

Annual Report of 2026

*European Society of International Law
Interest Group on the History of International Law*



This Interest Group (IG)'s founding goals and purposes remain accessible on the IG's blog and in the form of the mission statement – the revised form is available at <http://esilhil.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>

This report covers the IG's activities between September 2025 and October 2026. In December 2025, Jaanika Erne stepped down as convenor of the IG, and Monica Garcia-Salmones Rovira (Maastricht University) [joined the Coordinating Committee as a convenor](#).

EVENTS

The reporting period opened with the IG's two sessions at the ESIL Annual Conference "Reconstructing International Law over Time and Space" (10–13 September 2025), described in last year's report. Below are some of the major events this IG organized.

- On 11 September 2026, the IG [awarded the 2025 Article Prize](#) to Niccolò Ridi (King's College London) and Thomas Schultz (University of Geneva) for "Distantly Reading the *Recueil des Cours*: Authority and Authorities in the History of the Hague Academy of International Law" (2025) 36 [European Journal of International Law](#) 247, with an honourable mention for León Castellanos-Jankiewicz, "A New History for Human Rights: Conflict of Laws as Adjacent Possibility" (2024) 26 [Journal of the History of International Law](#) 119.
- On 22 October 2025, the IG held an online discussion between Hendrik Simon (Frankfurt University / PRIF) and Lauri Mälksoo (University of Tartu) on Simon's book [A Century of Anarchy? War, Normativity, and the Birth of Modern International Order](#) (OUP 2024), which was awarded the Jost Delbrück Prize 2024 and the Helmuth James von Moltke Prize 2025. The discussion took up the book's challenge to the image of the nineteenth century as an era of unlimited warfare, and its argument that the "free right to go to war" (*liberum ius ad bellum*) was a construct of Imperial German legal realism later universalised in the historiography of international law. A [recording](#) was made available on the IG blog on 27 November 2025.
- On 22 January 2026, the IG hosted an online [book launch](#) for Stefano Cattelan's *Mare Clausum: The Formation of the Law of the Sea in Pre-modern State Practice and Legal Doctrine (c. 1350–1650)* (Brill Nijhoff 2025), published in the series Studies in the History of International Law, with Guillaume Calafat (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Monica Garcia-Salmones Rovira (Maastricht University) and Sze Hong Lam (Ocean) (National University of Singapore) as discussants.

- In April 2026, the IG also organised an online workshop for early-career scholars in conjunction with the 2026 ESIL Research Forum “Sustainable International Law: Reconciling Stability and Change” (Jagiellonian University and Centre for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Kraków, 9–10 April 2026). Following a [call for papers](#) issued in December 2025, the [workshop](#) “What Could Be the Future of a Sustainable International Law? Lessons from History” took place on 7 April 2026 and asked how earlier generations of international lawyers thought about what is now called “sustainability” – the protection of nature, the stabilisation of international order and the regulation of economic power. A first panel, “Imagining History and Critique”, moderated by Andre Nunes Chaib (Maastricht University), featured Xuan W Tay (New York / Adelaide University), E Prema (Vellore Institute of Technology) and Antiqua Zaki (New Delhi University); a second, “Sustainability, Economy and History”, moderated by Monica Garcia-Salmones Rovira, featured Carolina Fabara (University of Otavalo / China University of Political Science and Law) and Anaïs Mattez (Asia Center, Harvard University).
- For the 2026 ESIL Annual Conference “International Law and Conflict: An Enduring Tension?” (Universidad de Málaga, 3–5 September 2026), the IG issued a call for abstracts in December 2025 for an Agora proposal, “Conflict, Crisis and Continuity – Historical Perspectives”, inviting papers on how international law has been shaped by, responded to, and coexisted with conflict. Our proposal is fortunately selected to be Agora 9, titled “Treaties, Capital and Conflict in the History of International Law”, on Friday 9 September 2029, from 16:00 – 17:30. The panel was chaired and moderated by Monica Garcia-Salmones Rovira from our IG, and featured Helin Laufer (University of Cambridge), “From Claims Commissions to Investment Arbitration: Conflict and Continuity in the Protection of Foreign Property”, Frederick Cowell (Birkbeck College), “The War to End all Wars’ and its legacy for the law of Treaty Withdrawal 1917-1945”, Connor McBain (University of Ulster School of Law & Transitional Justice Institute), “‘Unknown Knowns’, a redux: Venezuela, the ‘Donroe’ Doctrine, and the Subaltern Legacy of the Roosevelt Corollary in Jus ad Bellum.”
- The IG held its [pre-conference workshop](#) “Conflict, Crisis and Continuity – Historical Perspectives” on 3 September 2026 at the Universidad de Málaga (Teatinos campus), opened and closed by Florenz Volkaert. The first panel, “Laws of War or Law on War? History of International Law in Asymmetric Conflicts”, moderated by Sze Hong Lam (Ocean) (National University of Singapore), featured Stefano Cattelan (Vrije Universiteit Brussel / Brussels School of Governance) on “Neutrality as Crisis Management: Small Powers and the Law of the Sea in Recurrent European Wars (c. 1688–1714)”, and Danny Orbach (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Ziv Bohrer (Bar-Ilan University) on “A Pendulum of Legal Bandwagoning: The International Law of War on Pillage During and Following the Boxer War”. The second panel, “The Paris Peace Conference as a Moment of Crisis? Debates on International Law from a Regional Perspective”, moderated by Anastasia Hammerschmied (Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Münster), featured Artur Simonyan (University of Regensburg) on “Between Empires and After Empire: Armenia in the History of International Law”, Ágoston Frank (University of Vienna) on “Conflict and Crisis as the Origin and Driving Force of Hungarian International Law Between the Two World Wars”, and Peter Odrich (Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory / College of Europe) on “A Conflictual Affair: Internationalising Upper Silesia”.

PUBLICATIONS

- Building on its sessions at the ESIL 2025 Annual Conference, the IG has prepared an edited volume, provisionally titled *(Re)construction of International Law: Deconstruction, Reconstruction and Construction of International Law across Time and Space*, edited by Anastasia Hammerschmied, Sze Hong Lam (Ocean) and Jaanika Erne, to be published by T.M.C. Asser Press. The publishing contract has been signed, and the volume is currently under editorial review. With a foreword by Anne Peters, the volume brings together seven chapters by David M Scott, Valentina Vadi, Milena Mottola, César Targowla, Marcel-Modest Massner, Sze Hong Lam (Ocean) and Jaanika Erne, which approach the theme of “reconstructing international law” through the temporality of international legal thought, the historical turn, communication routes, the emergence of the government-in-exile in revolutionary France, individual agency in the late nineteenth-century “family of nations”, and China’s “unequal treaties” doctrine.
- Building on the Málaga Agora and pre-conference workshop, the IG is considering submitting a special issue proposal to the *Journal of the History of International Law*, provisionally titled “Conflict, Crisis and Continuity: Treaties, Capital and Force in International Law, c. 1900–1939”, with Anastasia Hammerschmied, Sze Hong Lam (Ocean) and Florenz Volkaert as guest editors. The proposed issue would bring together five articles by Connor McBain, Helin Laufer, Frederick Cowell, Peter Odrich and Andrea Farrés Jiménez on the period between the Venezuelan blockade of 1902–1903 and the collapse of the League system in the late 1930s. It asks how conflict generated international law, how legal techniques were adapted to manage conflict, and which hierarchies survived each episode of reform – bringing the history of the laws of war together with the histories of sovereign debt, the protection of foreign property, and treaty withdrawal. Full drafts were received from the prospective contributors in early October 2026, with a view to submitting the proposal to the Editorial Board in November 2026.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

- <http://esilhil.blogspot.com> – provides information about academic publications and events in the field of the history of international law to the public. Between September 2025 and October 2026, the blog carried 22 posts. Alongside the IG’s own calls, programmes, recordings and prize announcements, it circulated calls for papers, events and vacancies from across the field, among them a doctoral seminar with Lauren Benton (Yale University) and the conference “The Atrocity Paradox: From Limited to Extreme Violence in Empires” (both UCLouvain, 15 October 2025), the Forum on International Legal History & Philosophy (Chanakya National Law University, Patna, 15 April 2026), the conferences “Grotius and Toleration” (University of Zürich, 17–18 June 2027) and “Contested Seas: War, Commerce, and the Making of the Law of the Sea (c. 1400–1800)” (VUB/VLIZ, Ostend, 19–20 November 2026), three doctoral positions in the ERC project TREATYLAB at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and the launch of the webinar series of the ESIL IG on European and International Rule of Law.
- During 2026, the blog received approximately 1.38 million visits, with a peak around the time of the ESIL Annual Conference. Visitors came from the United States (180k), Brazil (146k), and Singapore (1112k). The significant traffic from Singapore and the USA might be rerouted VPN traffic originating in Europe. Core European visitors are from France (56.4k), Germany (30k), and the United Kingdom (26.4k). The blog

peaked in views in the days leading up to the annual conference, reaching up to almost 4k a day. The top referral websites are [Google.com](https://www.google.com) and [Linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com).

- In accordance with the pledge in last year's report, our interest group has created a separate LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/esil-interest-group-history-of-international-law/>. It currently has 133 followers.
- From last year onwards, we have also maintained a separate email: esilighistory@gmail.com.

Monica Garcia-Salmones - Anastasia Hammerschmied - Sze Hong Lam (Ocean) - Florenz Volkaert