



A Contested Conquest:
The Many Meanings of 1453 in Turkish Political Rhetoric

TURKEY PROGRAMME

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Summary

- Turkish politicians have invoked Ottoman history to justify everything from interfaith tolerance to aggressive irredentism.
- In the early years of the Cold War, shortly after Turkey and Greece joined NATO, Ankara sought to downplay anti-Greek elements in its 1453 conquest celebrations.
- Now, by recasting the reconversion of Hagia Sophia and Turkey's Exclusive Economic Zone claims as matters of national sovereignty, Erdoğan has succeeded in winning support from his political opponents.

Introduction

On May 29th, 2022, the Turkish Defense Ministry tweeted: “569 years earlier, Istanbul was conquered. To look at it and dream of rebuilding Rome or Byzantium is a delusion. Those who long for 1,000 years ago make it clear who is the irredentist and who is the obstacle to peace.”¹

It was certainly an ironic comment from a government that indulges in imperial nostalgia as readily as Turkey’s. But it was also a revealing one. Turkish leaders have long celebrated the conquest of Constantinople as a glorious event in their country’s – indeed the world’s – history. And yet the tone and target of these celebrations have varied. At some times, and among some political circles, the anti-Greek element has been front and center. Religious conservatives, in particular, were often eager to emphasize that converting Hagia Sophia into a mosque was necessary to defeat Greek designs on Istanbul itself. Yet at other times, Turkish leaders have worked to downplay this aggressive interpretation of the conquest, presenting it instead as a victory for liberal values.

President Erdoğan’s own version of Ottoman nostalgia - religious, anti-Western and often veering on irredentist - has come to infuse all official history in Turkey today. Indeed, it has become so omnipresent that it is easy to forget an alternate version was possible.

Turkish leaders, like their counterparts everywhere, read history according to their own worldview and the political needs of the moment. President Erdoğan’s own version of Ottoman nostalgia – religious, anti-Western and often veering on irredentist – has come to infuse all official history in Turkey today. Indeed, it has become so omnipresent that it is easy to forget an alternate version was possible. Yet in 1953, on the 500th anniversary of Istanbul’s conquest, different circumstances called for different history. Turkey had just held its first free multi-party elections in 1950 and, with Greece, joined NATO in 1952. In this context, historical details that could undermine NATO unity were downplayed, while in the most inventive interpretations, the Ottoman victory was presented as the triumph of UN values over Russia and its godless communist ideology.²

“Now Was Not the Time to Offend Christian Nations”

A recent Turkish comedy sketch casts a modern-day, latte-drinking hipster as a military commander trying to find a politically correct way to refer to the enemy while planning an offensive against Greek forces in 1922. After asking whether there will be a vegan option in the mess hall, he declares that calling Greek soldiers “the enemy” is “otherizing them” and calling them “occupiers” verges on “hate speech.”³

And yet, a not-so-dissimilar scenario actually played out in 1953 involving the Turkish President, the Ecumenical Patriarch and the U.S. Consul General in Istanbul. In January of that year, Patriarch Athenagoras, relating a conversation with President Celal Bayar to his U.S. government interlocuter, explained that :

[T]he Turks were a ‘kind people’ and were certainly intelligent enough to realize that now was not the time to offend Christian nations.

¹ <https://twitter.com/tcsavunma/status/1530988720941416448>

“569 yıl önce fethedilen İstanbul’a Roma İmparatorluğu’nun veya Bizans’ın hayalini kurarak bakmak kuruntudan ibarettir. 1000 yıl öncesine özlem duyanlar kimin yayılmacı, kimin barışa engel olduğunu açıkça ortaya koymaktadır.”

² Portions of this research were originally published in Nicholas Danforth, *The Remaking of Modern Turkey: Memory and Modernity since the Fall of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, London, 2021.

³ “Modalı Mesut Paşa,” *Güldür Güldür*, Episode 306, May 14, 2022.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EqWc6t12GE&ab_channel=G%C3%BCld%C3%BCrG%C3%BCld%C3%BCr

Consequently, the present government would play down the [conquest] celebration this spring and handle it in a tactful manner.

Newspapers were quick to remind “our Greek friends” that the alternative to the Turkish conquest of Istanbul was never continued Byzantine rule but rather Slavic domination and Byzantine incorporation into the “State of Moscow.”

When the Patriarch added that he himself would be willing to participate in the ceremonies, Bayar “was most gratified” and told him that “it would, of course, be necessary to hold the anniversary celebration, but it would not be on a large scale and the Greeks should not feel sensitive about a matter of such ancient history.”⁴ In fact, government rhetoric went out of its way to minimize any element of Greek-Turkish rivalry. The Ottomans' defeated foe was always referred to the Byzantines, never the Greeks. Newspapers were quick to remind “our Greek friends” that the alternative to the Turkish conquest of Istanbul was never continued Byzantine rule but rather Slavic domination and Byzantine incorporation into the “State of Moscow.”

Unsurprisingly, this approach to the celebrations generated considerable domestic criticism. Many authors have suggested that whatever new enthusiasm the Ottoman past enjoyed in the 1950s was a product of the ruling Democratic Party's more tolerant approach to public religiosity. In reality, the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) proved as eager to exploit the political potential of the occasion as the conservative government. In fact, CHP members repeatedly complained that the Democratic Party's “dull” and “wretched” ceremonies were an insult to the memory of Sultan Fatih Mehmet II on this “sacred” and “lofty” occasion.⁵ The CHP spent much of the 1950s criticizing the Democratic Party (DP) for failing to follow through on the elaborate anniversary preparations İsmet İnönü had begun in 1944. In one speech, CHP district president İlhami Sancar described the “great sadness” Turkish citizens felt over the government's trivialization of May 29th. He promised that, if brought back to power in 1954, the CHP would put on a ceremony worthy of Fatih himself.⁶ Newspapers criticized the government over its handling of the celebrations as well. Cartoonists showed Istanbul's mayor instructing his doorman “If Fatih calls, tell him I'm out”, or contrasted the Prime Minister's presence at Queen Elizabeth's coronation in London with his empty chair in Istanbul.⁷ *Cumhuriyet* argued the government's embarrassing performance was a missed opportunity to show the world how civilized and advanced Turkey was. It could have been “like Cannes,” one author mused, “the Venice Biennale or a French Colonial exposition.”⁸

CHP supporters even went as far as to suggest that the DP had deliberately downplayed the 500th anniversary in order to placate Greece and America, asking: “Why was Hagia Sophia not lit up like every other mosque or museum in the city?” and “Do we get indignant when the Greeks celebrate the independence they won from us?”⁹ The Istanbul University Students' Union published an official complaint in the newspaper *Vatan* warning that those who downplayed the celebration of Fatih's victory in order to “win or placate friends” committed a mistake that might “endanger the future” by calling Istanbul's Turkishness into question.¹⁰

⁴ After joining NATO, the Turkish government also quietly dropped its celebrations of the Ottoman army's 1916 victory over British forces at Kut Al Amara.

⁵ “Fatih yıldönümü için Meclise bir soru önergesi verildi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 2 June 1953.

⁶ “Fetih Şenlikleri dün sona erdi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 8 June 1953.

⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 28 May, 1953; *Cumhuriyet*, 3 June, 1953.

⁸ “Samih Nafiz Tansu, “500üncü Fetih yılında neler olmazdı”. *Cumhuriyet*, 23 May 1949.

⁹ “Terbiyemiz bakımından Fetih,” *Cumhuriyet*, 8 June 1953; Sadun Savcı, “Dolmuşta,” *Vatan*, 3 June 1953.

¹⁰ “Fetih yıldönümü törenleri bitiyor,” *Vatan*, 7 June 1953.

Ottomans Versus Soviets

In fact, in the early Cold War, Turkish leaders had their own ideological agenda they sought to advance through conquest celebrations. Specifically, politicians and journalists were eager to wrap Fatih Sultan Mehmet's mantle around Turkey's participation in the Korean War as part of the United Nations' forces. Saying Fatih's achievement was much more than just a military victory, Istanbul Mayor Fahrettin Gökay told a crowd assembled on May 29th that Fatih had in fact given the world an example of the United Nations five hundred years before its time.¹¹ In a subsequent speech, professor Şinasi Altundağ declared:

Visitors to an exhibit of Turkish children's paintings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for example, learned that Fatih's empire was "a veritable 'united nations' of people."

Great Fatih... May your spirit rest in peace. Your noble ideals will live forever with the Turkish nation and the Turkish Republic upon the sound foundation laid by Atatürk. Is it even necessary to elaborate? Look at Korea. Look at the Atlantic Pact... We, Fatih's children, show our greatest display of being worthy of him through serving the cause of world peace with our soldiers' blood in Korea today. Now we bow with honor before all of our holy martyrs who, beginning with Fatih, have died for their country and who now give their lives for world peace under the United Nations in Korea today.¹²

Columnists, too, made similar comparisons, with one asking, "what difference is there between Ulubatlı Hasan, who first raised our flag over the walls of Istanbul, and the commander who went into battle in Korea wrapped in the Turkish flag?"¹³ Some U.S. accounts echoed this rhetoric as well. Visitors to an exhibit of Turkish children's paintings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for example, learned that Fatih's empire was "a veritable 'united nations' of people." As a result "[t]he great heroism of the Turkish troops in Korea expresses not only the enduring fighting qualities of the Turks but the success of this 500-year-old experiment in international living."¹⁴

More dramatically, legend had it that Turkish troops serving in Korea were actually aided by the spirit of the "happy soldiers" who died in Fatih's conquest. In 1952, a young soldier returning from Korea to Diyarbakir reportedly stopped into a coffee shop in the Fındıklı neighborhood of Istanbul. Looking around, he announced that he had come to see the Sofu Baba and asked if anyone could show him the man's home. The customers were shocked. "Son," one of them said, "there's no one alive here by that name. He's one of our saints. You can find his tomb." Even more shocked, the soldier explained that he had met the Sofu Baba in the heat of battle. Surrounded by communist troops and facing death, he and his comrades had begun to lose hope. Suddenly, a radiant, bearded old man appeared. The man stroked his back, imparting a feeling of indescribable warmth, and asked why he was afraid. "It doesn't suit you," he said, "now fight." When the soldier asked the old man who he was, the man said "I'm the Sofu Baba. From Istanbul. I live in Fındıklı. Come find me after the war." He then disappeared into the smoke as the men launched their assault.¹⁵

¹¹ "Fatih ve Topkapı'daki törende yüzbinlerce İstanbullu bulundu," *Vatan*, 30 May 1953.

¹² "Şehrimizdeki Tören," *Zafer*, 30 May 1953.

¹³ Mümtaz Faik Fenik, "Seferihisar'da Genç Ulubatlı Hasanlar," *Zafer*, 30 May 1953.

¹⁴ ICE-D-4-54. MOMA, *Ibid*.

¹⁵ One version of this legend is related by the Turkish Ministry of Religion outside the tomb of the Sofu Baba, located on the Fındıklı yokuşu in Istanbul's Cihangir neighborhood. It can also be found at <http://www.smartbeyoğlu.com/firma/23015/sofu-baba-turbesi.html>

The Origins of Ottoman Tolerance

The geopolitical circumstances of the early Cold War period also helped consolidate the enduring narrative of ‘Ottoman tolerance.’ Turkish statesmen were well aware of the criticism their country faced, both in America and the Soviet Union, for its historic treatment of Christian minorities. Turkey also faced accusations from its new Western allies that its neutrality in World War Two been motivated by ideological sympathy toward fascism. The rhetoric of tolerance sought to respond to these criticisms and justify Turkey’s place in a new Western world order defined by international cooperation and freedom.

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Returning from a 1950 UNESCO conference consisting of “professors from all the world’s democratic countries,” a representative of the Ministry of Education wrote that Turkey would need to “facilitate the teaching of a broader historical viewpoint in keeping with UN ideals.” This viewpoint should be based on “the reality of nations’ ever-growing economic, political and civilizational ties and their dependence on one another,” in place of “our previous flat, narrow and extremist national views and teachings.”¹⁶ Among other things, this effort (which, he noted, also required other countries to purge their schoolbooks of anti-Turkish prejudice) would promote world peace, end national rivalries, and, most importantly, help defeat the spread of Communism. The author cited American history textbooks written “without religious prejudice” as examples that could serve as a “guide” in the creation of a “united world.”¹⁷ He then lamented that “if we had had the power in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras, we ourselves could have served as exemplars of the humanitarian ideal.”¹⁸ In this context, the discourse of Ottoman tolerance offered a way to nationalize the era’s internationalism and give a patriotic gloss to the spirit of global peace.

The discourse of Ottoman tolerance also echoed U.S. attacks against Soviet “religious persecution,” suggesting that Turkey’s historic embrace of religious freedom marked it as a part of the free world. In 1948, an article in Ankara University’s *Faculty of Language, History and Geography Journal* argued that Ottoman Christians had always been happy compared to Russia’s Muslims,¹⁹ and explicitly contrasted the lack of religious compulsion in Islam with the mandatory atheism prescribed by Communism.²⁰ The author also concluded that the Ottoman Empire had never been at war with Christianity, only the Slavs. In the sphere of public rhetoric, Celal Bayar gave voice to these sentiments when he declared “Fatih began the practical application of the ideas of religious freedom and freedom of conscience for which people still struggle today.”²¹ One of the few official conquest publications translated into English in 1953 was a pamphlet called “The Importance of the Conquest of Istanbul for Mankind and Civilization,” which explained that “[t]he respect of the Turks for all religions, even in the days before Mohammedanism, is no[w] proved by recent research.”²²

¹⁶ Osman Turan, ‘Milliyet ve İnsanlık Mefkurelerinin Tarih Tedrisatında Ahenkleştirilmesi,’ *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Cografya Dergisi*, Volume 10, Issue 1-2, March-June 1952, 209-239. p210

¹⁷ Ibid, 212.

¹⁸ Ibid, 225.

¹⁹ Bekir Sitki Baykal, ‘Şark Buhranı ve Sabah Gazetesi,’ *Universitesi Dil ve Tarih-Cografya Dergisi*, Volume 6, Issue 4, Sept.-Oct. 1948, 219-258. p252.

²⁰ Ibid, 233.

²¹ *Beş Yüzüncü Fetih Yılında Devlet Çalışmalarına Umumi bir Bakış* (Istanbul: Parsadan Basın, 1953). 67.

²² İsmail Hami Danişmend, “The Importance of the Conquest of Istanbul for Mankind and Civilization,” translated by E. A. and B. M. (Publications of the Istanbul Society for Celebration of the Conquest No 15). This rhetorical outreach was sufficiently effective that the *New York Times* noted, “[t]he modern Turk believes his was the first country to establish a legal basis for the co-

Celebrating Fatih's religious tolerance went hand in hand with celebrating his supposed secularism.

The regional politics of the early Cold War also played a role. Among other justifications used to bolster Soviet claims to northeastern Anatolia was the argument, advanced by two Georgian scholars in 1945, that Ottoman Turks had “spread violence and death” across Georgia, “imposing their religion and language by sword.”²³ Şinasi Altundağ set out to rebut these claims at the Fourth Turkish Historical Society Congress with a vigorous defense of the Ottoman Empire’s tolerance.²⁴ Citing the “emotion and loyalty” the Georgians felt toward the Ottomans, Altundağ went to explain that the Ottomans’ cultural policies were clear: “Today, are languages like Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Albanian not still around..? Did the Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs and Georgians re-learn their languages and Christianity after leaving the Ottoman Empire?”²⁵ “A tolerance reigned in the Ottoman Empire that was the envy of other nations.... To steal a Christian’s chicken or pasture a horse on a Christian’s field was equivalent to a murder and punishable by death.... Once ten Janissaries were executed for the unjust killing of a Christian.”²⁶

Celebrating Fatih’s religious tolerance went hand in hand with celebrating his supposed secularism. Several authors went as far as to suggest that in making Hagia Sophia into a mosque – instead, presumably, of destroying it – Fatih was not only showing his secular ideals but his respect for Christians’ culture as well. Despite the ruined state in which the Byzantines left Hagia Sophia, Fatih supposedly admired its mosaics of the Virgin Mary and violently intervened to stop a Janissary from damaging the marblework. Thus, in turning the building into a museum, Atatürk was acting on the same impulse that had inspired Fatih’s action.²⁷ In a particularly striking effort to recast Fatih as an exemplar of religious tolerance, Bülent Ecevit, who would go on to be Prime Minister, offered American readers the following anecdote in January 1955:

In [Hagia Sophia] were some of the finest mosaics that Byzantine artists had executed... Yet representation of the human form was forbidden by the Mohammedan religion. So, the new rulers of the city, who were of the Mohammedan faith, had no choice but to destroy them. Could Mehmet the Conqueror, the liberal Sultan who was later to bring over the famous Italian artist Bellini to his court to do his portrait, allow such an act? For nearly five centuries the whole world believed that he did! But a few years after Turkey became a secular republic... it was discovered that Mehmet the Conqueror had only had those mosaics covered with sheets of durable cloth... So, when the plaster and the sheets of cloth were removed, the mosaics were there – as fresh as they were in 1453.²⁸

Later that same year of course, a pogrom targeted Istanbul’s non-Muslim population, destroying stores and churches and leaving at least a dozen people dead. Ecevit was one of the few authors to see a contradiction with the lofty rhetoric of Ottoman tolerance. In

existence of all religious and racial groups.” Morris Kaplan, “Turks Here Will Sip ‘Lion’s Milk’ To Mark Victory of 500 Years Ago,” *New York Times*, 29 May 1953.

²³ S. Djanasia and N. Berzenisvili, *Gurcustan Meselesi* (Georgian Academy: 1945) as quoted in Şinasi Altundag, “Osmanli İdaresi ve Gürcüler,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Cografya Dergisi*, Volume 10, Issue 1-2, March-June 1952, p79-90.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 79.

²⁶ Ibid, 81.

²⁷ Damat Mehmet Şerif Paşa, *Ciğercan Tarih Kitapları Serisi no 5, Faith Sultan Mehmed Han-i Sani ve İstanbulun Fethi*, (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1953).

²⁸ “Istanbul a beautiful city of many names haunted by its long hectic past.” *Winston-Salem Journal Sentinel*, 2 January, 1955.

a column titled “Fatih, Forgive Us,” he lamented that the destruction visited on Istanbul’s minorities was a painful rejection of the principles Fatih had demonstrated 502 years earlier upon entering the city.²⁹

Modern Echoes

The popular image of the Ottoman Empire that was consolidated in the 1950s – mighty but just, tolerant but undeniably Turkish – has proved remarkably enduring in Turkish films, museums, and popular culture, even as a range of different political movements have refined their own versions of the Ottoman past. Current Islamist invocations of Ottoman piety, just like liberal invocations of Ottoman multiculturalism, both count on the same fundamental continuity between the Ottoman and Turkish states articulated by early nationalists. At the same time, the malleability of the Ottoman legacy can help explain its contestation in popular culture today.

Later, everyone headed to the Golden Horn for a laser light show, with rainbow colors to symbolize Fatih’s tolerance.

On May 29, 2010, for example, Istanbul celebrated with speeches, re-enactments and a laser light show. Along the city walls, men dressed in Janissary costumes and fake mustaches marched alongside uniformed military academy students and drum majorettes. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) mayor of Istanbul stressed the fact that within three days of taking the city, Fatih ordered the Janissaries back to their barracks to restore order. Fatih, it seemed, supported the AKP in its struggle to establish civilian control of the military. A Turkish military officer, by contrast, spoke about the many characteristics Fatih and Atatürk shared. Later, everyone headed to the Golden Horn for a laser light show, with rainbow colors to symbolize Fatih’s tolerance.

On May 29th, 2019, Istanbul’s CHP mayoral candidate, Ekrem İmamoğlu, shared a video on Twitter in which he quoted Fatih as saying that he “came to conquer hearts, not land.”³⁰ İmamoğlu then promised that, like Fatih, he would again make Istanbul a city where residents of all faiths and languages lived together in peace and justice. Meanwhile, AKP supporters spread accusations İmamoğlu was secretly Greek and warned that his victory would be a triumph for Turkey’s “internal Byzantines.” One paper called on him to deny that he spoke Greek in order to lead “the city conquered by Fatih.”³¹ A year later, İmamoğlu won widespread praise from his secular constituency for purchasing a Gentile Bellini painting of Fatih that went on sale in London. The pro-AKP press, in turn, condemned him for wasting money on a drawing done by an infidel.

In the summer of 2020, Erdoğan sought to put his own definitive stamp on the Fatih legacy with the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque. His speech on the occasion presented the building’s transformation as both an act of piety and a fulfillment of Turkish sovereignty.³² In doing so, he echoed a longstanding Islamist narrative in which Atatürk’s secularism represented a foreign imposition on the Turkish nation.³³ More pointedly, his rhetoric reinforced the “internal Byzantines” accusation levelled against the CHP, suggesting that the party was a disloyal fifth column working on behalf of

²⁹ Bülent Ecevit, “Fatih, Bizi Afet,” *Ulus*, 9 September, 1955. In the course of the column, he also argued that this was true even if Turkey’s cause was justified and the Ottoman Empire’s minorities had in fact betrayed it.

³⁰ https://twitter.com/ekrem_imamoglu/status/1133603511013392389?s=20

³¹ “Ekrem İmamoğlu'nun 'YOKMUŞ' gibi davrandığı cevapsız sorular,” *Sabah*, 29 May 2019.

³² “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan Ayasofya Açıklaması,” *Haber Global*, July 10, 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0Hm2scQQ8g>

³³ Specifically, he cited conservative historian İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı’s claim that Fatih himself had cursed anyone – meaning Atatürk – who would undo his consecration of Hagia Sophia as a mosque.

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modern-day crusader states. Yet by casting Hagia Sophia's reconversion in terms of national sovereignty, Erdoğan also succeeded in winning support for his decision from members of the secular opposition as well. Former CHP presidential candidate Muharrem İnce, for example, announced he would be willing to attend the opening prayers himself, tweeting "Hagia Sophia is inside Turkey's borders and opening it to prayer is Turkey's sovereign right. Neither Greece, America, Russia nor any other country can decide this."³⁴

Where Kemalist rhetoric presented Turkish sovereignty as having been fulfilled with the Treaty of Lausanne, Erdoğan's rhetoric often suggests that it remains incomplete.

Lately, Erdoğan's discussions of history and sovereignty have increasingly spilled outside Turkey's borders as well. Where Kemalist rhetoric presented Turkish sovereignty as having been fulfilled with the Treaty of Lausanne, Erdoğan's rhetoric often suggests that it remains incomplete. His Hagia Sophia speech, for example, suggested that the building's liberation would be a prelude to the liberation of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.³⁵ And even before Turkish officials began explicitly questioning the sovereignty of Greek islands, their "Mavi Vatan" or "Blue Homeland" rhetoric had injected an irredentist dimension into the Turkish-Greek maritime dispute over exclusive economic zones. Though these zones are not actually sovereign territory, Ankara has raised the stakes of the confrontation by referring to them as part of Turkey's homeland and displaying a plethora of maps on which Turkey's claimed zone is shown like territory, covered in the Turkish flag. Not surprisingly, this framing has helped Erdoğan in building a national consensus around his policies in which the opposition has little room, or indeed inclination, to challenge him.

Today, Ankara's embrace of a highly aggressive version of history – seen most recently in Erdoğan's comments on the 100th anniversary of the Turkish capture of Izmir – both fuel and is fueled by a climate of rising nationalism in the country.³⁶ Set amidst a multiplicity of alternate readings, this narrative represents a conscious decision on the part of the government to escalate rather than calm tensions in the region. Recognizing that in different political circumstances, different histories are possible can be encouraging. But it also makes the government's current choices appear all the more alarming.

³⁴ <https://twitter.com/vekilince/status/1281701816942682113?lang=en>

³⁵ In the 1950s, American diplomats worried that Turkey's invocation of the Ottoman past might alienate Arab states that Washington hoped Ankara would lead in an anti-communist alliance. Then, in the early 2000s, some Americans worried that Erdoğan's neo-Ottoman rhetoric would help him build on historic ties to make friends at Washington's expense across the Arab world. Now, with Turkish troops deployed in Iraq, Syria and Libya, many Arab commentators been quick to criticize the irredentist or neo-imperialist menace in Erdoğan's embrace of history.

³⁶ <https://twitter.com/Communications/status/1567145875029348352?s=20&t=bApoPZnv0Hzs38bTN2Fr-w>