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GALLIPOLI

THE RISE OF MUSTAFA KEMAL, AND THE MARTIAL CREATION OF THE TURKISH NATION

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ABSTRACT. The Gallipoli Campaign was often considered a sideshow of the Great War, but it played an important role in creating the myth of Mustafa Kemal, who should become the leader of Turkish nationalism after the First World War ended. The Turkish nation was created by war and Kemal, later Atatürk (Father of the Turks) was the decisive figure within the process. His fame might have originated by defending the Ottoman Empire against foreign invasion, but his political power was based on the victories during the war of independence. The present article traces the rise of Mustafa Kemal, the genesis of Turkish nationalism in the first third of the 20th century and the role the Gallipoli campaign played for it.

KEYWORDS: Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal, Turkish nationalism, First World War.

Although the main focus of research related to the centennial of the First World War is still directed on the campaigns in Europe, in particular the Western Front, “the Gallipoli operations are the most famous and well-remembered today” (Ulrichsen 2014: 75).¹ The memory of the

events related to the Gallipoli campaign (Macleod 2015) has played an important role in Britain, as well as in Australia, where discussions about the reasons for its failure and the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) myth, respectively, were at the center of commem-

¹ For extensive discussions of the campaign, see Haythornthwaite (1991), Carlyon (2003), Hart (2014), Erickson (2015a, 2015b), Liddle (2015), Moorehead (2015 [1958]) and Jacob (2020a).

orative events (Hopkins-Weise 2007; Prior 2015). However, the victory at Gallipoli was as important for the Turkish memory as the defeat and shared suffering were for the Australian identity (Jacob 2019). Ulrichsen emphasizes the role Gallipoli-related memories have played for the Australian and Turkish nations since the end of the First World War, as this military campaign “has come to symbolise the rise of a national consciousness in both countries, and the memory and bravery of those who took part continue to reverberate a century on” (2014: 75). However, Gallipoli as a symbol lost its power with the end of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Ottoman victory at the Dardanelles established the myth of Mustafa Kemal, the later Atatürk, who led the troops of the Ottoman Empire into the attack against foreign invaders, the post-war political leader of independent Turkey would reshape the semiotics related to his own role during the First World War and the following war of independence. Instead of referring to his early military success as an awakening point of Turkish nationalism, he would change the semiotics to focus stronger on his own role as the leading man of a new era. The following article will address how Atatürk reshaped Ottoman nationalism into Turkish nationalism, by shifting the focus from Gallipoli towards the more important legacy of the war of independence and his own role during these years. The article will also show how this Atatürkian shift is currently contested by Neo-Ottomanism and a return to pre-Republican narratives and semiotics.

After the Battle for the Gallipoli Peninsula, Kemal himself had become a symbol of the resistance of the Ottoman Empire against Western invasion, something the Ottoman military leadership had intended by its participation in the First World War on the side of Germany. With their decision to join the war on the German side in 1914, the Ottoman

leadership had originally intended to save the empire from partition and colonial rule, but the war would trigger its further decline and fall (Aksakal 2008: 2). The Young Turks and their attempts to reform the empire had already stimulated a Turkish nationalism before the First World War (Feroz 1969; Findley 2010: 201-205), but the Balkan Wars had weakened the empire, and their defeat in 1918 initially limited the chances for the Turkish national struggle, although the nation would be forged in wars continuing until 1922 (Findley 2010: 219-226). The rise of the Turkish nation from the ashes, to use a metaphorical expression, was related to another rise, namely that of Mustafa Kemal, a military officer who would begin to determine and decide the future of an independent Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War. His success was based on the victory at Gallipoli as well, because Kemal, who would become known as Atatürk, “Father of the Turks,” was not only remembered as the defender of the Turkish nation in the post-war period, but also as someone who in 1915 had already defeated the imperialist attempt of the Entente to conquer the soil that would later belong to the Turkish nation. Kemal’s rise to power was consequently related to his military successes that laid the foundation for his political reshaping of Turkey from 1922.

The present article therefore intends to follow the history of the building of the Turkish nation state, to emphasize how the role of Atatürk was reshaped and re-defined. The commemoration of Kemal’s military victories at Gallipoli and between 1918 and 1922, when he defended the new nation against foreign invaders stimulated an anti-imperialist nationalism, which was quite common in colonial and semi-colonial regions of the world in the interwar period.² However, Kemal went further than just building an independent nation, he inscribed himself as a semiotic figure within the national nar-

² For example, for a discussion of Chinese nationalism in relation to the First World War and Japanese imperialism, see Jacob (2020b).

rative. To achieve this, Kemal would not only use a nationalist language, which, according to Umiker-Sebeok (1977: 122) is not the only way to establish a semiotic system, but used his own image to emphasize his role for all Turkish people to be seen. Kemalism became part of a semiotic system in Turkey in which he provided what Umberto Eco referred to as a form communicative process: “When the destination [of a communicative process] is a human being ... we are ... witnessing a process of signification—provided that the signal is not merely a stimulus but arouses an interpretive response in the addressee. This process is made possible by the existence of a code. (Eco 1979: 8) Remembering the birth of the Turkish nation meant remembering Kemal, whose statue would be seen in all parts of Turkey to define a new set of semiotics for the national narrative that went beyond language and image alone (Barthes 1977: 9), i.e. to provide a possibility for the popular understanding of what the Turkish nation was supposed to be based on: Kemal Atatürk. The new semiotic instrumentalization of his own past and its broad visualization was consequently supposed to establish meaning (Genosko 2016: 1. Also see Kristeva 1971: 1)

1. KEMALS’S RISE AFTER GALLIPOLI

Before further elaborating on Kemal’s nationalist interpretation of Ottoman and Turkish history, a short description of his career and achievements seems to be in order here. Born in Thessaloniki in 1880/81 as Mustafa Kemal, he undertook a military career that would eventually also change the way people referred to him. He achieved the rank of brigadier in the Ottoman Army by 1916, and he was thereafter referred to as Mustafa Kemal Pasha. After 1921, when his victory against the Greek Army at the Sakarya River turned him into a national hero and defender of Turkey, he was called Gazi, which could be translated either as “conquering hero” or “champion of Islam.” In 1934, once he had established and secured the independent nation state

of modern Turkey, the national assembly chose to award him with the name “Atatürk” and would thereby forever inscribe his history into that of the Turkish nation (Zürcher 2012: 130). This rise to power was made possible by Kemal’s military successes, and until the end of the First World War, his career was a purely military one. While Kemal had been trained according to Western standards during his time at military schools and the academy for future members of the general staff in Constantinople (today’s Istanbul), he shared the idea of Turkish independence early on and therefore joined the Young Turks in 1908 and participated in their “revolution” during the same year (Hanioglu 2001; Der Matosian 2014; Lévy-Aksu & Georgeon 2017).

Sultan Abdülhamid II had intended to modernize his empire by establishing institutions that would provide Western-oriented education, but this also stimulated “the emergence of an enlightened intelligentsia within the ranks of the civil and military bureaucracy that adopted the principles of the French Revolution” (Dincsaahin 2015: 9). With an enlightened military elite, the sultan had also created his own enemies, who would demand political reforms to turn the Ottoman Empire into a constitutional monarchy to prevent its further decline. This was also a secular movement, as the Young Turks “despised Abdülhamid II’s personal piety” and “blamed his attachment to Islam for his autocratic conservatism” (Reynolds 2011: 83), although they shared the same enemy as the Muslim forces of the empire, namely Western imperialism. The Young Turks were consequently not a homogenous movement but divided into different factions, with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the one Kemal had been a part of as well, being one of the more progressive forces (Dincsaahin 2015: 9).

The “revolution” of 1908 had shown that the diversity of the Young Turks movement would cause problems, especially since “non-Muslim communities sought opportunities to establish self-rule

in their own nation-states rather than remaining subjects of the Sultan” (ibid.). Kemal nevertheless continued his military life for the next few years and in 1911 organized guerilla warfare against Italy in Tripolitania before serving during the Balkan Wars. He continued to be active and influential in the CUP, although he was not one of its political leaders. During the July Crisis, Kemal, at that time a lieutenant colonel, served as the Ottoman military attaché in Sofia for the Balkan states, namely Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia (Tetik 2007). While he was negotiating with Bulgarian authorities to join the war on the side of Germany and the Ottoman Empire, Kemal realized that he would prefer an assignment of combat duty instead, and in November 1914, when war had officially been declared, he approached Enver Pasha with the request to be transferred. His anti-German position, as he had criticized the German military mission in the Ottoman Empire before, as well as his activities with regard to the CUP prevented such an assignment at that time. However, in January 1915, as the war had continued and demanded capable officers, “Mustafa Kemal finally left Sofia to take command of an Ottoman division that as yet existed only on paper” (Hanioglu 2011: 73). In February 1915, Kemal was in Thrace to recruit and train his division, but a British attack, passing through the Dardanelles with a fleet, alarmed the military leadership and commanded him to head for Gallipoli. Hanioglu has emphasized how the war created a window of opportunity for Kemal, whose rise was now made possible, and although “[s]eated at an embassy desk scarcely one month before, he now found himself in the midst of one of the greatest battles of modern times. At last he would have the chance to command an offensive operation within the context of a defensive campaign and win thereby a place in history” (ibid.: 74).

It was the victory at Gallipoli and Kemal’s role in defending the landing zones against the Allied troops – he had taken the initiative and attacked the latter ones without waiting for a German approval – that proved that the Ottoman Army was not inferior, as many war planners in London had anticipated. In addition, the Ottoman military victory laid the ground for Kemal’s reputation as a successful defender of national interests (McMeekin 2012: 38). When the “British withdrew their entire expeditionary force in January 1916, Gallipoli had become synonymous with Allied humiliation and Turkish triumph” (ibid.), and Kemal’s rise to power began, although the German commander of the defending troops, Otto Liman von Sanders, would later complain that the Turkish officer’s role during the Gallipoli campaign had been overemphasized.³ Regardless of such a critical view by a former German commanding officer after the First World War, the Turkish nation-building process centered around “two key victories: Gallipoli and the Turkish War of Independence of 1919-22, which culminated in the republic’s recognition in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne” (Macleod 2015: 155). Both of them were relevant for Mustafa Kemal, who, however, would due to political necessities rather emphasize the latter, which made out of the Ottoman defender of the Dardanelles the hero and “father” of Turkish independence. The defeat in the Balkan Wars had already made the Young Turks demand “a new spirit and enthusiasm” (Beşikçi 2014: 555) for the army, and men like Kemal had tried to strengthen their political influence as well. However, the Ottoman Army was suffering from several problems, including insufficient logistics and diseases (Ozdemir 2008: 28-31, 48). All in all, the Ottoman Army was nevertheless able to mobilize around 3,000,000 men during the First World War (Turkish Military Archives, Ankara, BDH, Folder 62/File 309A/Index 005, cited in Beşikçi

³ Liman von Sanders to Carl Mühlmann, Munich, January 30, 1927, German Federal Archives, Military Archives (BArch MArch), RH61/1088.

2014: 558), and the experience of the war was shared by many men who would later support Kemal's claim for independent power under his leadership.

Regardless of their large number, Beşikçi described several problems the Ottoman Army was weakened by:

First of all, there was the problem of lack of standardization among regions regarding recruitment. [...] Secondly, although at the beginning a short war was generally expected, the Ottoman state began to have difficulty in sustaining a large-scale and permanent mobilization as the war continued. And, thirdly, resistance to conscription in the forms of draft-evasion and desertion became a major problem especially in the second half of the war. (2014: 558)

The victory at Gallipoli was consequently an outstanding experience, as it showed that the Ottoman Army was capable of winning battles if led by commanders like Kemal, who consequently became a kind of figurehead of Turkish nationalism during the First World War, since other military leaders, like Ismail Enver Pasha, had failed to secure victories, e.g. in the Caucasus region. For the "foundation myth [of the Turkish nation], the War of Independence is by far the more important, but the memory of Gallipoli is nonetheless interesting and the link between the two is Mustafa Kemal" (Macleod 2015: 155). Kemal was therefore the central figure, and after playing a role in the pivotal moments of Gallipoli and the War of Independence "he then went on to lead the Turkish national movement which fought to overthrow the stipulations of the Treaty of Sèvres, end the Ottoman sultanate, and establish sovereign, secular, and democratic government in Turkey" (ibid.). For the establishment of the independent Turkish nation, the defense of a multi-national empire, however, seemed to have been rather unsuitable and Kemal would later rather rely on an Anatolian-based Turkish nationalism to forge the new semiotic system that would center around his own person as the decisive national leader. Therefore the "nationalist histo-

riography inaugurated by the republican regime in the 1930s" tended to not over-emphasize the impact of Gallipoli as an important moment that triggered Turkish nationalism, but rather "present[ed] the emergence of Turkish nationalism as a process of 'awakening,' belated yet inevitable," (Özkirimli 2011: 90), it was also inevitable that Kemal's role as the central figure remained an important aspect of Turkish nationalism in the decades to come, because it would serve as the base for an exclusively Anatolian-Turkish nationalism that needed to be separated from its Ottoman past. When it emerged from the War of Independence in 1922, as Ugur Ümit Üngör correctly highlighted, "[m]entally, the young nation state was still blank and needed a memory. The continuous process of defining and fine-tuning a national identity entailed a parallel process for a national memory" (2011: 218). It was Kemal who provided an integrative nationalist figure, the "Father of the Turks," whose transition into Atatürk reached back to the last rearing up of the Ottoman Empire when fighting the Allied invasion forces at the Dardanelles and on the Gallipoli Peninsula, but at the same time provided a new direction for the establishment of a semiotic system, in which this victory should play a rather marginalized role.

During the battles for independence, Kemal "galvanized the simple Turkish soldier with a new courage. They were ready to follow him to hell" (Armstrong 1972: 80). This would be part of the foundational myth of modern Turkey, as without Gallipoli there would have been no opportunity for Kemal to rise. Regardless of this interrelation between the military officer and the establishment of the modern Turkish nation state, "the creator of modern Turkey, has been one of the most controversial personalities of the Muslim world in the twentieth century. Some admire him while others despise him. In some quarters he is considered a role model for Muslim leaders and in others, the enemy of Islam" (Sohail 2005: 133). Kemal's military success was initial-

ly not rewarded when the sultan acknowledged the achievements of the 27th and 57th regiments and decorated soldiers and officers in April 1916. Nor was he mentioned in official publications about the successful Ottoman defense of the Dardanelles (Macleod 2015: 157), which also seems to highlight that the depiction of his decisive role was rather related to later post-war narratives, which in a way overemphasized it to fit the new semiotic system of a Kemal that towered all Turkish citizens like a national father figure. The sign of Gallipoli, as Peirce defined it, was consequently interpreted from a retrospective point of view (Peirce 1998, vol. 2: 478) The government was interested in documenting an important victory, not a single officer. One sent “writers and journalists Ağaoğlu Ahmed, Ali Canip, Celal Sahir, Enis Behiç, Hakkı Süha, Hamdullah Suphi, Hıfzı Tevfik, Muhittin, Orhan Seyfi, Selahattin, Mehmed Emin, Yusuf Razi, Ömer Seyfettin, İbrahim Alaeddin, and Müfit Ratip; the musician Ahmed Yekta; and the painters İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya” (ibid.: 158) to the battlefield in July 1915, just six months after the Allied troops had been evacuated from the peninsula. It is therefore worth noting, as MacLeod emphasizes, that “Kemal’s role at Gallipoli became significantly more acclaimed after he attained power. Prior to that, it was the humble soldier who was primarily celebrated for his heroism at Gallipoli” (2015: 155). This is important, as the victory at Gallipoli was later more heavily emphasized to construct a line of Turkish nationalism that began with a victory against invading foreign forces, a victory that had been made possible by the man who would also unite Turkey during its fight for national sovereignty between 1918 and 1922, and it was thus an essential element of the War of Independence as well. Although Kemal was mentioned as a hero in some Ottoman reports about Gallipoli, his role would be more and more central in later narratives, although the focus tremendously shifted away from Gallipoli towards the battles related to the Turkish War of Independ-

ence. A tradition of nationalist defense was eventually invented (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) to match the necessities of Kemal’s later rule as Atatürk.

In some ways, Kemal’s life story was nevertheless very typical of a military officer who was part of the Young Turks movement (Zürcher 2012: 130), but his experience of the First World War in general, and the Gallipoli campaign in particular, as well as the War of Independence, also provided him with a chance to create an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) for all Turkish soldiers that naturally centered around Kemal, whose experiences were shared by the soldiers, and whose national program would naturally exploit references to this shared past. Kemal could, with regard to the military, and especially the new elites related to it, refer to a shared semiotic system based on the experiences of the battles and wars that had led towards independence. The Turkish nation could be built due to the struggle against foreign occupation, which is why, as Andrew Mango outlined, “[t]he emergence of a fully independent, stable Turkish national state within the community of civilised nations was a fortunate, if unintended, consequence of the policies of the victors of the [First World] War” (2010: 3).

2. THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND TURKISH NATIONALISM

After the armistice in 1918, the Ottoman Empire was occupied by the Allied powers, whose political representatives had already discussed plans on how to divide it among themselves. The fear that caused the Ottoman leaders to join the alliance with Germany in the first place would now, four years later, become a reality. In this situation, Kemal began to rise up as a prominent figure and eventually the leading man of the nationalist liberation movement (*Kuva-i Milliye*), as he “managed to pull together a coalition of diverse constituencies, which, despite profound differences of opinion and allegiance, were unified in their opposition to the foreign takeover of Anatolia” (Kezer 2015: 4). Considering the new situation

and the end of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal attempted to establish a modern nation state of Turkey, based on a more homogenous Turkish nation—excluding any minorities from power—instead of returning to the status quo ante. As a Young Turk, he had demanded reforms, but now he would long for a clear discontinuum, i.e. a new start (ibid.: 5).

Although the state, due to the necessities of military mobilization, had begun to centralize its power in the war years (Besikçi 2012: 1), there had been side effects, namely “new alliances between the state and the Anatolian Muslim population” (ibid.: 2) as well as more state control on the local level. The wartime mobilization, as Besikçi emphasizes, consequently “achieved certain objectives and played a major role in reshaping Anatolia’s social infrastructure in the years immediately preceding the Turkish National Struggle of 1919-1922” (ibid.: 314). Kemal could consequently base his efforts to secure a new and modern Turkish nation state on some aspects that had already been developed during the war. He could also channel a strong sense of nationalism, which had been directed toward minorities within Turkey, namely the Armenian population, who would become the victims of genocide during the war (Akçam 2013; Suny 2017; Morris & Ze’evi 2019), but Kemal would now use and direct these nationalist sentiments against external enemies.

In May 1919, Kemal was appointed as the new inspector of the Ninth Army at Samsun, and he was supposed to help the British occupation forces to suppress banditry in the Black Sea region. Regardless of his appointment, Kemal began to forge an alliance for national resistance with other army officers, namely Kâzım Karabekir and Ali Fuat (Cebesoy). Between June and September, several meetings and congresses in Amasya, Erzurum, and Sivas led to the formation of a Turkish nationalist principle and the alliance that was supposed to defend it against the foreign invaders. A National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*) was ratified in the

soon-to-be new capital, Ankara, and the government by the sultan Mehmet VI was declared illegitimate, while Kemal and his supporters claimed to represent the Turkish nation. Constantinople was therefore sacked again by British occupation forces, who would rule the city by martial law (McMeekin 2012: 41). Due to these events, “outraged parliamentary deputies fled to Ankara to convene the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi) on 23 April 1920, promptly electing Kemal its president” (ibid.). The Grand National Assembly acted as the new government of Turkey so that, politically, the separation from the Ottoman past had been completed, but the peace treaty of Sèvres in May 1920 had severe territorial consequences for the new nation, as Greece received almost all of Thrace and was authorized to gain the Izmir region, to be confirmed by a subsequent plebiscite. Eastern Turkey was supposed to be divided between Armenia and Kurdistan, while Italy and France would receive occupational zones between Antalya and Afyon and in Cilicia, respectively (ibid.). These terms would limit Turkey’s national integrity and sovereignty for years, and the accord stimulated a nationalist reaction as it was considered to be a dictatorial and anti-Turkish treaty, especially since it favored former minorities. McMeekin’s evaluation of the treaty’s impact highlights the nationalist responses that played into Kemal’s hands: “Sèvres was the best possible recruiting poster for Kemal’s nationalist army, which, from its base in Ankara, began a multifront war against now-independent Armenia in the Caucasus, the Greeks advancing inland from Izmir and Bursa, (in theory) the Italian and French troops to the south and southeast, and even the British, responsible for defending the Straits and the capital” (2012: 41).

The war that would follow between 1918 and 1922 was one in which Turkey had to fight alone against all, and the task seemed doomed, considering that no support could be expected from any other

power with an interest in the region, especially since Russia faced its own civil war in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Since Kemal and the Soviet Russian government were under pressure, they at least agreed on a pragmatic alliance, formally established by the Treaty of Kars in October 1921. Territorial claims were exchanged and granted. Kemal could thereby pacify his eastern front, and without the threat of a two-front war, he could focus on his main enemy, the Greek forces. Initial Turkish successes were countered by a Greek offensive, leading to the decisive battle between the two armies at the Sakarya River, in which 90,000 Turks would make a stand against 100,000 Greeks. What started as a possible battle of annihilation, as a Turkish defeat would have left the capital Ankara, around 50 miles away, open to an attack by the enemy, would, regardless of the Greeks' superiority in firepower, become a victory that would even intensify the image of Kemal as a nationalist hero who not only had defended the Ottoman Empire at Gallipoli, but also the Turkish nation at the Sakarya River: "The victory at Sakarya heralded Turkey's national revival." (ibid.: 42). The British authorities were willing to revise the Treaty of Sèvres in favor of Turkey in March 1922, granting them the Aegean region, although Thrace was supposed to remain Greek. Kemal realized that the full extent of the Turkish nation could not only be secured by peace and opted for, in a kind of Bismarckian sense, "blood and iron" to solve the current issues of the post-war order. In June 1922, the attack on Greece began, and Izmir was finally taken back in September. The Turkish forces were eventually also successful in regaining eastern Thrace, and the British had to accept these realities, while David Lloyd George, the "mastermind of Sèvres," resigned in October, "never to return to public office" (ibid.).

The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 would eventually secure the new Republic of Turkey territorially, and not only had the nation thereby "won its independence under arms, which gave its new Repub-

lican government the international prestige and legitimacy" (ibid.: 43), but Kemal had also laid the ground for his dominant role within the new nation state in the years until his death. As its first president, he would turn his military success into political power and influence, making him the main winner of the Turkish War of Independence (Zürcher 2012: 131). He would use this power to strengthen his position even further when conflicts with his former allies erupted once the foreign enemies had been defeated. In November 1924, Kazim Karabekir, Rauf Orbay, Ali Fuad Cebesoy, and Refet Bele, who had been important during the War of Independence as well, founded an opposition party in 1924, but Kemal used emergency laws to counter the menace to his uncontested position as the first man of the Turkish nation state. Until 1926, "all of the former leaders of the independence struggle had been purged in a spectacular political trial in which they were accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate the President" (ibid.: 132), and Kemal was free to continue his political course as he alone saw fit.

Vogel referred to the following period as one of Kemal's "transformative leadership" (2011: 513) as the latter began to secularize and modernize Turkey in the years that followed the establishment of the new nation state (Hanioğlu 2011: 160-61). Kemal, as Vogel further highlights, "took an ancient empire that was being dismembered, firmed up some of the remaining borders, and built new institutions to remake Turkey into a modern, Western-style and Western oriented nation" (2011: 513). Hanioğlu in this regard argues that Kemal's "new ideology, unsurprisingly, was a modified, scientifically sanctioned version of Turkish nationalism" (2011: 161). Kemal intended, as the new political leader of Turkey, to replace the religious bonds of his citizens with nationalist ones "through a radical reinterpretation of Islam from a Turkish nationalist perspective" (ibid.: 132). He needed to give his people a new national narrative, which also means a new

semiotic system that would be centered around himself, and when he spoke for more than 36 hours during the six days of the first Republican People's Party's congress in October 1927, he intended to create the narrative for Turkish nationalism and to further center the power within the new nation state in his own hands. In his lectures, he reinterpreted the previous year and ensured that he alone would be remembered as the savior of Turkey (ibid.), and this overemphasis also stimulated later reinterpretations and myths about his role at Gallipoli (Macleod 2015: 159). The history of Turkey as an independent nation was consequently a semantic construction by Atatürk himself, whose words, *ipse dixit*, described what should later be understood as the history of the Turkish War of Independence and the genesis of the modern Turkish state. Stories about this campaign would now be more like a *vaticinium ex eventu*, as Kemal's eventual success stimulated the overemphasis of his role in the military campaign to defend the Dardanelles as well. Kemalism would consequently become a "prime example of a personality cult manufactured by the state" (Zürcher 2012: 132), creating a semi-religious person-bound nationalist narrative.

That Kemal at the same time based his nationalist narrative on modernization and secularization was also a necessity in regards to his own self-representation, as the beliefs related to Sunni Islam prohibited the glorification and depiction of bodies, e.g. as statues. Although it caused possible problems with such religious traditions, statues of Kemal would be erected in many cities, especially in central spaces. Kemalist nationalism was consequently in some regards even anti-Islamic, as the messages represented by the personal cult of the military hero and political leader of Turkey went against existent religious rules (ibid.: 132-3). Later, Atatürk became a central element of Turkish nationalism, as he

has been depicted over and over again in a limited number of well-defined roles. The repertoire of visualisation seems to be limited in two

senses: the number of roles in which Atatürk is depicted and the freedom of artistic expression. Only four different roles can be clearly identified (military hero, teacher, father and emblem of modernity), and the vast majority of the paintings and statues, and even of the poses taken up by actors in the Atatürk films, go back to photographs that can be easily identified. There seems to be a strong reluctance to allow for artistic licence when depicting the leader. (Ibid.: 136).

These different interpretations and images already show that it was hard to clearly identify Kemal/Atatürk, and the narrative seemed to offer a variety of ways to attach him to one's own wishes and ideas. Kemal seems to have supported this "flexibility" of his own image, considering that his own reports about the Gallipoli campaign were not published before the early 1940s (Macleod 2015: 160). The commemoration of the events of 1915/16 played a less important role in the nationalist agenda after 1922, but it was part of Kemal's personal story and therefore of some interest, although the memory of the First World War and the last years of the Ottoman Empire obviously did not arouse too much attention in the early years of the republic, and as Macleod emphasized, when "it was remembered, it was increasingly known for the role of Mustafa Kemal as well as for the devotion of the country's ordinary soldiers" (2015: 161).

It is interesting to note here, too, that the legend of the Turkish president in relation to his military service at Gallipoli was later prominently supported, e.g. when Winston Churchill called Kemal a "man of destiny" (ibid.: 162). The campaign would especially be remembered by British veterans and other visitors who would travel to Turkey for trips to the Gallipoli Peninsula, but there were also visitors from other countries who would, during a cruise through the Mediterranean Sea, use the opportunity to visit the famous battlefields (ibid.: 165). Official commemorations had nevertheless come to a halt in the interwar years, as Kemal focused on the War of Independence as a source for and focus of the new national narrative. It is therefore quite ironic

that he expressed the following thoughts about national history in 1931: “[W]riting history is just as important as making history: if the writers are not faithful to the makers, then the immutable truth will be altered in ways that can confound mankind” (quoted in Kezer 2015: 1). Nevertheless, Kemal’s nationalist approach was successful, and as Atatürk, the “Father of the Turks,” he would remain an essential part of the country’s national identity for decades.

3. ATATÜRK’S TURKISH NATIONALISM AND THE COMMEMORATION OF GALLIPOLI

Once in power, Atatürk “spent the latter part of his life secularizing and Westernizing state and society” (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 189) as it not only served the necessities to build up a strong and modernized nation state but also to secure his own image as some kind of enlightened leader, or national educator. For these purposes, “he organized a major transformation from a polity governed by Islamic law to one that strictly separated affairs of religion and state” (ibid.) and, due to his achievements, was well remembered for the remaining decades of the 20th century. With regard to “so many other charismatic leaders in recent world history, ... [it is] the very length of his symbolism, its all but unanimously positive nature, and its near universality, both in his own country and world wide” (Weiker 1982: 1), that make Kemal Atatürk a powerful symbol of 20th century Turkish nationalism, although his political agenda was quite an internationalist one at the same time.

The unity between the man and the nation was not only emblemized by the many statutes but also by his mausoleum (the Anıtkabir), which “is more than just the final resting place of Atatürk’s body but also a national stage set and a representation of the hopes and ideals of the Republic of Turkey” (Wilson 2009: 225). With regard to the visualization of Turkish nationalism and thereby a semiotic systematization of his image, Atatürk became a central aspect of the existent sign system of the nationalist narrative,

both on the textual and the visual level. While sayings by him became winged expressions and were often cited, his face would be extremely prominent in the public sphere of Turkey where statues were erected in many cities and in central places. The “Father of the Turks” was made omnipresent. You could see or read Atatürk almost everywhere. More importantly, the “Kemalist elite that followed Atatürk envisaged a militantly secular, ethnically homogeneous republic ready to join the Western world. It banished Islam from school curricula, glorified Turkish history, and ‘purified’ the Turkish language in order to foster national pride and unity” (Çandar 2000: 89). The course of secular Turkey would be continued in the following decades (Macleod 2015: 60-62) until the 1980s, with Atatürk remaining “still far and away the most central single symbolic focus of his nation” (Weiker 1982: 1).

Since the 1990s, Turkey has begun to remember Gallipoli more thoroughly, as it helped to stimulate friendly international relations with the former Allied powers, probably Australia first and foremost. The references to the campaign, however, also changed in their wording, and nationalist pride was no longer focused only on Atatürk but also on the victory of a battle that had laid the foundations for his rise in later years (Macleod 2015: 175-187). The images of Atatürk at the same time were diversified once more and his prominence increased even more (Özyürek 2004: 374), leading to some kind of omnipresence of the national hero, who in a way linked the history of the last roar of the Ottoman Empire with the nationalist rise of a new and strong Turkish nation state. However, there was also a change with regard to the role of Islam from the 1990s, as “the state stresse[d] the public role of Islam to ensure social harmony and to serve as an ultimate source of legitimization just as it did in Ottoman times” (Yavuz 2003: 79). This “neo-Ottoman turn” (Aydıntaşbaş 2019) was even strengthened after Recep Tayyip Erdoğan determined the political fate of Turkey,

although Atatürk's personality cult remained strong in the early 2000s (Ökten 2007; Özyürek 2006). Consequently, Kemalism was one side of a dichotomic Turkish identity, and those who represent the secular part of it "suggest that Kemalism is the Turkish equivalent of the enlightenment; a guiding philosophy which brought Turks out of their dark age and onto the road to modernity" (Ciddi 2009).

The idea of a Western-oriented modernization has nevertheless been criticized as a form of intellectual concept that provided no clear definition for the Kemalist agenda and its predecessors, but was rather a tool to connect Turkey to a capitalist world system in which its national position should be as strong as possible. Somay argues with regard to this problem that

The hypothesis that "modernisation," "Westernisation," "Europeanisation" and "development" (economic or otherwise) were all used as euphemistic signifiers for the advancement of capitalism, also indicates that they have little to do with their root concepts "modern," "Western," "European" and "developed." Since all these terms entered Oriental cultural structures and intellectual life as external factors, conceptualised, defined and put into circulation by either colonial or patronising European powers, the Oriental cultures that are supposed to modernise, Westernise, Europeanise or "develop" had little say in what they were supposed to mean. (2014: 9)

Modernization meant different things for different people in different times, but the diverse ideas were in a way united with regard to the idea of a strong Turkish nation by the central authority of Kemal after 1922. Nevertheless, the system was only held together by his commemoration and dominance, as different people continued to want different things when they talked about modernization. While "[e]verybody wanted some of them, but never all of them, and combinations and permutations (depending on the priorities) that emerged were almost as varied as there were people" (ibid.), Kemal's authority provided the link for different interests and channeled them in the same

direction for a long period of time. For a long time, his mausoleum would represent the idea of the Turkish nation like no other building or space in Turkey. "An essential component of nationalist projects that seek to institute a new sense of nationhood and define a new national subject is the construction of national space" (Çinar 2005: 99), and so, along with the mausoleum, other Atatürk memorials also played an important role to create a sense of national belonging, a sense of being part of the nation that had been created by the "Father of the Turks" himself. Çinar highlighted in this regard that "nationhood is not only about the collective imagination of a national community, but also about the imagination of national space" (ibid.).

Atatürk was consequently an important factor of the Turkish nation from 1922, one that was also considered anti-imperialist in any sense of the word. In his early military career, he had opposed the German military mission, whose officers ran the Ottoman Army and were very influential (Grüßhaber 2018: 26-102), and the Gallipoli-related operations were "a prime example of combined arms warfare. The battle proved an instructive experience for all combat parties involved. This was especially the case for the more than 3000 German soldiers that saw action during the campaign" (ibid.: 79)/ However, "members of the German mission not only advised the Ottomans but actually took over field commands during the First World War" (Zürcher 2012: 130), something Kemal had not only criticized but maybe even considered when he turned out to be relatively reluctant to commemorate his own involvement in this important Ottoman victory. As mentioned earlier, German officers, like Otto Liman von Sanders, still considered Gallipoli to be a German victory (Prigge 1916), and reports about Kemal in Nazi Germany actually depicted a much more positive image of the strong Turkish leader. In the category "men of the month," the *Zeitschrift für Politik* (Journal for Politics) published a feature that compared

Kemal's role for Turkey with that of Hitler for Germany:

The "sick man" [Turkey] has become healthy today, healthier than ever and takes the position in the political power play of Europe that is his due to his geopolitical situation determined by barren and harsh Anatolia, by a man who equals—if not even surpasses—this landscape in harshness and spartan unpretentiousness! (Heberlein 1937: 168)

Since Atatürk did not run a democratic state after 1923 but rather an autocratic democracy in which an opposition was not free to express criticism, the parallels made Hitler even feel some kind of admiration for the Turkish statesman (Ihrig 2014: 109-110). "Atatürk and his New Turkey were understood [by National Socialists] not only as 'one of us' in the Third Reich, but also as forerunners of the new kind of *völkisch* modernity" (ibid.: 148), and criticisms of an overemphasis of Kemal's role at Gallipoli eventually disappeared.

The centennial would resemble the climax of interest in the campaign, as it had been developed in Turkey over the years, yet it came at a time when Atatürk's legacy had been contested by a new form of Turkish nationalism (Uyar 2016: 165). The history of the defense of the Gallipoli Peninsula had eventually "earned its prominent position in Turkish history only after a lengthy and arduous journey, having long remained solely of interest to Turkish military officers and a small group of enthusiasts" (ibid.). For many years, there had only been local commemorative events, and the attention the battlefields received by Australian and British tourists had not been matched by Turkish visitors. The Ottoman leadership around Enver Pasha had already tried to use the victory of Gallipoli for political purposes, but after the War of Independence, Kemal would not pay too much attention to this issue when "[t]he glory and sacrifices of the Gallipoli war dead and the campaign's veterans faded in the glow of the newly established Turkish Republic" (ibid.: 168). In later years, however, the myth of Gallipoli was transformed, and sparked the new interest of people beyond

the military ranks, who were interested in "a new form [of myth] in which 'Turkish' soldiers replaced the more multinational Ottoman or Anatolian troops and Atatürk became the commander who led them to victory. Gallipoli, unlike other campaigns, became the first defence of the motherland, although it carried no more significance than that" (ibid.: 170). The Gallipoli myth was consequently transformed again, "Turkified," so to speak, to match the new national narrative, and the events of the campaign were said to match the overtowering image of Atatürk as the first man of the new and strong nation of modern Turkey. The now "official" Gallipoli myth was fully developed in the 1960s, and only military historians would provide different evaluations of something that had already been interpreted within the public space of national memory.

In the early 1950s, a debate about the insufficient commemoration of the events in 1915/16 also finally led to a broader recognition of Gallipoli's role, and demands for proper memorials to the fallen soldiers were made. It would, however, not be until 21 August 1960 that the Dardanelles Martyrs' Memorial (Çanakkale Şehitler Abidesi) was finished and would address from then on the "sacrifice, victory and national pride" (ibid.: 173) of the Turkish nation under Kemal's leadership in relation to the last roar and victory of the Ottoman Empire. Further monuments would follow, and the area would eventually be turned into a national park, although the interest of the government in Gallipoli decreased for a while.

CONCLUSION

The rise of Turkish nationalism since the 2000s, however, again revived the interest in Gallipoli, although it tends to reinterpret the semiotic system again. It is no longer Kemal, who is so important. The unity of the Turkish soldiers, resisting foreign powers, seem to be more central now, especially since this narrative also fits a government, whose representatives rather want to see themselves reviving Ottoman great power policy, than to commemorate a secular Kemalism in

Turky today. Gallipoli, as well as Kemal Atatürk, are consequently signs within the system of Turkish nationalism that are currently redefined again. What the final outcome of this reprogramming of the semiotic system of the nation will look like in the end, is hard to be foretold. However, these signs had been redefined before and they will play a role in the future, although it is not exactly clear how this role will look like.

In 2011 the Turkish foreign minister, Dr Ahmet Davutoğlu, had declared that “[w]e are going to introduce the year of 2015 to the whole world. We will do so not as the anniversary of a genocide as some people have claimed and slandered, but as the anniversary of the glorious resistance of a nation, the anniversary of the resistance at Çanakkale” (cited in Macleod 2015: 154). The remembrance of Gallipoli, as well as the commemoration of Atatürk today, however, is problematic. First of all, both, the battle and the political leader, as semiotic elements of the Turkish nation, are connected to the history of the Ottoman Empire’s participation in the First World War and the Armenian genocide. Secondly, the new religiously determined nationalism of Erdoğan is rather reluctant to acknowledge the success of Atatürk, who secularized Turkey and tried to modernize it according to more Western standards.

The commemoration of Atatürk and his role during the Gallipoli campaign are consequently being reconsidered and reframed at the moment, and are being related to a different form of nationalism that has been quite strong since the beginning of the 21st century and which is directed toward tradition and religious values rather than enlightenment and modernization. Since the political climate between Ankara and the EU has worsened due to conflicts in the region that created a “Neo-Ottomanist” expansionism by the Turkish government and which were directed toward political enemies, ethnic minorities, and foreign states, where Turkish migrants in the diaspora are drawn into the political

struggles at home, the future of Turkish nationalism and the role Atatürk will play within it are currently being renegotiated. Time will eventually show which elements will be important for the reshaped nation of Turkey in the 21st century, but it is not yet clear which role the rise and impact of Kemal as well as the commemoration of Gallipoli are going to play.

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