

Dear Board Members of Hisar Educational Foundation, Founder Representative, and General Manager; Dear Colleagues, Students, and remote participants of our ceremony... I greet all of you with love and respect. Welcome to our Republic Day Ceremony.

Today, our country and our Republic are ninety-eight years old. It has been almost a century. However, when we consider histories of nations, this is still a short period of time. The Republic of Turkey which was founded through reforms is still very young. First of all, we must understand thoroughly how this was achieved.

At the core of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey lies a vision for the future. We see an effort to build the future of the country in the struggle for achieving liberation as well as all the reformations in various areas such as freedom, equality, education, and women's participation in politics.

A vision is the ability to see the unseen, to dream about what lies beyond, and to design the future. It is a word derived from the Latin word "videre" which means to "understand" and "perceive". Therefore, a vision is not an unfounded prediction for the future. It is a perception based on past events, experience, and a thorough cognition and understanding of the present.

In general terms, Republic refers to the public's authority to rule and ability to self-govern as a form of government. However, there is no single application of Republic; it is adopted in different ways. As such, the Republic of Turkey is also a different doctrine with its own process, and the creator and thinker of that doctrine is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. For that reason, understanding the ideas of Atatürk will also help us understand the vision of the Republic.

When he was alive, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk planned each of his steps and made his decisions by thinking about the future, by trying to understand the future, and by designing it. Now, we can take under consideration these questions: How did Mustafa Kemal Atatürk conceive of a vision which was beyond his time? Why do we still think so highly of his ideas and try to understand them after all those years? What if he were alive today? What kinds of solutions would he offer to the world's current problems including climate, education, migration and inequality? Sure, it is not possible to know it for certain, but we may ascertain from his way of life. There are so many aspects to consider when we speak of Atatürk; however, I would like to focus on one of them.

One of his favorite activities, which he never stopped doing, was Reading. When we consider the whole life of Atatürk, we see that one of his favorite activities, regardless of his various roles such as soldier, politician, and head teacher, was "reading a book". According to the records, Atatürk read nearly four thousand books throughout his life. When we look at the books in his library which contained books in various languages such as French, Ottoman Turkish and Latin, we see that he read nearly all of those four thousand books by taking elaborate notes on them.

Cemal Granda, who worked with Atatürk, mentions a conversation between Atatürk and Vasif Çınar, a bureaucrat at the time, and tells that Atatürk had acquired his reading habit during his childhood.

"I remember that Atatürk was always reading a book in his free time. One day, I saw that Atatürk was reading a thick book about history. He was so immersed in it that he would not notice anything else in his surroundings. Vasif Çınar must have been a little annoyed by the fact that the President was spending his time by reading a book when there were so many problems in the country. I heard that he said to Atatürk:

- My General!.. Do not spend so much time on books... Did you land upon Samsun by reading books on the 19th of May?

Atatürk smiled at this warm complaint of Vasif Çınar and said:

- When I was a child, my family was poor. When I had any money, I would spend it to buy a book. If I hadn't done that, I would not be able to achieve any of these things.

Atatürk's passion for Books did not stop even when he was fighting in a battle. In his biography of Atatürk, Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, the former Minister of National Education, tells that Atatürk read books in the dormitory with so little light and was lost in thoughts during his reading. The journalist Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın describes Atatürk's room during the days when the Gallipoli campaign was the most intense and says that there were books by Balzac, Maupassant, and Lavedan on his desk. At the time of the Gallipoli campaign, in a letter he wrote, Atatürk asks the wife of his friend Ömer Lütfi Bey to send some books to the front line. 16. When he was in the Eastern Anatolia as the Commander of Corps, Atatürk wrote a journal and often mentioned the books that he was reading at the time. When he was twenty-one years old, he started to attend the Military Academy as a lieutenant and created a newspaper titled "*Mili İrade*" (i.e. National Will) which he issued in hand-writing to explain his political views to his friends. He became a member of the newspaper's board and wrote most of the articles.

Another indication of the intellectual depth of Atatürk was that he generally followed the thought movements at the time: He read and analyzed the positivism as well as the works by key thinkers of the time such as A. Comte, Descartes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau - all of his works-, Voltaire, Emile Durkheim, and Ziya Gökalp. At a dinner in Çankaya Mansion, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, one of the key writers at the time, witnessed Atatürk's speech about philosophy and told his entourage that he could not understand how Atatürk was able to obtain such comprehensive information. Here, we see an intellectual capacity that would impress a literator... Again, people who met Atatürk during those times tell that he would not sleep before finishing a book if he was interested in it, regardless of the number of pages, or that he would continue reading it by sleeping a little now and then.

Therefore, we should not be surprised by his Republican doctrine and reformations. The difference of Republic of Turkey's reformations from the achievements of the British, French and Russian Revolutions is that it also experienced an intellectual revolution through language and writing system reforms. Atatürk's habit of reading, thinking and learning combined with his forward-thinking abilities laid the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. It means that the vision of our young country and Republic is to learn, to improve oneself and to think about the future.

This year is the 25th anniversary of Hisar School, which is built upon the values of the Republic, and our theme is the "*Future*". With the activities designed in the concept of future in our 25th anniversary, we will try to understand the past, the present and the future. As such, we will endeavor to design a better future for ourselves, our School, our country, and humanity. While designing a future by following the footsteps of Mustafa Kemal, we will maintain our scientific thinking and continue with our scientific works. As individuals who are respectful of human rights, who are free and who believe in ethical life principles, we will continue to advocate for equality and justice pursuant the values of the Republic.

With the hopeful sentiments and thoughts of the Republic, I congratulate everyone's Republic Day of everyone and pay my respects to the founder of our country, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, to the popular heroes, who put their lives on the line for the liberation of our country, and to the dear founders of our School, whose courage and vision are inspired by the values of our Republic. Thank you all.

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