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CONFERENCE REPORT: THE 7TH INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT CONFERENCE “IUSTORIA 2026:
IN THE SHADOW OF EMPIRES”

At the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law, students from all over the world have gathered during the Iustoria 2026 conference. The conference was held from May 11 to 13, for the seventh time, continuing the tradition of the unique legal history event for students. Iustoria is one of the few academic oases where students from bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs can share their finished research and those still in progress, as well as get to know colleagues with the same field of interest and improve their work together.

This year, students from Serbia, North Macedonia, Poland, Italy, Montenegro, Republika Srpska, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Slovenia, Russia, Germany, and India have been part of the international student conference. Research has been presented in 9 sessions, arranged in chronological order from Roman law to the modern age, and the official working languages of the conference were Serbian and English. The theme of this year's conference, “In the Shadow of Empires”, provided the framework for the formulation of students' research topics covering a wide range of issues concerning the organization of empires and their influence on international relations throughout history. The choice of this year's theme was inspired by the fact that 2026 marks the 1,550th anniversary of the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE. Each day of the three-day conference began with the keynote lecture. The conference was officially opened by the Vice Dean for International Cooperation of

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the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law, Prof. Dr. Dalibor Đukić, and the chair of the Organising Committee, Prof. Dr. Nina Kršljanin. They welcomed all participants, emphasizing both the significance of this year's conference theme and the important role the conference plays in fostering research collaboration in legal history and in bringing together students and scholars engaged in these topics.

FIRST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

The first day was dedicated to ancient and medieval legal history, and it started with Prof. Dr. Natale Rampazzo's (University Federico II of Naples) keynote lecture titled *Imperium sine fine*. The professor, connected from Naples via video link, spoke about the Roman institutions as the forerunners of international law. The lecture was moderated by Dr. Valentina Cvetković Đorđević, a Professor of Roman Law at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law. The lecture was followed by three student sessions.

The first session was held in English and had three speakers: Miljan Stojanović (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law), Maria Monika Miś (University of Warsaw Faculty of Law and Administration) and Petar Đorđević (University of Niš Faculty of Law), who discussed the topics related to Rome, the application of ancient law into modern times and the ancient public law theories. The session was chaired by Asst. Dr. Vukašin Stanojlović (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law). The discussion after the session was highly inspiring, and it underlined the importance of knowledge of the historic experiences when creating a modern framework.

In the second session, speakers were students from Serbia and Montenegro: Aleksandra Stojiljković (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law), Uroš Tutunović (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law) and Tijana Vidaković (University of Donja Gorica Faculty of Law). They presented their cognitions about the Roman private law curriculum-related questions, but also about the legal transplants of Roman law into 19th-century Montenegrin law. The session was chaired by Prof. Dr. Valentina Cvetković Đorđević (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law).

The third session was about Byzantine and Serbian medieval law. The discussion was mostly held about public law in the Byzantine Empire and especially about the relation between state and canon law at the time. The final session of the first day, the third session overall, featured the following speakers: Andrija Mirović (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law), Živan Labus (University of Banja Luka Faculty of Law) and Lazarela Garibović (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law). The session was chaired by Dr. Tamara Ilić (Institute of Byzantine Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts).

After the third session, participants had the opportunity to visit the nearby Nikola Tesla Museum, where they learned about the Serbian-American engineer and practically tasted and used samples of his work.

SECOND DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

The second day started with the keynote lecture on *Stefan Dušan, a Roman Emperor*, by Dr. Srđan Pirivatrić from the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The lecturer taught about the connection of Serbian Emperor Stefan Dušan with Roman ideas, features, symbolism, and learning.

The first session of the second day, or the fourth session overall, was dedicated to European imperial ideologies. In the session, participants talked about the empires, from the Byzantine to the Habsburg Empire. This session also had plenty of legal theory views on the different historical contexts of the empires. The speakers were Marko Andrejević (University of Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History), Romain Hartung (University of Paris X Nanterre and the École Normale Supérieure of Paris) and Jan Košir (University of Ljubljana Faculty of Law). The session was chaired by Asst. Đorđe Stepić (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law). During this session, participants attended presentations addressing the status of the Isaurians in the Roman Empire, the influence of ancient and early modern political thought on Althusius's opposition to absolute royal sovereignty, and the significance of *ius spoli* as an instrument of Habsburg centralisation.

The fifth session was titled *Mongols, Ottomans, and Habsburgs: At the Frontiers of the Old World*. The session featured presentations by Nevēna Maravić, Aron Čeh, Natalija Mićić and Tamara Čukić, students at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law, and was moderated by Prof. Dr. Nina Kršljanin (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law). This session raised various questions concerning the formation of the Mongol Empire, the restoration of the Serbian Patriarchate in the Ottoman Empire, the Great Plunder of Perast, and the position of Serbs during the reign of Maria Theresa in the Habsburg Monarchy. Upon its conclusion, the session sparked a highly fruitful discussion, as it covered a broad range of topics, while the speakers received numerous suggestions and recommendations for further improvement of their research papers.

The last session of the second day was titled *Empires and the Balkans from the Second Half of the 19th to the Second Half of the 20th Century*. The session was moderated by Prof. Dr. Dalibor Đukić (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law), and the speakers were students from the University of

Belgrade Faculty of Law: Milena Ćorović, Mia Terzić, Anastasija Jovanović, Ivan Marinković and Jovan Đorović. This session covered topics of exceptional importance for inter-state relations in the Balkans during this period. The presentations included an analysis of the introduction of the national army and the attempt to establish a Balkan alliance during the reign of Prince Mihailo Obrenović; the dynamics of relations between Serbia, Bulgaria, and Russia in the context of the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin; the nature and purpose of the May Declaration; as well as the importance of Serbian writers in the development of diplomacy during this era. Finally, the session examined the subsequent influence of the socialist movement in the Kingdom of Serbia on the ideological views of the communist authorities of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, particularly regarding the formation of republican borders.

THIRD DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

All sessions on the final day of the conference were conducted in English. The last day of the conference began with the keynote lecture *Civilization-State and Empire: New Forms of Imperialism in International Law*, by Ass. Prof. Dr. Vyacheslav Kondurov (St. Petersburg State University Faculty of Law). The professor delivered the lecture online. Professor Kondurov primarily focuses on constitutional law and legal theory, while his scholarly work has also encompassed certain topics in legal history. Therefore, this lecture aimed to examine the historical and modern understandings of empires from different perspectives, highlighting their key characteristics and the ways in which they continue to shape the dynamics of international law today.

Speakers of the seventh session, titled *Empires and Lawmaking: Modern Russian and Serbian Experience*, were Andrea Bertaccini (University of Bologna), Andrey Andreyevich Kiosov (St. Petersburg State University Faculty of Law), Lyaysan Valeeva (Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University Faculty of Law), Sara Jovanović (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law), Alexandr Yuryevich Zakharov (All-Russian State University of Justice) and Peter Odrich (Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory). The session was opened with a historically and theoretically oriented presentation on imperial legality between ritual and norm, and this was followed by presentations examining issues related to the continuity of the history of Russian law and the Russian state, the influence of legislative codification and judicial reforms in Russia on the distinctive features of the Empire's legal order, as well as the territorial structure of the Russian Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The session also included a

presentation on the significant long-term influence of the Austrian Empire on the adoption of the Serbian Civil Code. Finally, the session concluded with a presentation analysing imperial legal legacies in the post-imperial world. The session was chaired by Prof. Dr. Nina Kršljanin (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law) and Ass. Prof. Dr. Vyacheslav Kondurov (St. Petersburg State University Faculty of Law).

The next session was dedicated to multinationalism and imperialism. The moderator of the session was Prof. Dr. Miloš Stanković (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law) and the speakers were Petar Simonoski (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje Faculty of Philosophy), Aleksandra Rakhmanova (St. Petersburg State University Institute of History) and Tamil Iniyan A. (Central University of Tamil Nadu). The session began with a detailed presentation on the issue of the conflict between the Roman imperial legacy of the Byzantine Empire and the coronation of Charlemagne, followed by a presentation on the foreign policy of the British Empire towards Africa in the second half of the 19th century. The session concluded with a presentation examining the persistence of imperial legal reasoning behind the formal framework of sovereign equality in international climate law.

The speakers of the last session of the conference were Gabriela Szota, Natalia Bieniek, Marta Brodziak, Marta Pilarska (students at the University of Warsaw Faculty of Law and Administration) and Viktor Norkin (Ural Federal University/Yekaterinburg Orthodox Theological Seminary). The session was titled *Empires and Traditional Communities in the Modern Age*, and the moderator of the session was Prof. Dr. Branko Rakić (University of Belgrade Faculty of Law). The first presentation of the session focused on French and Austrian imperial aspirations in North Africa, with particular attention given to the persistence of customary law in this region. This was followed by a presentation devoted to the Sami people, who are primarily located in Norway. The research examined the international and domestic legal frameworks for the protection of their rights, placing this case within a specific context in which asymmetries of power reflect imperial elements even in the contemporary era.

The following presentation addressed the preservation of Byzantine canonical legal traditions in the Urals during the second half of the 20th century through the writings of the Old Believers. The session also included an analysis of the historical development of private law in Colombia, shaped by various influences throughout its history. The final presentation examined the broader context of how philosophical traditions endure despite colonial imperial influences on a state's legal system, thereby continuing to shape its contemporary law. This was illustrated through the

example of Ecuador, one of the Latin American states that experienced significant colonial influence.

CONCLUSION

Iustoria 2026 was distinguished by the diversity of its topics, which, from a variety of perspectives and through numerous examples, explored the ways in which empires have shaped political processes throughout history, as well as the practical implications of the enduring influence of imperial elements on contemporary law. Taken together, the presentations demonstrated that the legacy of empires remains deeply embedded in many of the social and legal processes witnessed today, reflecting the persistent existence of power asymmetries. At the same time, this influence cannot be viewed in isolation, as it is closely intertwined with historical traditions, the particular characteristics of individual peoples, cultural contexts, and the broader political and legal developments through which states pursue their interests.

The large number of participants from different countries reaffirmed the quality and continuity of students' research in the field of legal history. The presented papers were distinguished by the complexity of the research questions they addressed, with particular emphasis on the interdependence of various social factors and legal institutions across different legal systems. The students employed a variety of research methods and presented well-reasoned arguments, demonstrating a remarkable understanding of the historical and legal processes under discussion. All conference presenters will have the opportunity to publish the results of their research in the *Herald of Legal History*, an international academic student journal dedicated to the study of legal history of all countries and periods.

As in previous years, the conference once again demonstrated the breadth of legal history as an academic discipline, while the participants highlighted its significance and central role in understanding the past, the present, and the future.

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