

EWIS 2026 Workshop Call for Papers – Transactionalism in International Relations: Pragmatism, Expediency, and the Future of Global Order, 1-3 July 2026, Izmir, Turkey

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Over the past decade, *transactionalism* has become a recurring buzzword in international relations and foreign policy discussions. Pundits and policymakers alike use the term to describe a shift towards pragmatic, short-term, interest-driven exchanges among states and other international actors—ranging from Donald Trump’s “America First” diplomacy (Agrawal 2025; Beeson 2020) and the EU’s “transactional deals” with third countries (Turhan and Tekin 2023; Bashirov and Yılmaz 2020) to China’s Belt and Road engagements (Hall and Krolkowski 2022; Gyalpo 2025) or the flexible alliances of Gulf states (Ulrichsen 2025). Despite its increasing prominence in academic, policy, and media discourses, transactionalism continues to be conceptually elusive and empirically underexplored.

This EWIS 2026 workshop aims to examine transactionalism both as a practice and as an analytical perspective in International Relations (IR). It starts from the observation that the liberal, rules-based international order—historically anchored in multilateral institutions, shared norms, long-term planning and deliberative processes—is increasingly being replaced by more expedient, deal-oriented modes of interaction. These approaches prioritise short-term utility over long-term institution-building, and specific issue linkages and side-payments over broad normative commitments. The resulting landscape is one of liquid alignments, selective solidarities, and variable geometries of cooperation—dynamics that directly correspond to the EWIS 2026 theme of “*navigating a fractured world.*”

The workshop aims to conceptualise and critically evaluate what transactionalism signifies for international relations theory and practice. Does it serve simply as a rhetorical label for contemporary realism, or as a new governing logic that transforms diplomacy, regionalism, and global governance? How does transactionalism relate to conventional and critical theoretical approaches to international relations? And how do actors both within and outside the Western context—ranging from emerging powers to small states and regional organisations—incorporate transactionalism into their foreign policy repertoires?

Along these lines, we welcome contributions that explore, among others, the following themes:

- Innovative conceptual and theoretical frameworks for capturing the scope and complexity of transactionalism in contemporary international relations;
- Methodological opportunities and challenges in identifying and measuring transactional behaviour in world politics;
- The role of transactional logics in regional and interregional cooperation (e.g., Middle East, Europe, Africa; Transatlantic, Indo-Pacific);
- The interplay between crisis politics, populism, and transactional logics across domains such as security, energy, migration, economic, gender, or climate policies;
- Transactional diplomacy, alliances, and partnerships in a post-liberal order;
- Transactionalism-normativity nexus and authoritarian diffusion;
- The normative consequences of transactional exchanges: justice, solidarity, democracy, and the liberal order.

Following the workshop, we aim to invite a selection of papers for further development toward a Special Issue in a high-impact international journal, building on the conceptual and empirical insights generated through the discussions in Izmir.