



 *ICSSR Sponsored*



2<sup>ND</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

*On*

**Backwash: Voices on Environmental  
Colonialism and Post-colonials from  
the Global South**



*organised by*

**Centre for Australian Studies, Bankura University**

*in association with*

**Department of English, Bankura University,  
Bankura, West Bengal, India.**

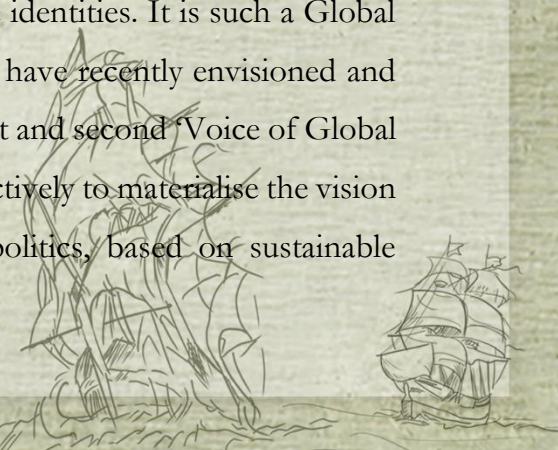
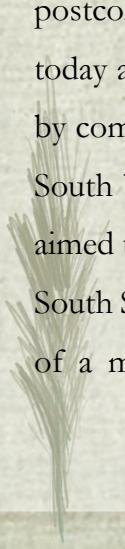
**07 – 08 February 2024**




## Concept Note:

Slowly but surely, the contemporary world order is shifting – from the West dominated unipolar order to a multipolar promise with its tilt towards the Global South, especially Asia. This shift of centre of geo-political gravity began primarily in the Asian Century and necessitates a re-ordering of narratives, a re-writing of histories, an acceptance of non-metropolitan perspectives, and invoking a backwash – of voices formerly considered residual and irrelevant. . . One of the formative moments of that hegemony began on a warship in 1941 when Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt made their Joint Declaration of “hopes for a better future of the world”, which would provide the basis for the later Charter of the United Nations in 1945 and its grand rhetoric of committing to the rights of “all the men in all the lands”. The New World Order thus created fortified only the Anglo-American alliance and the hold of imperial and proto-imperial powers that aimed to rule the world as a post-colonial alibi, the Charter having provided the legal basis for anticolonial and anti-imperial movements across the Global South.

Coined in 1969 by Carl Ogelsby who argued that “the North’s dominance over the global South . . . [has] converged . . . to produce an intolerable social order” in relation to the Vietnam War, the term “Global South” gained traction in 1974 with the United Nations ‘Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order’ and became synonymous with the Third World after the 1980 Brandt report drew an imaginary line based on GDP per capita. The imaginary of the Global South has had little to do with physical location and latitude. India located in the northern hemisphere qualified for the “South” and Australia and New Zealand located in the southern hemisphere became honorary recruits to the “North”. While the term Third World went out of favour post Cold War, the 134 countries strong Global South comprising a conglomerate of postcolonial countries like India has since grown in geo-political stature and constitutes today a diverse and distinct coterie of countries having disparate interests and yet braided by common motivations and interests, through their diverse identities. It is such a Global South brand that India and Australia, among other nations, have recently envisioned and aimed to collaborate in creating, for instance through the first and second ‘Voice of Global South Summit’(s) held in January and November 2023 respectively to materialise the vision of a more equitable and inclusive global economy and politics, based on sustainable

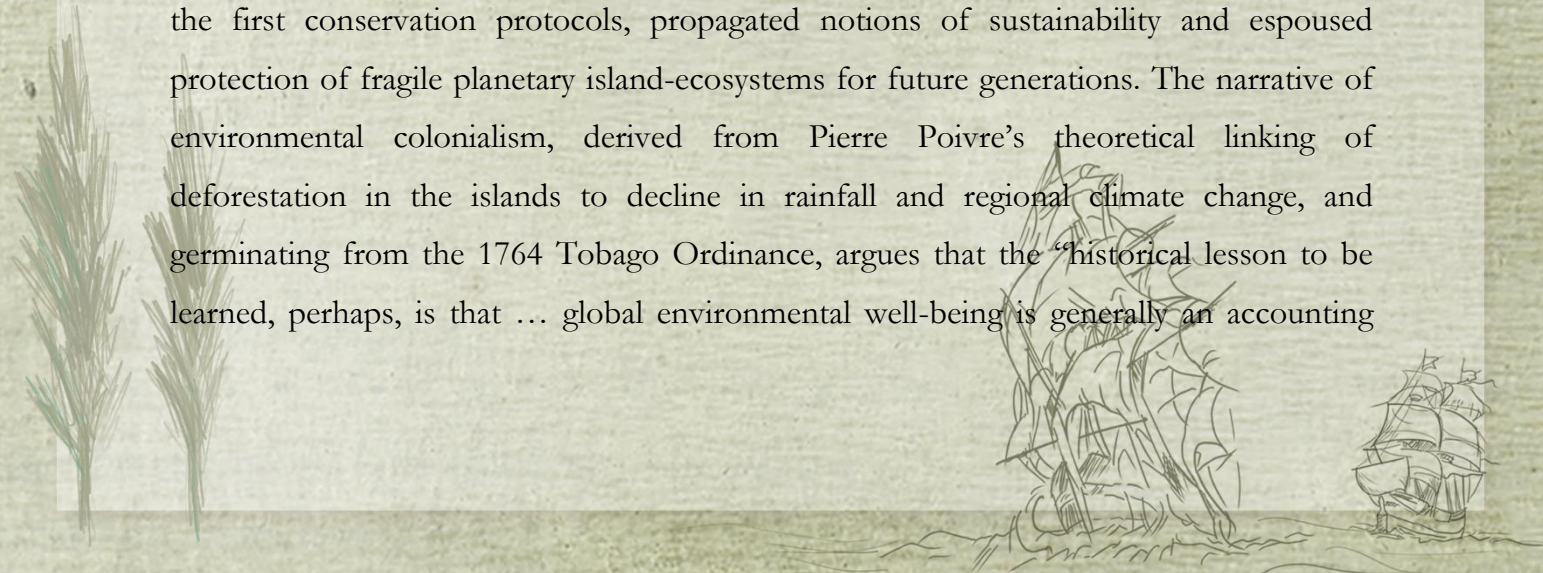





development and economic growth with the desire to create and sustain a more multipolar world order.

In the Introduction to *The Global South Atlantic* (2018), Joseph R. Slaughter and Kerry Bystrom label the Global South as “a geopolitical region ... yet at the same time ... also a vision, an ideal or aspiration of solidarity and interconnection” (04) and a network of “transactions, and systems of interchange and imagination that have historically defined the South Atlantic (and that continue to drive its futures) but are obscured or suppressed by the hegemonic North Atlantic orientation of knowledge production and the division of disciplines tasked with producing it” (Slaughter and Bystrom 04). While Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell believe that the term critiques imperialism, neo-imperialism and social inequity in a geopolitically divided world, having morphed into a tool to problematize Eurocentric epistemologies post Industrial revolution in international activism and academia, the publication of Kenneth Pomeranz’s *The Great Divergence* (2000) led to the eruption of non-Eurocentric literatures that have since aimed to redress the history of capitalism across geographies.

Environmental colonialism, apparently rooted in positioning the developing nations at the receiving end of the blame game, seems to consider the environmental crisis to be an unprecedented phenomenon, erasing centuries of resource exploitation initiated by the European merchants and companies who steered the first phase of globalisation or capitalist expansion of Immanuel Wallerstein’s “world system”. While indigenous island peoples of oceanic islands like the Canary Islands faced extinction, Richard Grove contends that forest clearances and collapse of ecological balances in the Europe-desired “Edenic” islands like Mauritius and St Helena led to the extinction of the dodo and to humans becoming denatured. Ironically the exploitative colonial system also established the first conservation protocols, propagated notions of sustainability and espoused protection of fragile planetary island-ecosystems for future generations. The narrative of environmental colonialism, derived from Pierre Poivre’s theoretical linking of deforestation in the islands to decline in rainfall and regional climate change, and germinating from the 1764 Tobago Ordinance, argues that the “historical lesson to be learned, perhaps, is that ... global environmental well-being is generally an accounting

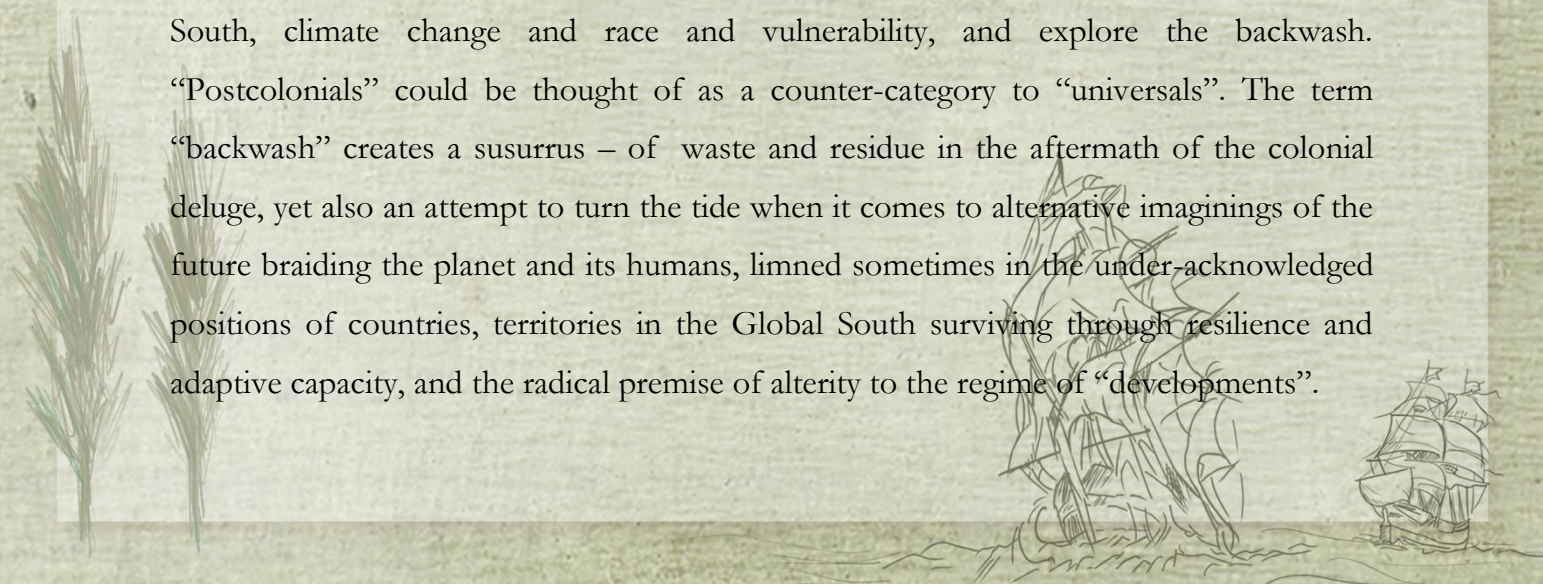




irrelevance.” (Grove 55). Contemporary environmentalism aimed to “save” Africa and bled the neocolonial colour-characteristic of Western environmentalism.

Thus while settler colonialism has often unequivocally displaced centuries-old indigenous entanglements with the environment, has the apparent Western withdrawal post independence in such decolonised nation spaces mitigated underdevelopment, exploitation and environmental injustice? Aligned to Anne McClintock’s version of postcolonialism as a “history of hopes postponed” (92), it is imperative that the post-colonials find their voices -- not as a mere rejoinder or collage of write-backs to colonialism but as one which retrieves and espouses the centuries-old indigenous nous of the planet.

In an era of intersections of contrapuntal relationships between environment and humans, in which environmental justice paradigms seem applicable only to indigenous and postcolonial communities who have been and continue to be dependent on the use/exploitation of vulnerable environments for their survival, the need of the hour seems to be enfranchisement of transitional decolonised communities and nations of the Global South and initiating discourses at global and glocal levels in the Global South – to “write back” and repudiate the xenophobic, economic and colonial inequalities often set as templates across mainstream commercial, governmental and environmental formulations. Since at least Tom Sawyer’s whitewashing of the fence, whitewashing of histories and the past have become a favourite pastime across geographies. But with every onward wave of colonialism from the Global North and its subsequent whitewashing, a backwash has laid bare both the reality and barely habitable truths of unsettled, indigenous and island communities. This conference, scheduled a couple of months after COP28 (UN Climate Change Conference - United Arab Emirates, 30 Nov - 12 Dec 2023) aims to look at environmental colonialism, its afterlives and postcolonials emergent from the Global South, climate change and race and vulnerability, and explore the backwash. “Postcolonials” could be thought of as a counter-category to “universals”. The term “backwash” creates a susurrus – of waste and residue in the aftermath of the colonial deluge, yet also an attempt to turn the tide when it comes to alternative imaginings of the future braiding the planet and its humans, limned sometimes in the under-acknowledged positions of countries, territories in the Global South surviving through resilience and adaptive capacity, and the radical premise of alterity to the regime of “developments”.





## **SUB THEMES:**

- Climate Colonialism/ Environmental Colonialism
- Representations of Climate Colonialism / Environmental Colonialism in Literature
- Nature and Indigenous Communities
- Global Warming and Beyond
- Us and Climate Change
- Postcolonial Writings responding to Environment and Climate Change
- Global South and the Environment
- Garbage-fiction
- Pollution
- The age of speed, and plastic
- 1.5 Stay Alive
- Propaganda and Denial of Climate Change
- Ecological Consciousness and Climate Change
- Climate Exodus, Climate Refugees
- Climate of Doubt
- Climate Change and Cultural Entropy
- Eco-literacy in the Global South
- Eco-literatures from the Global South
- Climate and Microclimates
- Climate Change and rural communities in the Global South
- Climate Change and grassroots activism





## Climate Blueprint

- Environmental Justice and the Global South
- Environmental Law and Climate Change
- “Backwash” in imagining Environmental Responses
- Climate Change and Ocean Peoples

### Highlights of the Conference:

#### Key Note Address I:

***Professor James Arvanitakis, PhD***

Director, Forrest Research Foundation, Perth, Australia  
& former Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Graduate Studies),  
Western Sydney University, Australia

#### Key Note Address II:

***Dr Ruth Morgan***

Associate Professor & Director, Centre for Environmental History, School of History,  
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, The Australian National University, Canberra,  
Australia.

#### Plenary Address I:

***Dr Paul Sharrad***

Fellow of the University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia.

#### Plenary Address II:

***Dr Helen Pringle***

Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture,  
University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.





## Call for Papers:

Abstracts (not exceeding 250 words) may be emailed to:

[centre\\_australianstudies@bankurauniv.ac.in](mailto:centre_australianstudies@bankurauniv.ac.in)

**EXTENDED Deadline for sending of abstracts** : 26 January, 2024

**Selection of abstracts would be conveyed by** : 29 January, 2024

**Registration Fees:**

- 2000 INR (Indian delegates)
- 1000 INR (Research Scholars)
- 500 INR (Postgraduate students)
- 50 USD (International delegates)
- 20 USD (International delegates presenting papers via video-link)

### Accommodation:

The convenors have received approval of conference support from **Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)**, Ministry of Education, New Delhi.

Hence, the conference team is happy to provide partial support for both hotel accommodation (with breakfast & dinner) on a twin-sharing basis for a stay of 2 nights at Bankura and transport between the conference venue at Bankura University Main Campus and the hotel, to all delegates.

### Registration Fees with accommodation:

2000 INR + 800 INR (Indian delegates)

1000 INR + 800 INR (Research Scholars)

If you need accommodation, please contact the conference team beforehand. Please drop a mail here with your requirements:

[centre\\_australianstudies@bankurauniv.ac.in](mailto:centre_australianstudies@bankurauniv.ac.in)





**Publication:**

Selected papers will be published in a blind peer-reviewed Edited Volume / Conference proceedings by a reputed publisher.

**Chief Patron of the Conference:**

Professor Goutam Buddha Sural, Vice Chancellor (Acting), Bankura University

**Convenors:**

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& Head, Department of English, Bankura University, Bankura, WB, India.

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*See you at the conference!*

