

# THE MIDDLE EAST EXPLAINED

A project of the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

### Video: Turkey from Empire to Republic

*This video is recommended for use in High School classrooms.*

#### Video Overview

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I led to its final dissolution. In 1923, the Republic of Turkey was established. This transition from Empire to Republic was largely impacted by European colonial powers, including the occupation of the capital Istanbul and the League of Nations mandate system. Resisting British and French influence, the Turks responded with an armed insurrection known as the Turkish War of Independence, leading to negotiations about the national self-determination of Turks and other ethnic groups formerly part of the Ottoman Empire.

After the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, founding president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk implemented a series of sweeping political, social, cultural, and religious reforms designed to separate the new Turkish state from its Ottoman past. Despite a desire to disengage from colonial powers, Turkey still attempted to emulate Europe by following the logic of modernization espoused by the West. In this 10-minute video, Professor Erdağ Göknaç discusses contestations between colonialism, nationalism, and the Kemalist cultural revolution in Turkey.

#### Learning Objectives

After watching this video, students will be able to:

- Understand that colonial powers influenced the establishment of the modern Middle East
- Identify international concepts and treaties relevant to the development of modern Turkey
- Consider debates related to rights to nationalism and self-determination
- Identify changes in Turkish culture and society following the secularizing Turkish cultural revolution

#### About the Speaker

**Erdağ Göknaç** is Associate Professor of Turkish & Middle Eastern Studies at Duke University. He is the award-winning translator of Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* and A.H. Tanpınar's *A Mind at Peace*. He is the author of *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel* (Routledge 2013). His research primarily focuses on the legacies of the Ottoman Empire and the Kemalist cultural revolution upon modern Turkey and the Middle East.



The **Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies** is a collaboration of the UNC Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies and the Duke University Middle East Studies Center. As the recipient of a Title VI Middle East Studies grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Consortium is a National Resource Center. Our Outreach Program supports K-12 and community college educators in deepening understanding of the Middle East through professional development trainings, local study tours, providing access to speakers, creating classroom resources, and more. [Visit us online at http://ncmideast.org/outreach/](http://ncmideast.org/outreach/).

## Classroom Activities: Modern Turkey: From WWI to Cultural Revolution

**Materials/Resources Needed:** “Turkey from Empire to Republic ” video link

(<https://youtu.be/WdLeXOIOZtY>), copies of the Student Viewing Guide

*Optional: Rather making copies for each student, teachers may project one copy of the discussion questions for the entire class.*

**Step 1:** Explain that the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I in 1918 led to its final end, transitioning from a large empire to an independent nation a few years later. The modern nation states of the Middle East were formed after the dissolution of this vast empire, with borders drawn by European Colonial Powers. This video discusses the case of Turkey, including the establishment of its modern borders and reforms implemented by its first president.

**Step 2:** Pass out the Student Viewing Guide. Before playing the video, ask students to read through the key terms and timeline. Then, inform students that they will answer Comprehension Questions as they watch the video.

*Differentiation: Divide students into small groups and assign questions to each group member. After the video, ask students to explain their answers to their small group.*

**Step 3:** Play the video. Give students extra time after the video is complete to finish answering the Comprehension Questions on the Student Guide. Check for understanding by going over answers to the questions out loud as a class. Discuss key terms as a group.

**Step 4:** To encourage further understanding, consider facilitating a class discussion or addressing the following points:

- What were the interests of the colonial powers, Britain and France after World War I? What were the interests of the local ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire? How did these interests differ?
- Which groups “lost out” on rights to self-determination following the Treaty of Lausanne?
- What was the legacy of the Turkish Cultural Revolution? How did the reforms instated by the newly formed government impact Turkish life and society?
- Some people view Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a hero, others view him as a controversial figure. What might be the reasoning behind these different views?
- Discuss the contradiction between the newly formed Turkish relationship’s with Europe. On one hand, Europe was regarded as an enemy (being on the opposing side in World War I), and on the other hand, Europe was looked upon as a model (the society to emulate).

### **Assessment:**

Informal Student Performance Assessment: Observation of each student participating in small group or class discussions.

Formal Assessment: Written student responses on the Student Viewing Guide. Good responses will demonstrate understanding of learning objectives.

**Extension:** After watching the video, further topics for exploration include: the Middle Eastern theatre of World War I; the impact of the mandate system on other nation-states in the Middle East (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine); Wilson’s 14 Points, specifically Wilson’s 12th point that provides a “secure sovereignty” for the Turkish parts of the Ottoman Empire and offered the “opportunity of autonomous development” to the other nationalities of the Empire; Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant; minorities and stateless groups in the Middle East (such as the Kurds), and debates between secularism and religion in Turkey today.