

SIXTH ALL-RUSSIAN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE  
“REPUBLICANISM: THEORY, HISTORY, MODERN PRACTICES”.  
CONFERENCE CHRONICLES  
DECEMBER 16, 2022 (ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA)

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On December 16, 2022, the Sixth All-Russian Interdisciplinary Conference “Republicanism: Theory, History, Modern Practices”, traditionally organized by the Research Center “Res Publica”, was held at the European University at St. Petersburg. The central topic of this year was the phenomenon of *Caesarism* in the context of different historical epochs from Greco-Roman Antiquity to the present. Leading Russian and foreign historians, philosophers, and political theorists participated in the event. Even though this year’s conference was held for the first time in a one-day format, the program was very eventful: it included four thematic sections and a keynote address from a special guest, Professor David Bell (Princeton University).

SECTION 1. ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF CAESARISM:  
CAESAR, AUGUSTUS, AND OTHERS

The first section, chaired by Alexander Marey (HSE), included three presentations on the origins of Caesarism in Roman antiquity and the Russian Middle Ages. The first one was presented by Konstantin Markov (NNSU, Nizhny Novgorod), whose paper’s title was “The Ideal Principate of Senator Cassius Dio: ‘Absolute Monarchy’ or ‘State System of Mixed Type’?” The speaker contrasted two main approaches to interpreting the speech of Maecenas from Book LII of the *History of Rome*. While some contemporary scholars believe Cassius Dio’s political ideal is a “mixed government”, others suppose that the historian extolled absolute monarchy in his text. Moreover, Markov stressed the “institutional innovations” presented in the speech of Maecenas, aimed at limiting imperial power.

The next speaker, Oleg Kharkhordin (EUSPb), continued the discussion of Cassius Dio with his paper “Octavian Augustus combined monarchy with democracy according to Cassius Dio’s *History of Rome* (LVI. 43. 4)—what does it mean?” Relying on Book LVI of the *History of Rome*, he observed that, unlike other ancient historians, who considered Augustus’ reign a transitional period from mixed government regime to monarchy,

Cassius Dio proposed a different point of view. He argued that the Romans, at the end of Augustus' life, viewed his rule as a combination of monarchy and democracy. Such a combination might, at first glance, resemble M. Weber's idea of plebiscitary democracy. Nevertheless, the speaker noted that Dio's mixture of *monarchia* and *demokratia* meant a mixture of monarchy and aristocracy since the plebeian tribunes had been eliminated, and their power had passed to the emperor by then.

The section ended with a presentation by Konstantin Jerusalimsky (RSUH / EUSPb) on "Prus, the Brother of Octavian Augustus, and the Russian Imperial Idea in the XV–XVII Centuries". The paper focused on the role of Octavian Augustus's fictitious brother Prus in shaping the Russian "Imperial Idea" and the reactions of European countries to his appearance in Russian foreign policy discourse.

## SECTION 2. CAESARISM IN RUSSIAN THOUGHT OF THE XVIII–XIX CENTURIES

The chair of the second section was Pavel Lukin (Institute of Russian History at the Russian Academy of Sciences). Within its frames, Natalia Potapova (EUSPb) presented her paper "Bonapartism in the policy of Alexander I towards the Grand Duchy of Finland". She analyzed the rhetoric of "The Grand Duchy of Finland"'s founders, who, like Napoleon, simultaneously used in their argumentation — two discourses, revolutionary and monarchical.

The next speaker, Victor Kaplun (EUSPb), in his paper "*Caesar non est supra grammaticos*: The Russian Enlightenment on Tyranny", attempted to prove that the Russian culture of the Modern epoch, being a full-fledged branch of the European Enlightenment, was characterized by the criticism of the Caesarist forms of power, which anticipated the critical analysis of the Caesarist regimes in Europe of the XIX–XX centuries.

The third paper of the section entitled "The Second Republic and the Second Empire in Herzen's Interpretations of 1850 – the 60s" was presented by Andrey Teslya (BFU, Kaliningrad). The presentation was dedicated to analyzing Alexander Herzen's reflection upon the reasons for the failure of the pan-European revolutionary movement of 1846–1848 and the possible alternatives to the prevailing political order based on his cogitations on the specifics of the Second Empire.

### SECTION 3. CAESARISM IN EUROPEAN THOUGHT OF THE XIX–XXI CENTURIES

The third section, chaired by Viktor Kaplun, was opened with the paper of Nikolai Vlasov (SPbSU), “Otto von Bismarck — Bonaparte or Caesar?” The author tried to analyze the formal and informal mechanisms of power inherent in Bismarck’s political regime to find features of Bonapartism and Caesarism.

Yuriy Basilov, in his paper “Caesarism and Bonapartism. Genealogy of the Concept in German Thought in the XIX–XX Centuries”, tried to follow the evolution of Caesarism in German political Thought from Karl Marx to Oswald Spengler.

The final presentation of this section was given by Andrey Medushevsky (HSE) on “Democratic Caesarism: from Historical Forms to Modern Constitutional Dictatorship”. In his presentation, the author asked to what extent the classical theory of Democratic Caesarism, which began to form during the transition from Republic to Empire in Rome, can explain the subsequent forms of unlimited power based on the mechanism of the plebiscite. The speaker was also interested in the legitimacy of using this theoretical framework in analyzing modern constitutional upheavals, particularly in Russian and other post-Soviet political regimes. In the context of the analysis of the Russian constitutional amendments of 2020, the presenter proposed the concept of “constitutional dictatorship” as a new modern form of Democratic Caesarism.

### SECTION 4. CAESARISM AND EXTERNAL EXPANSION: HISTORICAL ACCIDENTS OR POLITICAL FORM?

The final section of the conference, chaired by Fedor Lukyanov (HSE), was devoted to the propensity of Caesarist regimes for external expansion and imperialist wars.

Grigory Yudin (MSSSES) presented his paper “Bonapartism and Imperialism”. He tried to identify why former Republics, transforming into Empires, often get involved in imperialist military reckless schemes leading to dangerous and unexpected consequences, including the fall of these regimes.

Artemy Magun (EUSPb) spoke on “Guglielmo Ferrero and Negativity in Imperialism”. Basing on contemporary historiographical debates, he tried to update G. Ferrero’s views on Imperialism and Caesarism. Theoretical foundations of later were based on the premise that the French Revolution

destroyed concepts of legitimacy without offering any worthy alternative in return, which led to a big European War.

Alexander Filippov (HSE) read the “Empire versus World Society” presentation. As an alternative to globalization, which is rapidly going out of fashion, the speaker suggested using the concept of “World Society” (Weltgesellschaft), developed by sociologist Nicholas Luhmann. Based on the idea of communication, the World Society’s conception, with its functional differentiation of world systems, inevitably replaces societies based on economic and political stratification and hierarchy with solid territorial boundaries. Once, the main competitor of world society was the Soviet empire. Even though the USSR lost, Filippov noted that today World Society faces a new crisis associated with the resurgence of Empires with their reliance on large political spaces and old political hierarchies.

#### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The conference concluded with a lecture on “Democratic Republicanism, Caesarism, and the Charismatic Bond in the Age of Revolution” by David Bell (Princeton University). He noted that 1775–1825, which he called the Age of Revolution, was notable not only for the emergence of new republican and democratic political regimes across the Atlantic world. Also, it was interesting for the particular kind of political leadership represented by charismatic military heroes who elicited intense emotional support from a broad public and often used it to help impose the dictatorial rule. Prof. Bell examined the cultural and political changes that made this new form of political leadership possible and briefly discussed two of the most important examples from the period under consideration. The first was Napoleon Bonaparte, and the second was Simon Bolivar, whom the author considers to be the role models for XIX and XX-century Caesarism.

*Ivan Naumov, MA Student  
Research Center “Res Publica”  
European University at St. Petersburg*