

## **Nationalist internationalism. Revisiting Turkey's entry into the League of Nations**

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### **Abstract**

In the 1920s, the new Turkish state portrayed itself as a modern nation devoted to rational progress, international peace, and Western civilization. Similarly, the founders of the League of Nations in Geneva presented their new organization as a community of modern nation states, a vanguard of European-modelled civilization and universal advancement.

So why – despite this shared ideological frame – did Turkey not become a member of the League of Nations right after the Lausanne Conference in 1923? And why did the government in Ankara then finally decide to join the international organization in 1932 – at a time when liberal internationalism was beginning to slide into global crisis?

Scholars often respond to these questions by referring to the role played by geopolitical conflicts like the Mosul Question, diplomatic strategies, and security interests. This talk takes a slightly different perspective suggesting answers that transcend the history of foreign affairs and the analytical boundary between external relations and domestic developments. It sheds light on deeper links between the Kemalist leadership's view of the League of Nations and their internal nation building project i.e. the forging of an ethno-religiously homogenous and 'civilized' society.

### **Bio**

Carolyn Liebisch-Gümüş is Research Fellow for Global/Transregional History at the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington D.C. She received her PhD from the University of Heidelberg in 2018 with a thesis on the relations between Turkish nationalists and the League of Nations. Her first book was published in 2020 under the title *Verflochtene Nationsbildung. Die Neue Türkei und der Völkerbund 1918-1938* with the book series *Studien zur Internationalen Geschichte*. In the past, she was member of the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence Asia and Europe in a Global Context, lecturer in modern history at Kiel University, guest student lecturer at the University of Chicago as well as PhD fellow at the Orient Institute Istanbul. At the GHI, she is currently investigating the role of air routes and airports in the history of refugee migration, with a focus on Frankfurt Airport and the Atatürk Airport in Istanbul.

She is also author of "Embedded Turkification. Nation Building and Violence within the Framework of the League of Nations," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 2 (2020): 229-244, open access <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020743819000904>.