

# MURCIR Debriefs

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ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER RESEARCH CENTER FOR  
ARASTIRMA ve UYGULAMA MERKEZİ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## The 65th ISA Conference - San Francisco

*"As one of the most prominent and largest academic events in the world, the 65th ISA Conference brought together academics and experts from around the globe to share their insights and present their research findings on various topics within the field of international relations. In this debrief, MURCIR Analysis presents the reflections of Emel Parlar Dal and Gül Mescioğlu Gur, offering valuable perspectives garnered from this esteemed gathering*

### Emel Parlar Dal, Marmara University

Academics and experts from around the world convened in San Francisco for the 65th ISA 2024 Conference for four days, bringing together specialists in various intersecting topics under the umbrella of international studies. These topics included gender and feminism in international relations, the Third World and decolonization, grand strategy, intelligence and national/international security, artificial intelligence and data, international political economy, climate change, international organizations and global governance, international law, and democracy. The conference featured panels and roundtable discussions exploring these diverse areas of interest.



I participated in this conference this year with two separate presentations, one in a panel and the other in a roundtable discussion, which I have been trying to attend every year since 2013. In the panel titled "Informal Governance," the impact and limitations of informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) in international relations and their influence on international partnerships were discussed. For example, one presentation examined the relationship between informal organizations and the official international organizations that form the basis of multilateral agreements.

Another presentation in the same panel discussed, using the example of space governance, how these informal structures interact with multilateral agreements and how this interaction shapes the landscape of multilateral diplomacy and governance. In another presentation within the same panel, the extent to which the European Union participates in informal intergovernmental organizations was examined, and how this participation can be evaluated in terms of normativity, trade, or security power. This provided an important analysis to understand the relationship between the EU and informal structures, shedding light on the EU's role in international relations.

My presentation, in the evolving context of multilateralism, presented a multi-layered institutional approach to assess the legitimacy of IIGOs. Offering a comprehensive framework for analyzing the legitimacy of IIGOs, helped us better understand the acceptance and impact of these informal structures at the international level. The final presentation addressed the understanding of institutional choices within a hybrid institutional complex. It presented a model to comprehend decision-making processes and their outcomes in a complex environment where different institutional structures converge, particularly relevant in contemporary issues such as cybersecurity. These sessions provide a comprehensive framework to delve deeper into the role, impact, and acceptance of IIGOs and similar informal intergovernmental organizations in international relations.

Additionally, at the conference, there was a roundtable that I organized titled "Multilateralism and International Organizations," which included experts in the field. In this roundtable, we delved deeply into the crisis of multilateralism and how this crisis affects both formal and informal international organizations.

Gender and feminism studies played a significant role at the ISA 2024 Conference. Traditional international relations theories have often overlooked or marginalized the role of gender. However, in recent years, there has been increasing attention to the impact of gender on international politics. Feminist international relations theory seeks to reshape the understanding and practice of international relations by centring on gender roles, women's rights, and gender equality.

We see that the topics of the Third World and decolonization were also significant points of discussion at the ISA 2024 Conference. The term "Third World" refers to economically underdeveloped or former colonies, while the process of decolonization narrates the struggle for independence and liberation from colonialism in these regions. These issues were re-examined at the ISA conference from the perspectives of global justice and equality.

Grand strategy is the process through which states determine their long-term objectives in international relations and allocate policies and resources to achieve these goals. The ISA 2024 Conference aimed to promote strategic thinking in international relations by examining the impact of grand strategy on international security, economic development, diplomacy, and global leadership.

Surveillance and intelligence have become increasingly important in today's digital age. At the ISA 2024 Conference, the surveillance activities conducted by states and private entities in cyberspace and their impacts on individual privacy, freedom, and security were examined. This topic has sparked in-depth discussions in areas such as international law, human rights, and cybersecurity. Artificial intelligence and data were a significant focus at the ISA 2024 Conference. These technologies are bringing revolutionary changes to many areas of international relations. At the conference, the impacts of artificial intelligence and data on international security, economy, cybersecurity, human rights, and international cooperation were discussed, and various recommendations were made for future policymaking.

International political economy also held a significant place at the ISA 2024 Conference. Panels on this topic covered discussions on international trade, finance, economic development, and global economic governance. The conference addressed topics such as the analysis of global economic balances, development policies, and the future of international trade, leading to discussions on the future of the global economic system.

Climate change, being one of the most urgent global issues of our time, was examined from various perspectives in many panels at the ISA 2024 Conference. The conference featured numerous presentations discussing the impact of climate change on international security, the economy, migration, human rights, and the environment.

International organizations and global governance formed another key theme of the ISA 2024 Conference. This field encompasses topics such as inter-state cooperation, international organizations, global norms and rules, human rights protection, environmental conservation, and global security. The conference featured numerous panels and roundtable discussions exploring effective governance models and international cooperation mechanisms to address global issues.

International law and human rights held a significant place at the ISA 2024 Conference. International law establishes norms and rules for interstate relations, while human rights protect the fundamental freedoms of individuals and reflect the common values of the international community. At the conference, the impact of international law on human rights, peace, justice, and global order was thoroughly examined.

Populism and democracy emerged as a significant topic of discussion at the ISA 2024 Conference. The rise of populist leaders can exert pressure on democratic institutions and processes, potentially weakening democratic norms. The conference featured numerous presentations discussing strategies for preserving and strengthening fundamental democratic principles such as democratic participation, political representation, freedom of expression, and pluralism.

The ISA 2024 Conference proved to be enlightening and productive, addressing a wide range of topics such as gender and feminism, the Third World and decolonization, grand strategy, security, artificial intelligence and data, international political economy, climate change, international organizations and global governance, international law and human rights, as well as populism and democracy. This conference served as a critical platform for understanding developments in international relations and contributing to future policymaking. It facilitated the exchange of ideas among participants, the acquisition of new perspectives, and the assessment of collaboration opportunities, thereby contributing to the international community's efforts to address common challenges and promote global peace and prosperity.

### **Gül Mescioğlu Gur, American University**

The International Studies Association's 65th Annual Convention in San Francisco, held from April 3rd to 6th, 2024, provided a dynamic platform for discourse on global relationships, drawing over 5,000 participants to engage in more than 1,600 panels and roundtables. The convention explored the theme "Putting Relationality at the Centre of International Studies," focusing on how relationships shape global political and social landscapes. The convention was hosted at the Hilton Union Square and Parc 55, featuring an all-in-person format that facilitated direct interactions among attendees. Participants had access to various sessions across multiple tracks, reflecting the rich diversity of topics within international studies.



I was particularly engaged with the presentations in the Peace Studies section. I participated in two panels titled "Peacebuilding from Inside" and "Functional Coexistence: a Decades-Long View of Conflict Resolution and Nonresolution." My first presentation, "From 'Thin' Reconciliation to 'Thick' Reconciliation: The Role of Insider Reconcilers in Cyprus," discussed the evolution of peace processes in Cyprus, emphasizing the role of local actors and international interventions in shaping a multi-track peacebuilding framework. It highlighted the need for a more comprehensive reconciliation process, advocating for supporting insider reconcilers and a shift from limited to deep-rooted reconciliation in Cyprus. My second presentation, "Functional Coexistence in Cyprus," explored different levels and forms of coexistence in Cyprus, from denial and non-recognition to passive and active engagement. This session underscored the complex interplay of geopolitical, social, and economic factors that influence peace and conflict dynamics on the island. It concluded that the functional coexistence approach advises against rushing into negotiations without a conducive environment for constructive dialogue and supports a shift in the narrative from a sense of "stuckness" by highlighting the positive impact of peace interventions and supporting enhanced inter-community interactions.

Additionally, I participated in a roundtable discussion on "Dialoguing on Liberal and Post-Liberal Approaches to Peacebuilding." This conversation delved into contemporary theories and practices in peacebuilding, examining the tensions and synergies between liberal and post-liberal paradigms. The discussion was enriched by diverse viewpoints, contributing to a nuanced understanding of peacebuilding strategies in various geopolitical contexts.

The convention also featured innovative formats of interaction, including storytelling and performance-based sessions, which brought a creative dimension to the academic discussions. These sessions allowed participants to engage with the material in immersive and experiential ways, enhancing the overall impact of the presentations.

The event also provided significant networking opportunities, with designated areas for informal interactions and programmed events aimed at fostering professional connections. The convention offered career development sessions, particularly beneficial for early-career scholars and practitioners. The informal coffee zones were a personal highlight, facilitating relaxed discussions and networking.

As the ISA San Francisco Convention 2024 was conducted amid the backdrop of the Ukraine-Russia War and the War on Gaza, it was a testament to the vibrant and evolving field of international studies. It not only provided a forum for presenting cutting-edge research and theories but also fostered a community of scholars dedicated to understanding and addressing the complexities of global relationships. My participation in this event was profoundly enriching, offering both a platform to share my work on Cyprus and a chance to gain insights from the global academic community on broader international studies issues. Reconnecting with old friends from Türkiye and the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution (GMU), catching up on their lives, and sharing research findings added a personal and rewarding dimension to my experience.

**\*The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy or position of MURCIR.**

