

Introduction

Rahul Mukherji

South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University

mukherji@uni-heidelberg.de

With this issue, *Indian Politics and Policy (IPP)* has spontaneously transitioned from a bi-annual to a tri-annual publication in its second year of continuous publication since 2024. The first issue in 2025 was dedicated to the 2024 Indian Parliamentary elections. The current volume explores Indian foreign policy during the decade of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule under the stewardship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The three volumes in 2025 have covered a diversity of topics and engaged with significant scholarship.

Colleagues had warned me regarding the vicissitudes of establishing a journal, especially one that had lain dormant for a couple of years (2021–23) after beginning on a promising note in 2018. These challenges notwithstanding, *IPP* can now claim to be an emerging repository of the highest quality of current research on Indian politics and policy.

We take a broad view of our mandate in areas of “politics” and “policy,” inclusive of disciplines such as economics, history, law and anthropology, as well as comparative research that relates to India. Since its inception, the journal has deeply engaged with Indian politics, economic policy, secularism, demographic change, state-building, and key areas of governance such as constitutional safeguards, social protection and biometrics. The current issue adds depth to our engagement with foreign policy analysis. We aim to expand into many more areas such as environment and gender relations while reinforcing our existing strengths.

This is a collective achievement, and I thank the editorial team, the Editorial Advisory Board and the International Advisory Board for their unstinting support for the project. The encouragement we have received from the scholarly community has surpassed our expectations. The success of a journal, in the end, rests with its contributors and readers. We are hopeful that the current trajectory of *IPP* will fill a gap by generating scholarly knowledge (through rigorously refereed research engaging academic debates) alongside a wide range of perspectives from distinguished scholars and practitioners, and book reviews/review essays that bring the best scholarship to a larger audience.

This special issue on Indian Foreign Policy is guest edited by Professor Rohan Mukherjee from the London School of Economics. Professor Mukherjee has engaged with talented younger and mid-career scholars to reflect on substantial is-

sues of Indian foreign policy during Prime Minister Modi's period of premiership. The scholars presented here have produced excellent scholarship in their areas of expertise and are productively working towards distinguished senior positions. Their approach is both intellectually innovative and scrupulously researched.

The special issue begins with an excellent introduction to the key themes related to how domestic political change with a right-wing Hindu nationalist dispensation in the saddle for over a decade shapes India's foreign security, economic and cultural policies. Various under-researched questions are explored in this volume. How has Hindu nationalism impacted India's relations with other countries? Does Hindu nationalism use Buddhism for soft power but detest it when it comes to conversions in India? Has Hindu nationalism transformed India's conception of sovereignty and "worldmaking"? Does autocratization driven by Hindu nationalism, supported by civilizational arguments for political legitimacy, reduce the need for pragmatic economic management leading to sub-optimal economic growth and development? Has the federal character of India's foreign economic policy been transformed? Does a Hindu nationalist regime seek the diaspora more for political rather than for economic goals with an inclusive understanding of the diasporic community? What difference does it make now that we are living in a world where digital platforms are driven by artificial intelligence? Some papers also interrogate whether India is turning into a revisionist state.

In addition to this menu, we present a book review that debates the importance of the state versus the significance of firm level strategies for commercial success in India and Pakistan. We do hope that you will enjoy the feast.