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The Path Not Taken: Decolonial Perspectives from India and the Future of IR

Friday 5 June 2026 09:00 (1h 30m)

The panel seeks to engage with the politics of decolonizing the discipline of International Relations (IR) building upon perspectives from India. Scholars within India, outside, and across the ideological spectrum have shown renewed engagement with the broader project of decolonising political thought, theory, and IR. The so-called relational turn is a testimony to this.

The contributions engage with ancient Indian texts and seek to provide interpretations that engage with ontological and epistemological problems in the discipline of IR. The panel includes interpretation of texts such as Arhashashtra, Mahabharata and philosophies such as Samkhya, Yoga. By doing so, it seeks to place Indian philosophy and philosophers in the domain of IR. Existing scholarship have used key concepts of Indian Knowledge System to reconfigure the discipline. Such scholarship ranges from finding similarities between extant concepts and traditional Indian practices to positing the superior distinctiveness of Indian ideas. For the purpose of simplification, these works can broadly be categorized-labelled as Non-Western, Post-Western, Global, Nativistic, etc. The panel interrogates and problematizes these existing exercises that begin by either critiquing Eurocentrism and romanticizing Indian contributions, or presenting the Indian ideas as precursors of Western concepts. While attempting to uncover the perils of such attempts of decolonizing IR, the contributions in this panel align with the idea that Indian tradition(s) evolved while traversing through critical historical conjunctures and learning from internal contradictions. It is the direction that was not chosen, and possibly the future of IR as discipline –and practice –lies there.

Track Classification: Contemporary Research on International Political Theory Working Group