



Universität
Basel

Departement
Gesellschaftswissenschaften

Nahoststudien

The Politics of Heroism in the Middle East by Hala Al Daoud invites you to attend a guest lecture

The Father, the Shahid, and the Holy State: Political Sacralization in Turkey

Dr. Alp Yenen

26 March 2026

14:15 - 16:00

Kollegienhaus, room 212

This lecture examines how contemporary Turkish political life is shaped by a cultural repertoire that sacralizes political leadership, human sacrifice, and Staatsräson. While paternal models of rule in Turkey long predate Atatürk, Kemalism as a foundational ideology and as a lasting leader cult has structured a political landscape in which charismatic authority is reproduced across the party spectrum, and contestations over Kemalism continue to shape rival visions of the “father of the nation.” Across these same political divides stands a pantheon of martyrs whose sacralized sacrifices ideologically anchor political commitments, culturally embed political violence, and emotionally reproduce political hostilities across generations. At the center lies a widespread belief in the sacredness of the state and a tradition of statist nationalism that subordinates individual citizenship, civil society, and social justice to the moral primacy of the state (*devlet*) and its eternal survival (*bekâ*). This lecture explores how these forms of political sacralization animate ideological contestations, memory regimes, and categories of belonging in Turkey.

Dr. Alp Yenen is a lecturer at the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies. He specializes on the history of Modern Turkey and the Young Turk era. He has recently co-edited volumes: *A Hundred Years of Republican Turkey: A History in a Hundred Fragments* (Leiden University Press, 2023) as well as *Age of Rogues: Rebels, Revolutionaries, and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

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