.

**Weekly Essay:** Write and submit 2-page essay on ONE of the following questions

1. Did Ataturk reform the Ottoman system, or impose on it an authoritarian overlay with a Western patina?

2. Did Ataturk cure the “sick man” of Europe or merely change his prescription?

3. Would Ataturk’s approach to governance work in neighboring countries (e.g., Iran, Iraq, and Syria)?

4. In Ataturk's time was Turkey a European state? Is it today?

5. In this century Turkey has been likened to an ancient ship whose captain tries to steer west, but whose oarsmen pull an easterly course. How accurate is that metaphor?

**Required Readings:**


Week 3: July 15

**TOPIC: The Role of the Military**

The Turkish General Staff (TGS) sees itself – and is widely seen by Turks – as the keeper of the Kemalist legacy, the ultimate glue that holds the secular nation-state together. Both the legal basis for, and the TGS's own perceptions of, the role and responsibilities of the military have remained unchanged for over 70 years. However, the extent and the manner in which the military has influenced politics have always varied. Turkish military leaders overthrew, tried, and hanged, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and two of his ministers in 1960-1961; they sent to jail for some years then-President Celal Bayar. The military later twice overthrew another Prime Minister, Suleyman Demirel. It banned Demirel and his archrival, Bulent Ecevit, from political life for several years in the 1980s. Both eventually returned to office, Demirel as a President who served until 2000 and Ecevit as Prime Minister. The military nudged Turkey’s first Islamist Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, out of office in 1997 by what some call, “The Soft Coup.” In recent years the TGS's ability to ensure that government policy remains within acceptable parameters has been primarily based on its public prestige rather than the prospect of a full-blooded military coup. Although the TGS has always been the most respected institution in the country, the Turkish public's willingness to tolerate, or even to encourage, its assumption of a more active political role has traditionally varied according to changes in the prevailing domestic political circumstances, falling during times of stability and confidence and rising during times of uncertainty. In early 2007 both the country and the government of the moderately Islamist Justice and Development Party (JDP) appeared to have lost momentum and direction.

In such an environment, and in the continued absence of an effective political opposition, many Turks will once again look to the country's military to prevent the JDP from increasing its control over the apparatus of state, starting with the appointment of a new president in April 2007. To date the JDP has always backed down in the face of pressure from the TGS. However, whether it will continue to do so, and what the TGS can or will do if the JDP defies its warnings, currently all remains unclear.

**Weekly Essay: Write and submit 2-page essay on ONE of the following questions**

1. How is the role of the military changing?

2. What differs the Turkish military from Latin American ones?
3. Would Turkey still remain secular without a strong military?

4. How did the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party affect the military?

5. Is the TGS still supportive of Turkey’s EU drive?

**Required Readings**


4. Omer Taspinar “Turkey’s General Dilemma: Democracy and the Reverse Coup” Foreign Affairs August 8, 2011
   http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68019/omer-taspinar/turkeys-general-dilemma

**Week 4: July 22**

**TOPIC: Islam in Turkey**

Throughout most of Ottoman and modern Turkish history, Islamists were anti-West. During the Ottoman centuries, religious segments of society were by and large opposed to modernization, positivism and Westernization. This situation continued during the more contemporary history of the 20th century as well: religious conservatives maintained their anti-West position. For instance, Erbakan’s “National View” movement was essentially anti-Europe, anti-NATO, anti-American and even anti-capitalist. Today, however, we have a very counter-intuitive situation. Turkey’s Islamists are becoming increasingly pro-Europe and pro-West, while the Kemalist establishment is increasingly turning inward. Why?

To better understand the ideological evolution of the AKP, it is necessary to emphasize that Turkey’s Islamic movement had already the advantage of participating in a democratic process for over three decades. Although Turkey’s Islamic movement was anti-Western, anti-secular, and anti-liberal from its inception, it always played by the electoral rules. Compared to political Islam in the Middle East, Turkish political Islam was therefore much more moderate and inclined towards gaining electoral legitimacy.

**Weekly Essay:** Write and submit 2-page essay on ONE of the following questions
1. What is the role of Islam in Turkish society?

2. Is Turkish Islam different?

3. Is there a distinct Turkish secularism?

4. Is there a risk of Islamization in Turkey?

**Required Readings**


Week 5: July 29

**TOPIC: The Kurdish Question**

The Kurdish question goes to the heart of Turkey's identity as a nation and a country. Turkey’s Kurdish question forms part of a larger issue that involves Kurds in Iran, Syria, Iraq, and the Caucasus. In varying degrees, this question affects Turkey's relations with all those countries, and with the West.

After the Cold War, the most important challenge that came to haunt the republic was the Kurdish question. Between 1984 and 1999 Ankara had to spend considerable blood and treasure against a violent Kurdish insurrection in southeast Anatolia. The separatist challenge posed by the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), a terrorist guerilla movement with considerable regional support, proved extremely costly in political, economic and foreign policy terms. In addition to a death toll of 35,000 the conflict cost up to $150 billion in military expenditures.

Compromise with the Kurdish and Islamist enemies of the republic was not an option for Turkey and the result was military confrontation, political polarization,
authoritarianism and economic crisis during the “lost decade” of the 1990s. Turkey’s relations with the EU reflected all these problems. To the dismay of Ankara, the EU saw the Kurdish conflict as the rebellion of an ethnic group whose cultural and national rights were long suppressed by an authoritarian system. The 1999 capture and trial of PKK Leader Abdullah Ocalan has led to a gradual winding down of Kurdish violence in Turkey, and military and paramilitary reprisals in response to that violence. Turks deeply resent the effect that the Iraq war has had on their own problem of Kurdish separatism. Turkey’s longstanding fear that independence-minded Kurdish nationalists would dominate northern Iraq – thereby setting a dangerous precedent for Kurds in Turkey – has now become reality. The Kurdish population of Turkey is around 15 million – 3 to 4 times more than Iraq’s Kurdish minority. Despite U.S. government protestations to the contrary, most Turks believe that a civil war in Iraq will be followed by the creation of an independent Kurdistan.

**Weekly Essay: Write and submit 2-page essay on ONE of the following questions**

1. How vulnerable is Turkey to resumed Kurdish violence at home or abroad?

2. What role should Western Europe and the United States play in helping Turkey deal with this problem?

3. Can the Kurdish problem in Turkey remain isolated from other Kurdish questions in the Middle East, particularly Iraq post-OIF?

4. What impact would some type of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq have on Turkey?

5. How might the US balance relations with the Turks and Iraqi Kurds?

**Required Readings**


3. Omer Taspinar “Turkey's Kurdish Achilles' Heel” The National Interest, September 15 2011


**Week 6: August 6**

**TOPIC: Turkey and the EU**
In many ways, Turkey’s quest to become part of Europe predates the EU. Ironically, it even predates the establishment of the modern Turkey. This historic quest has Ottoman roots. Turkey first applied in 1963 to the then European Economic Community. The impulse to belong to Europe gained further momentum with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ankara increasingly felt that its place in the New World Order was in the progressive and increasingly democratic institutions that Europe represented. For many people in Turkey joining the European Union became synonymous with the final push toward Atatürk’s dream to be part of contemporary civilization. For them, Turkey as a member of the EU would become economically prosperous as well as politically stable and democratic.

Today Turkey’s hopes to join the European Union, while boosted by the EU’s October 3, 2005 decision to begin accession negotiations, remain distant and uncertain. Such pessimism is justified on many counts. Perhaps most important is the fact that the EU is plagued by enlargement fatigue. In the aftermath of the French and Dutch rejection of the EU constitution, it is now much harder for European politicians to ignore their public opinion, particularly when critical decisions about Europe’s future are at stake. France even went so far as to change its constitution to require that a referendum be held to approve all future EU enlargements. Other countries may also require referendums. This is clearly bad news for Turkey. Already struggling with problems such as unemployment, immigration, Islamic terrorism, and Muslim integration, Europeans are in no mood to embrace 70 million Muslims.

Therefore, even if Turkey continues to develop its democracy and economy, major obstacles still stand on its way to Europe. Ankara’s hopes of membership could easily be dashed by anything ranging from a crisis over Cyprus to a national veto from any one of the 25 EU countries. Equally troubling for Ankara are French and German proposals for a “privileged partnership” instead of full membership. The EU guidelines for accession negotiations already spell out the possibility of “permanent safeguards” against Turkey – on issues ranging from freedom of movement to regional aid – and, therefore, fuel Turkish concern about “second class” membership. Similarly, the fact that the EU has described the accession process as not only “open ended” but also conditional upon the Union’s “absorption capacity” was not lost on many Turks who believe Brussels will always find excuses to say “no” to Turkey.

Weekly Essay: Write and submit 2-page essay on ONE of the following questions. FINAL COMPREHENSIVE ESSAY QUESTION TO BE PUT OUT. RESPONSE TO FINAL DUE MONDAY AUGUST 12 noon EST.

1. What explains the EU’s reluctance vis-a-vis Turkey?

2. What does Privileged Partnership mean?

3. Why Turkey wants to be part of the EU?
4. Does Turkey have alternatives?

**Required Readings**


5. Graham Fuller, The New Turkish Republic, pp.145-149.