

Introduction

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I*ndian Politics & Policy* (IPP) began in 2018 under the editorial guidance of Professor Sumit Ganguly, Indiana University, Bloomington, but went dormant after its Spring Issue in 2020. The journal is now being revived with an actively engaged and re-configured Editorial Board, and a galaxy of distinguished members on its International Advisory Board. The core editorial team resides at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg and in Oxford. With the generous support of the Policy Studies Organization, Washington DC—a truly transatlantic relationship deeply embedded in the fabric of Indian reality—the journal is poised to become a premier one engaging with India’s policies and politics.

IPP occupies a distinct scholarly space hitherto neglected by existing journals. While there are multiple avenues for publishing papers on economic policy, or those engaging with India, South Asia, or Asia at a broader level, IPP is unique in that it will put the spotlight back on the intermeshing of politics and diverse arenas of policymaking in India.

The inaugural issue of Volume 4 presents three *research papers*. Two of the papers delve into economic and human development issues, namely India’s demographic challenge, and the criticality of bolstering the public face of healthcare services in India. The third examines the import of export-led growth for India’s developmental trajectory.

Anil Deolalikar opines that India’s demographic dividend remains grossly underutilized—and time is running out. A young population can spur economic growth more rapidly than an ageing one. The best use of this favorable economic condition would require higher levels of skill development, health and nutrition levels, global competitiveness promotion, and more substantial job opportunities. India’s respectable growth, on the other hand, creates very few jobs. Underutilization of the demographic dividend is exacerbated by the fact that the poorest and least developed states of India are the ones that have a younger population. These are the very states that have the scarcest job opportunities. The country has a small window of opportunity till 2030, after which year the proportion of the population aged over 65 will exceed the number of children below 5 years of age. And, India is even less prepared to face the challenge of non-communicable diseases that arrive with an aged populace.

Deepika Joshi and Sulakshana Nandi argue that the private sector-based model of public health service delivery is flawed. The authors deploy a rigorous case study of the conversion of a publicly supported private facility into a public one in the sub-national state of Chhattisgarh to arrive at this conclusion. The paper points to the dire need for increasing public investment in health, a fact that is also highlighted in the paper by Deolalikar.

Arvind Panagariya presents the best reasons why India should not shy away from export promotion at a time when protectionist voices seem to have risen in the country. India's rapid economic growth after 2003 was accompanied by its emergence as a trader. The same is true for the rise of the East Asian economies. He argues persuasively that new phenomena such as the advent of automation or COVID 19 do not take away from the basic factors that causally connect international trade with economic growth and development.

IPP presents a second section titled *perspectives*. These shorter papers are invited articles where scholars and practitioners share their perspectives on critical issues concerning India's policy environment. Contrary to the Hindu nationalist narrative, Amitav Acharya argues that the origins of India's Vedic civilization did not emerge exclusively within the geography of India. It is a far more complicated story that begs serious archaeological, historical and anthropological research. Harsh Mander reflects on the roots of the bloody ethno-nationalist conflict in Manipur, which is a significant challenge for Indian secularism. Kunal Sen reflects on the Modi government's economic policy since 2014.

Finally, we present a section titled *review essays* that reviews books around critical themes. We are delighted to publish a review essay by John Harriss on the evolution and impact of Article 22 of the Indian constitution. Article 22 is an important legal stricture on preventive detention that may well have opened the gates for the efflorescence of repressive laws in India. This review is timely at a time when three new Bills on the criminal justice system were introduced in August 2023 after suspending 143 opposition Members of Parliament.

Forthcoming issues of IPP will engage lively political and policy issues. There are Special Issues planned around the theme of the Future of India's Democracy and to an analysis of the results of the parliamentary elections currently underway in India. These planned special issues and the interest of leading scholars to contribute to the journal gives us the confidence that IPP will make a difference to the scholarly understanding of India's politics and policies.

India's size in terms of demography and economy, and its capacity to perform within a democratic framework will be significant for the world. India is a significant growing economy faced with the challenge of poverty, deepening economic inequality, heightened social discrimination, and rapidly declining democratic credentials. Its geostrategic significance cannot be underestimated. IPP will provide substantial insights into the politics, and evolution and impact of policies

shaping the world's largest democracy.

Lastly, we are deeply saddened to report the loss of an eminent scholar and dear friend Raghendra Jha, Emeritus Professor, Australian National University, who was on our International Advisory Board. He passed away on 20 November 2023. His unwavering support for the journal, and many such intellectual ventures, was of a rare kind. Raghav's generosity of spirit and intellectual acumen will be dearly missed.