Anglo-Turkish Society online lecture, 6 July 2022, 6.00 pm (UK time)
Speaker: Ayşegül Avcı
Platform: Zoom with link provided to those who register
Title: 'A Failed Success: American Naval Engineers in Istanbul, 1831-1842'

With the intent of modernizing naval forces, Mahmud II employed American naval engineers, Henry Eckford and then Foster Rhodes, as Chief Constructor at the Imperial Arsenal. Despite the many war ships of the highest quality they built, and their efforts to educate the Ottoman youth in the art of shipbuilding, neither of the engineers was capable of accomplishing naval modernization as they aspired to. They were, however, successful in establishing a strong image of American people that would lead Ottoman Emperors to seek out American experts in different fields in the upcoming years. Moreover, being the strongest link in the American network in Istanbul, both Eckford and Rhodes morally and financially supported the missionaries, travellers and diplomatic legation. When the last American constructor, John Reeves, left the country in 1842, they left behind a united and energetic American community, which would thrive until the end of the Empire.

Booking essential: https://aysegul-avci-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk
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Ayşegül Avcı works at Yeditepe University in Istanbul, Turkey as an English instructor. She earned her Ph.D. from the History Department at I.D. Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey in 2016 with her dissertation entitled "Yankee Levantine: David Offley and Ottoman-American Relations in the Early Nineteenth Century." Her Research interests are mainly in the area of Ottoman/Turkish relations with the United States ranging from social and cultural to diplomatic and commercial interactions. Avcı has received a Fulbright Postdoctoral Grant to conduct research on the US influence over Ottoman naval modernization between the years 1831-1840 during which the Ottoman Porte employed American naval engineers in Istanbul, and she is currently affiliated with Boston University's International History Institute for this purpose.

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