



A Body of Work and its Meaning

Çalışmalar ve Anlamları

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Edward J. ERICKSON 

Düşünce Yazısı

¹ Prof. Dr. – Türk Savaş Çalışmaları Dergisi Yayın ve Danışma Kurulu Üyesi



[ORCID: 0000-0002-9975-5790](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9975-5790)

Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author:

Edward J. ERICKSON

E-posta/E-mail:

ederickson100@gmail.com

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Abstract

Prof. Erickson retired as professor of military history at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. He briefly served as a Scholar-in-Residence in the Clark Center for Global Engagement at the State University of New York at Cortland, New York. Prof. Erickson is also a retired regular US Army lieutenant colonel. He is the recipient of two Bronze Star medals, the Legion of Merit, and numerous other military awards. Prof. Erickson is widely recognized as one of the foremost specialists on the Ottoman Army during the First World War. Among the numerous books he has written are *Ordered to Die, A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, *Defeat in Detail, The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912-1913*; *Gallipoli, The Ottoman Campaigns, Ottomans and Armenians, A Study in Counterinsurgency*; *Gallipoli, Command under Fire*, and *Palestine, The Ottoman Campaigns 1914-1918*. He is the co-author, with Prof. Mesut Uyar, of *A Military History of the Ottomans, from Osman to Atatürk* and *Phase Line Attila, The Amphibious Campaign for Cyprus*. His latest book is *The Turkish War of Independence, A Military History 1919-1923*. This think piece is a kind of autobiography in which Prof. Erickson explains the contribution of his works to the literature.

Özet

Prof. Erickson, Quantico, Virginia'daki Deniz Piyadeleri Üniversitesi Komuta ve Kurmay Koleji'nden askeri tarih profesörü olarak emekli oldu. Kısa bir süre Cortland, New York New York Eyalet Üniversitesi'ndeki Clark Küresel Etkileşim Merkezi'nde yerleşik araştırmacı olarak görev yaptı. Prof. Erickson, aynı zamanda emekli bir ABD Ordusu yarbaydır. İki Bronz Yıldız Madalyası, Legion of Merit ve diğer birçok askeri ödülün sahibidir. Prof. Erickson, Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında Osmanlı Ordusu konusunda en önde gelen uzmanlardan biri olarak tanınmaktadır. Eserleri arasında *Size Ölmeyi Emrediyorum*, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusu*, *Büyük Hezimet*, *Balkan Harpleri'nde Osmanlı Ordusu*, *Gelibolu*, *Osmanlı Harekâtı*, *Ottomans and Armenians, A Study in Counterinsurgency*, *Çanakkale Savaşı: Ateş Altında Komuta*, *Palestine, the Ottoman Campaigns 1914-1918* gibi kitaplar yer almaktadır. Prof. Dr. Mesut Uyar'la birlikte *Osmanlı Askeri Tarihi* ve *Phase Line Attila, The Amphibious Campaign for Cyprus* isimli eserleri de kaleme almıştır. Son kitabı *The Turkish War of Independence, A Military History 1919-1923*'dir. Bu düşünce yazısı, Prof. Erickson'ın çalışmalarının literatüre katkısını açıkladığı bir tür otobiyografidir.

INTRODUCTION

In October 2021, the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) honored Dr. Edward J. Erickson by appointing him as a member of the society for his ‘valuable studies on Turkish history and culture.’ The question might be asked ‘What are Erickson’s contributions to the study of Turkish history and what are his conclusions?’ In this essay I will attempt to answer these questions.

I have had a lifelong passion and interest in military history. While serving in Turkey as a United States Army officer I became very interested in Ottoman and Turkish military history. However, throughout my assignments in Turkey, I became aware of how little reliable military history there was in English about Ottoman and Turkish military history (other than British books on the Gallipoli and Palestine campaigns). Moreover, I became very aware that what there was available had been written from a European or western perspective, often denigrating Ottoman officers and soldiers. Essentially, I found there were very serious gaps, omissions, and misunderstandings in the available English language historiography of Ottoman and Turkish military history. A singular example showing the ignorance of Ottoman and Turkish military history appeared in 1999 in the late, but well-known and highly respected, British historian John Keegan’s book *The First World War*. Unaware of the vast field of Turkish General Staff publications about the First World War, Keegan wrote ‘Neither Russia nor Turkey published official histories...’ Nothing could be farther from the truth.

After my retirement from the United States Army in 1997, I began to research and write about these gaps and omissions in the military history of Turkey. Since 1999, I have published sixteen books, six chapters in books, fourteen refereed academic journal articles, and numerous other articles about Ottoman and Turkish military history. Many of my publications have been translated into Turkish and other languages (see the publications listed below). Academically, this amounts to a significant body of historical work.

I did not start out with the intention of concentrating on and writing so many books and articles about Ottoman and Turkish military history. My good friend, the former Turkish Ambassador to the United States Namik Tan, affectionately calls me ‘the accidental historian.’ In fact, I attribute the opportunity to conduct research in Ankara as instrumental to getting an unintentional start as a historian. The most important first step for me was the support of Turkish Chief of the General Staff General Hüseyin Kivrikoğlu, who was instrumental in granting me access to the military archives and library in ATASE. From there, one thing led to another, and I found myself with access to materials that nobody else in the Anglophone world even knew existed. Without too much forethought I followed the Turkish materials available to me and, twenty-some years later, I find myself with a considerable body of work. As I said, I never planned to accomplish this.

I could never have produced these publications without the encouragement and advice of many personal friends. I gratefully acknowledge the unstinting advice and assistance of Dr. Mesut Uyar (dean of the School of Business and International Relations, Antalya Bilim University and editor of this journal) who has provided, by far, the most help to me over the years. I must also acknowledge the generous assistance of Dr. Yücel Güçlü (retired foreign service officer from the

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Bülent Yilmazer (businessman and Turkish aviation historian), Dr. Maxime Gauin (French historian at AVIM), and Dr. Konstantinos Travlos (assistant professor of International Relations at Özyeğin University) who have also been crucially important in helping me track down the fine details of the historical record. These scholars (and many others too numerous to cite here) were always ready to answer my questions and assist me in researching and understanding new material, and I owe them all a huge debt.

THE BODY OF WORK

When I organize my publications into thematic and chronological periods, my body of work looks like this:

Ottoman Military History (1300-1922)

A Military History of the Ottomans, from Osman to Atatürk, Co-author with Mesut Uyar, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2009 (Published in Turkish as *Osmanlı Askeri Tarihi*, Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014)

“Template for Destruction, The Congress of Berlin and the Evolution of Ottoman Counterinsurgency Practices” (chapter) in *The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, eds. Peter Sluglett & Hakan Yavuz, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011

“In the Nick of Time: Transformation in the Ottoman Army, 1911” (chapter) in *Preliminary Moves, 1911*, Canberra: Australian Army History Unit, 2012

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Command Series), Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013 (Published in Romanian as *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*, Bucharest, Romania: Editura Militară, 2016; Published in Turkish as *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Büyük Komutanlar)*, Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014)

“Adrianople” (entry) in *The Encyclopedia of Europe 1789-1914*, eds. John Merriman & Jay Winter, New York: Scribners, 2006

“The Eastern Question” (entry) in *The Encyclopedia of Europe 1789-1914*, eds. John Merriman & Jay Winter, New York: Scribners, 2006

“From Kirkilisse to The Great Offensive: Turkish Encirclement Operations 1912-1922” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 40, Number 1, January 2004

“The Ottoman Empire” (essay) in *History in Dispute: The First World War*, ed. Dr. Dennis Showalter, Detroit: St. Martins Press, 2002

The Balkan Wars (1912-1913)

Defeat in Detail, The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912-1913, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003 (Published in Turkish as *Büyük Hezimet, Balkan Harpleri'nde Osmanlı Ordusu*, Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2013)

“Lessons Learned from the Balkan Wars” (introductory chapter) in *Lasting Socio-Political Impacts of the Balkan Wars*, eds. Peter Sluglett & Hakan Yavuz, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012

The First World War (1914-1918)

“*Ottoman Campaigns in the First World War*” in *The Journal for Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, February 2021

“*Wasp or Mosquito? The Arab Revolt in Turkish Military History*” in the *British Journal for Military History*, Volume 4, Issue 3, July 2018

Palestine, The Ottoman Campaigns of 1914-1918, Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2016

“Ottoman Artillery in the First World War” (chapter) eds. Sanders Marble & Bruce Gudmundsson, *King of the Battlefield, Artillery in World War One*, Leiden: Brill, 2016

Gallipoli, Command under Fire, Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015 (Published in Turkish as *Çanakkale Savaşı, Ateş Altında Komuta*, Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019)

“Gallipoli” (chapter) in *Places of Encounter: Time, Place and Connectivity in World History*, eds. Aran MacKinnon & Elaine MacKinnon, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012

Gallipoli, The Ottoman Campaign, Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2010 (Published in Turkish as *Gelibolu, Osmanlı Cephesi*, Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012)

By the Light of a Candle, The Diaries of a Reserve Officer in the Ottoman Army: The WW1 Diaries of Ragıp Nurettin Ege, Trans: Gunes Ege-Akter, annotated by Edward Erickson, Istanbul: Isis Press, 2009 (Republished in the United States by Gorgias Press, Piscataway, NJ, 2010)

Gallipoli and the Middle East 1914-1918, From the Dardanelles to Mesopotamia, (UK Foreword by Gary Sheffield/US Foreword by Dennis Showalter) London: Amber Books, 2008 (Military Book Club Selection; Published in Polish as *Gallipoli, I Bliski Wschód, 1914-1918, Od Dardaneli do Mezopotamii*, Poznan, Poland: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2011; Published in Swedish as *Första Världskriget Del 5: Gallipoli och Mellanöstern*, Stockholm, Sweden: Svenskt Militärhistoriskt Bibliotek 2009. (Swedish Military Book Club Selection); Published in Turkish as *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı: Dünya Savaş Tarihi*, Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2011)

Ottoman Army Effectiveness in W.W.I: A Comparative Study, London and New York: Routledge 2007 (Published in Turkish as *Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusu [Çanakkale, Kutül-Amare ve Filistin Cephesi]*, Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009)

“*The Turkish Official Military Histories of the First World War, A Bibliographic Essay*” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 39, Number 3, July 2003

“Gallipoli” (essay) in *History in Dispute: The First World War*, ed. Dr. Dennis Showalter, Detroit: St. Martins Press, 2002

“The Arab Revolt” (essay) in *History in Dispute: The First World War*, ed. Dr. Dennis Showalter, Detroit: St. Martins Press, 2002

“*Strength Against Weakness, Ottoman Military Effectiveness at Gallipoli, 1915*” in *The Journal of Military History*, Number 65, October 2001

“One More Push, Forcing the Dardanelles in March 1915” in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 24, Number 3, September 2001

“Very Good Indeed, Ottoman III Corps Effectiveness at Gallipoli” (conference paper) in *The First World War: Middle Eastern Perspective*, Tel Aviv: Israeli Society for Military History, Tel Aviv University, 2001

“WW1: Armed Forces, the Balkan Countries” (bibliographic essay) in *The Reader's Guide to Military History*, ed. Charles Messenger, London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001

Ordered To Die, A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publications Group, 2000 (Published in Turkish as *Sizge Ölmeyi Emrediyorum! Bininci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusu*, Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2003)

“Turkey Prepares for War, 1913-1914” in *Relevance, The Quarterly Journal of the Great War Society*, Volume 9, Number 2, Spring 2000

The Armenian Counterinsurgency Campaign (1914-1915)

A Global History of Relocation in Counterinsurgency Warfare, Editor and contributor, London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2020

“The Armenian Lost Cause and the Interpreted History of the American Civil War” in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Volume 39, Issue 1, March 2019 (Published in Turkish as “Ermeni ‘Kayıp Dava’ Mitolojisi,” *Derin Tarih*, Haziran (June) 2021, Sayı (Volume) 111)

Ottomans and Armenians, A Study in Counterinsurgency, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013 (Published in Russian as *Турки и армяне, Исследование борьбы с повстанцами*, Moscow: Rosspen, 2018; Published in Turkish as *Osmanlılar ve Ermeniler, Bir İsyan ve Karşı Harekâtın Tarihi*, Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2015)

“The Armenian Relocations and Ottoman National Security, 1915: Military Necessity or Excuse for Genocide?” in *Middle East Critique*, Volume 20, Number 3, Fall 2011

“Captain Larkin and the Turks: The Strategic Impact of the Operations of HMS Doris in Early 1915 in Middle Eastern Studies, Volume 46, Number 1, January 2010

“The Armenians and Ottoman National Security, 1915” in *War in History*, Sage Publications, UK, Volume 15, Number 2, April 2008

“Armenian Massacres, New Records Undercut Old Blame” in *The Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. XIII, Number 3, Summer 2006 (Published in Turkish as “Ermeni Katliamları: Yeni Bulgular Eski Suçlamaları Çürüttü” in *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Number 23-24; Republished in *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 8, Number 3, July-September 2006)

“Bayonets on Musa Dagh, Ottoman Counterinsurgency Operations-1915” in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 28, Number 3, June 2005

“The Armenian Genocide” (essay) in *History in Dispute: The First World War*, ed. Dr. Dennis Showalter, Detroit: St. Martins Press, 2002

The Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923)

The Turkish War of Independence, A Military History, 1919-1923, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishing, 2021

“Decisive Battles in the Asia Minor Campaign” (chapter) and “Conclusion” in *Salvation and Catastrophe, The Greek-Turkish War 1919-1922*, ed. Konstantinos Travlos, Lexington Books, 2020

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“*The 44-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh; Turkish Drone Success or Operational Art?*” in the Military Review (On-Line Exclusive Edition), Army University Press, August 2021

Phase Line Attila, The Amphibious Campaign for Cyprus, Co-Author with Dr. Mesut Uyar, Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2020

“The Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, the SOE, and Gerasimov” (article), *Derin Tarih* (Turkish Journal), June 2016

Strategic Water; Iraq and Security Planning in the Euphrates-Tigris Basin, Co-author with F.M. Lorenz, Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2013

“*Turkey as Regional Hegemon - 2014, Strategic Implications for the United States*” in Turkish Studies, Volume 5, Number 3, autumn 2004

“Turkey: Armed Forces” (bibliographic essay) in *The Reader's Guide to Military History*, ed. Charles Messenger, London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001

The Euphrates Triangle, Security Implications of the Southeast Anatolia Project, Co-author with F.M. Lorenz, Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1999

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS FROM THE BODY OF WORK

I believe that I have made significant original and scholarly contributions to the field through my efforts to understand the dynamics of military victory and defeat. Although my publications about Ottoman and Turkish military history span from its earliest days through the present day my ‘historical center of mass’ is the period 1912-1923 including the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, the First World War, and the Turkish War of Independence. I specialize in the operational level of war, which links the tactical level of war to the strategic level of war, therefore what I call my ‘military center of mass’ are operational military campaigns and how these were planned and executed. I feel that my major contributions to the field of Ottoman and Turkish military are:

- The Balkan Wars: 1) the origins and implementation of the triangular infantry division and 2) the first explanation in English of the operational history of the war.

- The First World War: 1) the emergence and advancement of a cadre of seasoned and proficient commanders and general staff officers, 2) the Ottoman record of Gallipoli and Palestine, 3) the army's counterinsurgency campaign against the Armenian revolutionary committees, 4) the army's logistics and lines of communications posture and vulnerabilities in 1915, 5) the Ottoman Army reinterpreted as a very effective army capitalizing on high levels of initiative and mobility, 6) the Ottoman Army's capability to task organize *ad hoc* combat groups, and 6) the ineffectiveness of TE Lawrence's irregular operations.
- The Turkish War of Independence: 1) the hybrid threats facing the Nationalists and how M. Kemal Atatürk organized the victory, 2) the integration of the theaters and campaigns into a coherent narrative for non-Turks, and 3) the analysis of how the Nationalists successfully fought a multi-front war against conventional and irregular enemies.
- The Cyprus Peace Operation: the first presentation in English of the campaign and how the Turks successfully planned and executed a joint aero-amphibious operation.

VIEWS ON CONNECTING OTTOMAN AND TURKISH MILITARY HISTORY

My work as an historian and service as an army officer have shaped my thinking on the connections between the historical Ottoman military and the military forces of the modern Republic of Turkey. I would like to share my views on connecting Ottoman and Turkish military history and to briefly present my thoughts on its progression from 1300 to the present day. The periods I present constitute my personal assessments about their meaning and impact, and how I organize my own thinking about linking Ottoman and Turkish military history. This is not a strictly defined historical narrative about the 'periodization' of the various phases of Ottoman and Turkish military history – rather, it is my holistic view of how I approach Ottoman Turkish military history at the 'macro-level' and I will cite my own work should the reader want more details of my positions.

In my many years of service as a United States Army officer I had many opportunities to work with the Turkish Army, in particular with the Turkish III and V Corps, and with the 5th Artillery Regiment. I also served in NATO assignments in Izmir and Naples with Turkish officers and soldiers, and I sponsored Turkish staff officers at the U.S. Army Command and Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Moreover, I worked with Turks in Bosnia and in Iraq, and today I continue my association with the Turkish military through my writing and through my close friendship with retired Turkish officers and diplomats. It should seem obvious to the reader that I am an admirer of the Turkish Armed Forces and that I have a deep appreciation for the Turkish Armed Forces as a professional institution.

We know, of course, that the modern Turkish Republic is not the Ottoman Empire, but I believe it is fair to say the Turkish Armed Forces carry forward the traditions and aspirations of its Ottoman predecessor. It is my belief that resiliency, innovation, and dynamic leadership have been the continuing signatures of the Ottoman and Turkish military history throughout the last one thousand years and these attributes serve to connect the Ottoman and the Turkish military systems though time and space today.

FOUNDATIONS 1300-1451

The Turcoman warriors who swept from the Altai Hills of central Asia were a part of the steppe-nomadic military tradition of horsemen armed with composite bows. They prevailed over the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071 in what amounted to a battle of annihilation. This victory firmly established the Gazi Warriors of Osman as world-class fighters and enabled the Osmanlis to conquer Anatolia. But recognizing the difficulties of a semi-disciplined nomadic army the Osmanli dynasty gradually created a standing army which incorporated many aspects of their Byzantine opponent. The standing army composed light infantry corps which were created in the early 1300s as well as Sipahi light cavalry units. However, the most well-known innovation of the Osmanli military was the formation of slave based Kapıkulu Ocakları, which transformed into the world-famous and feared Janissaries (Yeniçeriler).¹ The Janissaries provided the backbone of the Ottoman military system until the end of the eighteenth century and may be characterized as a fighting elite. Crossing into the Europe the Ottomans won victory after victory although some, like Kosovo in 1389, were exceptionally costly. As the army moved into the fourteenth century it acquired artillery, and forward-thinking sultans embraced the Era of Gunpowder armies. The second battle of Kosovo in 1448 proved a turning point for the Ottoman army when it used up-to-date battle tactics and also integrated firearms with infantry and cavalry.

APEX PREDATOR 1451-1683

The ascension of Sultan Mehmed II to the throne in 1451 marked the beginning of what Professor Mesut Uyar has called the Classical Period in Ottoman military affairs.² In 1453, the young sultan conquered Constantinople using innovative methods to move ships into the Golden Horn as well as employing the first modern siege train of heavy artillery to destroy the city's formidable walls. Very importantly, in this period, the Ottomans created an innovative and advanced logistical system which enabled them to deploy large forces on the empire's frontiers for extended periods of time. It also developed a more advanced system of auxiliary forces and built a system of modern fortresses. While the Classical Period ended in 1606, the Ottoman army remained the world's dominant military machine until it reached its high-water mark and defeat at the gates of Vienna in 1683. To be fair, the army was already showing signs of decline but, in many ways, the decline was relative because the European armies were catching up to the Ottomans in their organizational and technological approach to war. In this period, however, the Ottoman army proved resilient and unbeatable in combat, and it is fair to say that it was in a class by itself.³

LION IN WINTER 1683-1876

So, we might ask, "how did the Ottoman military lose its preeminent position as the world's best?" I believe that there are two principal reasons.⁴ First, the Ottomans fell behind the Europeans technologically and their weapons systems grew obsolete over time. But, more importantly, the effects of the modern Military Revolutions occurring in Europe (military historians agree today that there were five Military Revolutions) doomed Ottoman efforts. In the First Military

¹ Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *Osmanlı Askeri Tarihi*, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Edward J. Erickson, "The Ottoman Empire," *History in Dispute: The First World War*, ed. Dr. Dennis Showalter, (Detroit: St. Martins Press, 2002).

Revolution, modern nation-states created financial systems which enabled a nation to bear the high costs of the creation of standing professional military forces. This led to the professionalization and standardization of the small but highly effective armies of the Age of Frederick the Great. The second Military Revolution was an outcome of the French Revolution and involved national conscription and national mobilization. The huge armies of the Age of Napoleon were the result. Finally, the third Military Revolution was the result of industrialization which enabled nation-states to mass produce modern weapons. While some sultans attempted military reforms, notably Sultan Selim III, the Ottoman state failed to recognize and embrace the Military Revolutions which were changing the balance of power in Europe on a continuing basis. How do we explain this loss of military competitiveness? There are many explanations, but I believe the simplest one is that the Ottoman state was heavily bound in tradition and also bound by an institutional resistance to change. It is difficult for successful institutions (and nations) to change doing what has always worked for them. But, in particular, both the government and its people rejected European ideas as well as the rejecting the industrialization of society and the economy. This inevitably led to the empire being locked into the technologies of the seventeenth century. Over time, after losing a series of costly wars, the empire lost the Crimea, Greece, Hungary, and large parts of the Caucasus and the Balkans. Regardless of causation, by 1876, the Ottoman Empire was labeled “the Sick Man of Europe.”⁵

RENAISSANCE 1876-1922

Something of a renaissance began with the accession of Sultan Abdülhamid II to the throne. The young sultan was very interested in the new technologies and was determined to catch up to the west. The Meijis of Japan had already begun such a process and many Ottomans, especially military officers, shared Abdülhamid’s vision. The sultan began the importation of modern weapons but, most importantly, invited a German military mission to advise the Ottoman army in its modernization efforts.⁶ While the empire still had military defeats, the adoption of German military educational methods and curriculums led to the growth of a cadre of committed young professional officers dedicated to modernization.⁷

Out of this emerged the Young Turks, many of whom, including Mustafa Kemal, would lead the nation in its struggle for survival in the 1920s. The Ottoman army’s reform efforts were quite successful in creating military institutions that could withstand the rigors of war and defeat European opponents.⁸ The army was notably innovative and created the modern Triangular Infantry Division as well as evolving the most effective system for creating new combat-ready infantry divisions in the First World War.⁹ Although the Ottomans lost the First World War it is

⁵ Edward J. Erickson, “The Eastern Question,” *The Encyclopedia of Europe 1789-1914*, eds. John Merriman & Jay Winter, (New York: Scribners, 2006).

⁶ Edward J. Erickson, “Template for Destruction, The Congress of Berlin and the Evolution of Ottoman Counterinsurgency Practices,” *The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, eds. Peter Sluglett and Hakan Yavuz, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011).

⁷ Edward J. Erickson, *Büyük Hezimet, Balkan Harpleri’nde Osmanlı Ordusu*, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2013).

⁸ Edward J. Erickson, “In the Nick of Time: Transformation in the Ottoman Army, 1911,” *Preliminary Moves, 1911*, (Canberra: Australian Army History Unit, 2012).

⁹ Edward J. Erickson, *Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Ordusu (Çanakkale, Kutü’l-Amare ve Filistin Cephesi)*, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009); Edward J. Erickson, “Lessons Learned from the Balkan Wars,” *Lasting Socio-Political Impacts of the Balkan Wars*, eds. Peter Sluglett and Hakan Yavuz, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012).

worth remembering that their army did not collapse or mutiny, and that it was still fighting hard at the time of the armistice. It is significant that the Ottomans defeated the Allies at Gallipoli in 1915 and halted the British in Palestine until late 1917.¹⁰

A cadre of seasoned, experienced, and brilliant leaders emerged from the ashes of disaster to lead the Nationalist armies against the invading Greeks during the War of Independence.¹¹ Not only were these generals tactically and technically proficient in their combat skills but they proved brilliant in training and rebuilding the Nationalist army. Mustafa Kemal's Great Offensive (Büyük Tarruz) in August 1922 provided the world with a lesson in modern tactics, which was that encirclement battles of annihilation were still possible.¹² The subsequent pursuit to Izmir and the nearly total destruction of the Greek Army was model of its kind and paved the way for successful negotiations at the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.¹³ It is also clear that without prescient and enlightened leaders, who recognized and reacted successfully to change in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, modern Turkey would exist today only as the tiny rump state as envisioned by the Treaty of Sèvres.

THE ATATURK ERA 1923-1991

The importance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the creation of modern Turkey is beyond doubt. His efforts to industrialize the economy and unify Turkish society provided a strong platform from which to bring the new nation into the mainstream of the global system.¹⁴ Importantly, Atatürk's dictum "Peace at home, peace in the world" provided foreign policy stability for Turkey during the tempestuous inter-war years and his successor, İsmet İnönü (who was also a brilliant and skilled general) successfully kept Turkey out of the Second World War (until its very last days). This was a crucial because it enabled Turkey to compete fairly against the war-damaged economies of the post-war European powers.

Turkey joined NATO in 1952 thereby becoming an integral and important ally of the United States in the Cold War. The nation's military and naval forces became increasingly proficient during this period. Of note, the Turkish air force, army, and navy conducted a brilliant amphibious campaign to secure Northern Cyprus in 1974, which demonstrated an ability to conduct combined arms operations of the most difficult type.¹⁵ After the American arms embargo in 1974, the Turkish General Staff embarked on a systemic and deliberate program to encourage and assist Turkish firms to forge a domestic armaments industry. This was designed to achieve strategic autonomy by making the nation self-sufficient in the domestic production of armaments and munitions. The

¹⁰ Edward J. Erickson, Gelibolu, *Osmanlı Cephesi*, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012); Edward J. Erickson, *Osmanlılar ve Ermeniler, Bir İsyan ve Karşı Harekâtın Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2015); Edward J. Erickson, Palestine, *The Ottoman Campaigns of 1914-1918*, (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2016); Edward J. Erickson, *Çanakkale Savaşı, Ateş Altında Komuta*, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019).

¹¹ Edward J. Erickson, "Decisive Battles in the Asia Minor Campaign" and "Conclusion," *Salvation and Catastrophe, The Greek-Turkish War 1919-1922*, ed. Konstantinos Travlos, (Lexington Books, 2020).

¹² Edward J. Erickson, "From Kırkılıse to The Great Offensive: Turkish Encirclement Operations 1912-1922," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 40, Number 1, January 2004.

¹³ Edward J. Erickson, *The Turkish War of Independence, A Military History, 1919-1923*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishing, 2021.

¹⁴ Edward J. Erickson, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Büyük Komutanlar)*, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014).

¹⁵ Edward J. Erickson and Mesut Uyar, *Phase Line Attila, The Amphibious Campaign for Cyprus*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2020).

effort was innovatively unique among the global roster of American allies and recipients of military assistance packages.

As the Cold War advanced the Turkish armed forces became increasingly important in NATO defense planning to keep the Soviets, in the event of war, from breaking through the Turkish Straits to the Mediterranean Sea. Of note, the Turkish military became one of three NATO nations using unmanned drones – a harbinger of the future in the 1980s. Turkey also became a full partner in the deployment, and planning for employment, of NATO tactical nuclear weapons. It should also be noted that, starting in the late 1970s, the Turkish military also fought a successful domestic counterinsurgency campaign against the PKK which was largely won by the end of the century. This period is, to my way of thinking, characterized by a defensive mind-set and a robust conventional capability designed to defend the territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic to direct attack by a neighboring state.

A SECOND RENAISSANCE 1991-PRESENT

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union two years later, presented Turkey with an imperative and an opportunity to restructure its defense establishment and its military policy. This period is characterized by a shift from a defensive strategic posture to an offensive posture and force capability.¹⁶ After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Turkish armed forces participated in UN operations in Somalia in 1992, providing both troops and a commanding general. Turkish participation in NATO-led operations in Bosnia and Kosovo and EU-led operations in Albania further enhanced the skills of its military forces. Cross-border army corps-level operations in the 1990s into Iraq to destroy PKK sanctuaries, and the brilliant special operations raid in 1999 capturing PKK terrorist leader Adbullah Ocalan in Kenya, proved indisputably that the Turkish armed forces could be labeled “world class.”¹⁷

A path-breaking White Paper published by the Turkish General Staff in 2000 fundamentally changed Turkish military policy from a defensive posture to a more proactive and offensively minded posture. The White Paper explicitly stated that Turkish military forces would be prepared and capable of transferring operations across borders, when necessary, in order to maintain a forward defense. The general staff subsequently announced defense targets which committed the military to form a Peace and Security Zone in the surrounding region when necessary.¹⁸ The White Paper’s changes in national defense posture startled Turkey’s NATO partners but served notice that Turkey’s military had entered the twenty-first century as a force to be considered in geo-strategic considerations.

In the new century Turkish armed forces participated in NATO operations in Afghanistan and what came to be called “the Zorlu Doctrine” entered the NATO vocabulary as an innovative counterinsurgency policy. Turkey also provided peacekeeping forces for Lebanon and provided command and control support for NATO air operations over Libya in 2011. Turkish armed forces

¹⁶ Edward J. Erickson, “Leadership and Organizational Architecture,” *Uluslararası Liderlik Sempozyumu: Bildiriler*, (Ankara: Kara Harp Okulu Basım Evi, 2004).

¹⁷ F.M. Lorenz and Edward J. Erickson, *The Euphrates Triangle, Security Implications of the Southeast Anatolia Project*, (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Edward J. Erickson, “Turkey as Regional Hegemon - 2014, Strategic Implications for the United States,” *Turkish Studies*, Volume 5, Number 3, (Autumn 2004).

also provided stabilization in northern Iraq through observers and forward presence as well.¹⁹ Throughout this period Turkey maintained its NATO commitment but transitioned its armed forces from heavy defensive forces to lighter expeditionary rapid reaction forces. The Turkish army's III Corps headquarters proved fully deployable by taking command of NATO operations in Afghanistan. Today, the III Corps headquarters, as well as some subordinate units, is designated as the 'NATO Rapid Deployable Corps – Turkey' and is fully capable of out of area missions.

In the wake of the Arab spring, Turkey reacted to external Daesh and PYD/PKK-related threats by deploying military forces into northern Syria and Iraq. These were instrumental in ending the Daesh domination of northern Iraq and also in protecting the southern borders from PYD/PKK threats. Simultaneously the Turkish armed forces successfully crushed a renewed outbreak of PKK terrorism in the southeast. Although a tiny number of military members supported the attempted July 2016 coup the vast majority of military members remained steadfastly loyal to the constitutionally elected government. In 2020, the overwhelming success of Azerbaijan in retaking the occupied provinces of Nagorno-Karabakh in the 44-Day War owed much to Turkish military assistance, training, and reequipping the Azerbaijanis for modern war.²⁰ It is clear that in the same way Ottoman armed forces recognized the need for change in the 1870s, and reacted to that imperative, the modern Turkish armed forces have reacted to change in similarly successful ways.²¹

CONCLUSION

So, what is there to be said about connecting Ottoman military history to modern Turkish military history or, for that matter, to contemporary Turkish Armed Forces operations today? My twenty-year endeavor has led me to three enduring signatures which unify these threads. First, since their foundational periods, Ottoman and Turkish armed forces have proven exceptionally resilient and combat-ready, both in victory and in defeat. Second, military innovation driven by the recognition of tactical and technological change has been a hallmark of these forces throughout their history. Third, dynamic and brilliant leadership has been an outstanding characteristic of Ottoman and Turkish armed forces for almost a thousand years. By any measurement this is a remarkable history which shows no signs of slowing down in the twenty-first century.

¹⁹ F.M. Lorenz and Edward J. Erickson, *Strategic Water; Iraq and Security Planning in the Euphrates-Tigris Basin*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2013).

²⁰ Edward J. Erickson, "The 44-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh; Turkish Drone Success or Operational Art?" *Military Review* (On-Line Exclusive Edition), (Army University Press, August 2021).

²¹ Edward J. Erickson, "The Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, the SOE, and Gerasimov," *Derin Tarih* (Turkish Journal), June 2016.

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