In a general sense, and in comparison to the massive artillery contests of the First World War in Europe, the history of the Ottoman Army artillery in the war is one of decentralized and low intensity efforts focused mainly on direct support of the infantry. This situation was not by choice but was forced on the army as a result of the Ottoman Empire’s economic weakness and lack of heavy industrial capacity. During the war, the empire produced no cannons internally and only small amounts of artillery ammunition. Moreover, the illiterate and largely peasant population worked against the creation of an increasingly sophisticated and technical arm. These handicaps caused the army to be under-equipped and under-resourced in fire support assets and capability. In its First World War campaigns the Ottoman Army deployed hundreds rather than thousands of artillery pieces, and indirect fire support was never the \textit{sine qua non} in its combat operations. Nevertheless, the Ottoman artillery delivered deadly and decisive blows in support of the army’s maneuver forces in several campaigns and battles.

\section*{Origins}

In the age of gunpowder empires, the Ottoman Army was well-known for its advanced and lethal artillery arm. Famously, huge cannon demolished the walls of Constantinople in 1453; however, during the industrial revolution Europeans replaced the Ottomans as the pre-eminent artillerists of the modern world. Efforts were made in the mid-19th century to restore the effectiveness of the Ottoman military, but these were largely unsuccessful. In the 1830s the Ottomans established a military academy and the first of a long succession of German advisors arrived to assist efforts in modernization.\footnote{See M. Uyar and E.J. Erickson, \textit{A Military History of the Ottomans, From Osman to Ataturk} (Westport: Praeger, 2009) for detailed discussions of the revival of the Ottoman military during the Tanzimat period.} Rearmed with Krupp cannon the revitalized artillery became the jewel of the Ottoman military, and a fully-fledged German military mission was established in 1882,
which then led to the army adopting mostly German tactics and procedures. By 1888, the army held an inventory of over 1,000 German field guns. Although there was an artillery school in Constantinople and an artillery office in the army headquarters, the Ottomans were unable to produce their own cannons, a situation that would continue to plague them.

During this period, Ottoman field armies were organized into several infantry divisions, a cavalry division and a separate artillery division (96 cannon organized into three artillery brigades each of two regiments). As a combat arm, Ottoman artillerists specialized in field, horse, mountain, howitzer, and fortress artillery assignments. In July 1910, the Ottoman Army began a massive reorganization at the heart of which was the creation of the new triangular infantry division. In the new organizational architecture, Ottoman divisions comprised three infantry regiments supported by an artillery regiment of three battalions. Additionally, an artillery regiment was assigned to each newly formed Ottoman Army corps. This arrangement would serve the army throughout the First World War.

In the early battles of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, Ottoman artillery performed poorly and was generally unable to deliver effective fire support to the infantry. This was largely the result of the rapid reorganization of the artillery in 1911, after which it had little time to train in the newly configured divisions. Notably, the artillery arm recovered its reputation during the First Battle of Çatalca (17 November 1912) when it was instrumental in stopping a massive Bulgarian attack on the final defensive positions to the west of Constantinople. This was the result of the Ottoman Army reacting to an understanding that its artillery system was incapable of accomplishing its mission. As the army withdrew to the Çatalca lines, earlier the Ottoman general staff decided to concentrate its remaining artillery in three formidable artillery groups, each supporting a frontline army corps. This centralization of artillery assets enabled the Ottoman commanders to concentrate artillery fires effectively. The Ottoman artillery continued in this configuration for the remainder of the Balkan Wars.

The disastrous defeats of 1912 and 1913 caused the Ottoman military to undergo a massive transformation to reform its doctrines and reserve force

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4 Ibid., pp. 76–122.
5 Ibid., pp. 122–136.