

Call for Papers

The 8th Middle East Congress on Politics and Society

Changing International Order and the Middle East: Back to the Future?

The 8th Middle East Congress on Politics and Society, organized biennially by the Middle East Institute of Sakarya University, will be held on 8–9 October 2026. The Congress will open on 8 October 2026 at the Turgut Özal Congress Center, Sakarya University, while the panels on 9 October 2026 will be held online. Under the theme “Changing International Order and the Middle East: Back to the Future?” the Congress aims to bring together scholars working on the politics, society, security, economy, and international relations of the Middle East.

The Middle East remains at the center of contemporary international politics. The US-backed military aggression of Israel extending from Gaza to Iran have reopened fundamental debates on the restructuring of the regional order, while encouraging a critical re-examination of conventional frameworks centered on stabilization and institutional development. Rather than signaling a transition toward sustainable regional governance, these developments unfold within a complex historical landscape marked by shifting security alignments, territorial disputes, and structural challenges to state sovereignty. The contemporary Middle Eastern space exhibits a profound tension between externally imposed governance frameworks and local political realities. As changing diplomatic tracks and new coalition patterns redefine traditional spheres of influence, long-standing mechanisms of external involvement, economic restructuring, and regional fragmentation continue to reshape the boundaries of state autonomy and governance. These developments show that the Middle East cannot be understood only through short-term crises. It must also be examined through the deeper historical, institutional, and geopolitical structures that continue to reshape the region. In this context, the complexity of the Middle East requires approaches that move beyond simplified explanations, political discourses, and crisis-oriented narratives.

The Congress is designed as an interdisciplinary platform open to different theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches. The Congress welcomes studies from international relations, political science, sociology, history, economics, political economy, security studies, law, migration studies, and related fields. Through the keynote speech, panels, paper presentations, and academic discussions, the Congress seeks to contribute to a more historically informed and analytically grounded understanding of the Middle East in a fragile and changing international order. Its aim is not only to discuss current developments but also to examine the broader patterns through which regional order is contested, reproduced, and transformed.

We invite scholars, researchers, and graduate students to submit paper and panel proposals. While the following themes represent indicative areas of inquiry, contributions exploring other relevant dimensions of the topic are also welcomed.

Congress Themes

The Congress welcomes original research papers addressing, but not limited to, the following thematic areas:

- **Theorizing the Middle East in International Relations**
(Global IR, postcolonial and decolonial approaches, historical sociology, critical security studies)
- **State Formation, Governance, and Post-War State-Building**
(authoritarian resilience, regime transformation, legitimacy, state capacity)
- **From Non-State to States: Quo Vadis?**
(armed groups, militias, civil society, religious movements, diasporas)
- **Regional Order, Diplomacy, and Alliance Politics**
(regionalism, normalization processes, mediation, multilateral institutions)
- **War, Conflict, and International Law: What is Next for the Middle East**
(civil wars, proxy wars, securitization, conflict resolution, post-conflict governance, peacemaking)
- **Political Economy and Development in the Middle East**
(rentier economy, energy politics, sanctions, inequality, crises, reform)
- **The Changing Nature of Relations Between Great Powers and Regional States**
(US, China, Russia, EU: strategic competition, multipolarity)
- **Global Projections of Regional Powers**
(Gulf, Levant, East Mediterranean, North Africa)
- **Political Change, Protest, and Social Movements**
(contentious politics, revolution and counter-revolution, digital mobilization)
- **Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization**
(sectarianism, nationalism, religion, ethnicity, populism)
- **Media, Communication, and Power**
(digital media, narratives, propaganda, public opinion, discourse)
- **Migration, Refugees, and Forced Displacement**
(border regimes, humanitarian governance, integration, diasporas, daily life)
- **Gender and Politics**

(feminist approaches, gendered governance, citizenship, labor, rights)

- **Environment and Climate Change**

(water politics, climate security, environmental governance, resource conflicts)

- **The Israel–Palestine Conflict in a Changing Global Context**

(international law, occupation, resistance, diplomacy, global narratives, new sources of Israel's aggression)

- **History, Archeology, and Politics**

(archaeo-politics, historiography, politics of memory, cultural heritage and identity)

Submission Guidelines and General Rules

- The official languages of the Congress are Turkish and English.
- Individual paper proposals should include an abstract of 300–400 words outlining the research question, theoretical framework, methodology, primary argument, and expected findings.
- Panel proposals should consist of papers and include a panel abstract of 400–500 words explaining the panel’s intellectual coherence, theoretical contribution, and relevance to the Congress themes.
- Abstracts and panel proposals must be submitted via the online submission form provided on the Congress website by the announced deadline (August 21, 2026).
- All submitted abstracts will be evaluated through a double-blind peer-review process.
- Participation from Turkey-based scholars will be limited to 45% of the total number of participants.
- Participants whose abstracts are accepted will be invited to submit their full papers, which should be between 4,000 and 6,000 words. Accepted papers may be considered for publication in *The Congress Proceedings Book*, or *The Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (subject to an additional editorial and review process).
- The participation fee for accepted papers will be ₺2,000 for Turkish citizens and €45/\$50 for international participants.
- The student registration fee for accepted papers will be ₺1,000 for Turkish citizens and €35/\$40 for international participants.
- For presentations with two or more participants, the fee will be paid per presentation and must be paid under one participant's name.

