



## Has India reached a post-hegemonic moment under Modi? Reflections on the last 5 years

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### ABSTRACT:

Between the year 2012, when Narendra Modi was nominated as the 'Prime Ministerial Candidate', to now, 3 years into his tenure holding that office, the Indian political landscape has changed dramatically. In this lecture, I sketch out how Indian politics has changed over this period, while in conversation with recent debates over populism, governance, civil society, and 'forms of power outside the state'. Modi was welcomed by neoliberal media figures in 2012 as an anti-dote to what it labelled 'povertarianism', that is, a policy regime that was ostensibly pro-poor, but actually consolidated the poor in a condition of poverty, as a permanent constituency. He was also welcomed by capitalists, by large sections of the middle classes (including those whom Modi referred to as the "neo-middle class"), and segments of subaltern classes. His mandate was substantial enough to authorise policies of medium-term pain in the pursuit of long-term and deep development. To the extent he was seen as a populist, his populism itself was seen as one of style and form, rather than substance and content. My lecture explores a) state-capital-labour relations after demonetization; b) how and why Modi's populism has changed in these 5 years, c) what kind of governance practices have been seen; d) why and how civil society faces unprecedented challenges, and d) how the large-scale use of non-state actors are forms of informal governance outside the state, substituting for a civil society that has shrunk more, and more quickly than was anticipated. I close with remarks about the unpredictability of political change today, and the emerging responses to Modi in the electoral and non-electoral political arenas.

### READING LIST:

Jon Beasley-Smith: "Introduction." *Post-Hegemony*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010 <http://criticalatinoamericana.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1.-beasley-murray-posthegemony-intro.pdf>

J. Pal, P. Chandra and VGV Vydiswaran, "Twitter and the Rebranding of Narendra Modi." *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 20, 2016

S. Sinha, "Fragile Hegemony: Modi, Social Media and Populist Contentions in Contemporary India." (forthcoming in the *International Journal of Communication*)

L. Caruso, "Gramsci's Political Thought and the Contemporary Crisis of Politics." *Thesis Eleven*, 2016, vol 136(1)