



Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Command)

By Edward J. Erickson

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Mustafa Kemal was one of the 20th century's greatest combat commanders. Winston Churchill labeled him as a 'Man of Destiny', his service at Gallipoli and in the War of Independence were pivotal in the success of Turkish armies. Moreover, after leading the Nationalist army to victory and establishing the modern Turkish Republic, he took the name Atatürk, or father of the Turks, as his own.

Born to a middle class family in Salonika, he attended military school in the late 19th century and graduated from the Ottoman Military College in Constantinople in 1905. He saw service in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-12 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 before taking command of the 19th Division based in Gallipoli during World War I. His sterling service led to his promotion to corps command during the fighting against the Russians in the Caucasus after which he took charge of Seventh Army in Palestine, and managed to keep his command during the harrowing retreat following the British victory at the battle of Megiddo in September 1918.

Following the end of the war he took command of the nationalist forces struggling against the occupation of Turkey and managed to defeat Greek forces that sought to occupy Smyrna, thus preserving Turkey's territorial integrity. Following his military victory, Kemal deposed Sultan Mehmed VI, abolishing the sultanate and the caliphate, and became Turkey's first president in 1924, serving until his death 1938. He is remembered in the west today as a secular westernizer and modernizer, who set his country on the path toward democracy and market capitalism.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Dr Edward J. Erickson is an Associate Professor of Military History at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. Dr. Erickson is widely recognized as one of the foremost specialists on the Ottoman Army during the First World War. Among the numerous books and articles 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; Ottoman Army Effectiveness in WW1, A Comparative Study, and Gallipoli and the Middle East 1914-1918.

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