

Editor's Introduction

This is the inaugural issue of *Indian Politics and Policy*. The editors collectively decided to focus on the Modi regime's performance in a number of key policy areas during its span of nearly 4 years in office. To that end, the journal commissioned papers from a number of senior and junior academics. The papers deal with the regime's performance in the arenas of foreign, economic, social, counterinsurgency policy, and federalism.

In the realm of foreign policy, Chris Ogden of the University of St Andrews argues that the regime has focused on India obtaining recognition as a great power, pursuing a multipolar global order, and setting in motion a more robust engagement with Southeast Asia. These goals, while they do not amount to a wholly new foreign policy doctrine, nevertheless represent a tonal shift and an acceleration of certain foreign policy objectives.

Vijay Joshi of Merton College, Oxford argues that the regime was the beneficiary of weak global oil prices and sandbagged with an inherited "twin balance sheet problem." Its responses to these two legacies were respectable but not impressive. Joshi concludes that the government's performance was excellent with regard to the continuation of a few major market reforms, but mostly failed to address the problems related to "deep fiscal adjustment." In summary, he contends that the performance of the regime was good in parts but mostly underwhelming.

Chanchal Kumar Sharma of the Central University of Haryana and Wilfred Swenden of the University of Edinburgh contend that despite the claims of the Modi regime to place "center-state relations on an even keel," Indian federalism has become more centralized. Yet this process of centralization has hardly been uniform. It is strongest in the political domain but weakest in fiscal matters.

Two contributions, one from Amrita Basu at Amherst College and another from Maya Tudor at the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University, discuss different aspects of social policy under the Modi regime. Basu specifically deals with the growth of executive power, heightened nationalism, and the attrition of key institutions. She argues that the populist orientation of this government has attenuated democracy because of its rejection of the values of pluralism, diversity, and political contestation.

The second contribution, that of Maya Tudor, suggests that Indian nationalism was historically inclusive and had sought to protect democratic institutions during political crises. However, she believes that a newly hierarchical Indian nationalism is justifying the marginalization of minorities and is therefore inimical to Indian democracy.

Finally, Subhasish Ray of the National University of Singapore assesses the current regime's counterinsurgency policy. Through an examination of two cases

of counterinsurgency, in Nagaland and Kashmir, he asserts that ideological penetration of the “politics of conflict resolution” has profoundly affected counterinsurgency operations in both theaters. Where ideological penetration is high, the state has evinced a willingness to accept the logic of ballots; where it is weak, the logic of ballots has been made subservient to the logic of bullets.

We collectively thank the President of the Policy Studies Organization, Paul Rich, for suggesting the launch of this journal. Our thanks also to Professor Fred Cate, the Vice President for Research at Indiana University, Bloomington, for the financial assistance which enables the journal to employ a research assistant. It is our hope that it will soon emerge as the key professional venue for publications dealing with contemporary policy issues in Indian politics.

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