

Virtual Workshop (in English) on December 5, 2025: Béligh Elbalti on “The Double Face of Private International Law: Reconsidering Its Colonial Entanglements”



On Friday, December 5, 2025, the Hamburg Max Planck Institute will host its monthly virtual workshop Current Research in Private International Law at 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (CEST). Dr. **Béligh Elbalti** (Osaka University) will speak, **in English**, about the topic

“The Double Face of Private International Law: Reconsidering Its Colonial Entanglements”

In its general discourse, private international law (conflict of laws) is often presented as a discipline grounded in principles such as sovereignty, the equality of states, and comity. Its defining traits are said to flow from this premise of equality between legal orders, including its claim to neutrality, its pursuit of international harmony in cross-border cases, and its role in coordinating diverse legal systems. However, it is striking that private international law developed in an international context marked by domination, inequality, and subordination, a context that challenged the very premises on which the discipline claimed to rest.

Within this broader context, private international law appears to have played a dual role. On the one hand, it served as an instrument of colonial domination,

particularly by denying its foundational premises to legal systems not regarded as “civilized”. In these contexts, instead of applying the ordinary methods of private international law, alternative mechanisms were employed to manage foreignness, most notably through systems of extraterritoriality – whether in the form of consular jurisdiction, mixed courts, or foreign courts operating in colonized or semi-colonized territories. On the other hand, private international law also functioned as an instrument for restoring sovereignty and achieving independence. The abolition and dismantling of extraterritorial regimes required colonized and semi-colonized states to meet the substantive and institutional conditions considered necessary for recognition as a “civilized nation”. This included, among other reforms, the establishment of a functioning system of private international law, alongside the adoption of substantive and procedural legal frameworks that guaranteed equal rights and protection for foreigners.

The presentation will be followed by open discussion. All are welcome. More information and sign-up [here](#).

If you want to be invited to these events in the future, please write to veranstaltungen@mpipriv.de.