



CALL FOR PAPERS

for an interdisciplinary workshop
on

POSTCOLONIAL IR: ENGAGING WITH PUBLIC HISTORY IN SOUTH ASIA AND BEYOND

18 March 2019

Department of International Relations
South Asian University
New Delhi, India

The Department of International Relations at the South Asian University, New Delhi invites contributions from young scholars for an interdisciplinary workshop on *Postcolonial IR: Engaging with Public History in South Asia and Beyond*. The workshop would be held at the South Asian University, New Delhi on Monday, 18 March 2019. It would offer a platform for emerging and established scholars to make critical interventions on the significance of history to contemporary international politics.

The workshop would examine the hitherto underexplored interface between public history and IR. The two fields of enquiry have largely evolved independent of each other although these intersect at numerous points. The workshop would focus on some such intersections, including the battlefield, the museum and the border. Public history, with its focus on how history is located, experienced and interpreted at distinct sites, steers away from the academic field of enquiry that characterises history as a discipline. These are increasingly recognised within critical IR as archival sources in their own right. A sustained theoretical engagement with public history and the gamut of interpretive networks it entails would be a worthy intellectual exercise. For instance, museum practices, through their emphasis on the materiality of culture, shed light on what is regarded as heritage worth preserving. Contestations over the right to possess and preserve heritage make public history a fertile area of enquiry for IR. The workshop would also focus on how postcolonial readings of territoriality, which hinged on colonial practices, had in turn relied on local itinerant guides. Such little-known travellers had regarded the spaces they traversed in the Himalayas as integrated cultural wholes. Likewise, the standard accounts of important episodes in military history such as of the Second World War have privileged a statist Eurocentric reading that overlooks the role of those who made up the 'forgotten army'. This in turn shines light on the construction of memory in sites outside the state and

how alternative narratives have chosen to commemorate the subalterns. Such experiences and interpretations, more often than not, also mark a departure from official discourses on territory, war and history as evidenced in state sponsored projects such as memorials and museums. As compared to the depersonalised representations of history, other accounts of historical events, which include personal chronicles and oral recollections, appear to be either ephemeral or subjective (read banal).

The workshop is an enquiry into how the colonial, the national and the postcolonial intersect in the domain of public history in South Asia. These layers make the remembering, commemorating and teaching of political history an intrinsic part of identity making in the region. As such, it aims to develop lines of enquiry that examine how certain key markers in IR are repositioned and reimagined through lived experiences in sites such as museums, memorials, archives and personal chronicles.

The workshop invites observations from panelists and participants on the following questions:

1. To what extent have contemporary manifestations of public history in South Asia questioned colonial and national representations?
2. In what ways can public history inform ongoing discourses on identity within IR?
3. Which renditions of history do sites of memory privilege given that these are subject to multiple appropriations and contestations?
4. How have South Asian interventions, in discourse and in practice, influenced postcolonial IR?

The workshop will feature panels organised around a set of key dimensions of public history, which includes (but is not restricted to) the following key themes:

1. Postcoloniality in South Asia
2. Teaching and learning national and integrated histories
3. Migration, diaspora and memory
4. The politics of commemoration
5. Chronicling military history
6. Preserving, archiving and displaying history in a postcolonial world
7. Narrating difficult histories

We welcome abstracts exploring any dimension of history and IR that that pertains to postcolonial South Asia or the Global South. Submissions with an interdisciplinary orientation and a strong analytical focus are encouraged.

Interested young scholars are invited to submit a detailed abstract of 600-750 words with the following aspects clearly spelt out:

1. Key research question(s)
2. The relevance of the study
3. The gap in literature to be addressed

Note: Submissions should be original; only previously unpublished papers will be accepted. The applicant should provide an undertaking to this effect at the time of submission.

Submissions are to be emailed to postcolir.sau@gmail.com.

Eligibility:

All researchers pursuing an MPhil or PhD degree are eligible to submit abstracts. Young scholars who have received their PhD degree in the last five years are also welcome to apply.

Timeline:

Submission of abstract: 15 February 2019

Notification of acceptance: 22 February 2019

Successful applicants would be intimated after the Expert Committee completes the review process.

Support:

Young scholars are expected to make their own arrangements for travel and stay. Limited funding is available for outstation participants.

Publication:

The papers presented at the workshop would be brought out as a research publication, either as a Special Issue in an international peer-reviewed journal or as an edited volume.

Workshop Convenor:

Dr. Jayashree Vivekanandan
Assistant Professor
South Asian University