LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

A warm welcome to the 14th edition of the Public Sphere Journal 2025-26!

Today we live in highly dynamic and uncertain times with an equally interesting plethora of opportunities. The last two decades refuse to settle; a global recession, unpredictable pandemic, and unprecedented wars (without humans), comes with far-reaching consequences. Many of the multilateral institutions are in a precarious state and heading towards their gradual decay. The sudden retreat of the global hegemon pushed the world in a state of flux, reimagining the global order.

The theme for 2025-26 edition 'The Future of Social Contract', draws inspiration from the ideas of the great British Philosopher Thomas Hobbes, from his magnum opus 'Leviathan' (1651). He identified three principal causes behind a conflict: Competition, distrust and glory of reputation. These factors can perpetuate the war, unless eased by a social contract. Such social contracts were formed over time, and we enjoyed harmony and stability. Peace and trust are not just altruistic objectives, but the essential elements for the smooth functioning of any political system, defining its pragmatic worth facilitated through social contracts. It presently acts as a binding force for the 200+ nations all over the globe.

Professor Dani Rodrik, links the three pressures shaping global development: poverty, middle class security and climate action. And the global economy has a political trilemma of Hyperglobalisation, Democracy and National Sovereignty. Any nation can not choose all three simultaneously. Global citizens seem to be exasperated about the promise of the trickle-down effect and pushing a post-neoliberal transition through the democratic protests all across the globe. This signals a dire need to revisit the existing framework of social contract. And that is the biggest challenge in-front of the emerging policy makers worldwide.

The 14th issue comprises six sub-themes and offers a policy landscape to build a virtuous society, ensuring collective welfare. It is a result of the sheer hard work and dedication from all the team members, associated with the print, blog and podcast departments of the Public Sphere Journal, despite their academic and professional commitments.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Former Dean, Professor Andres Velasco, our interim dean Professor Tony Travers (CBE) and Professor Lloyd Gruber for their pivotal contribution to this edition. A special thanks to Professor Adnan Khan for writing an opening piece for us, describing ways to fix the fracturing world through the social contract. Additionally, we are immensely thankful to Sarah, Jemima and the entire SPP Administration, whose support makes this student led initiative a great success. And thanks to Emily Hoong for the design.

As you explore this edition, read it for the policy insights with a hope for a better world we chose to build on empathy and compassion.



Best Regards,
Akash Waghmare
Co-Editor-in-Chief
PSJ 2025-26

There are decades where nothing happens;
and there are weeks where decades happen.

It is hard not to think we are not living through one of those (really long it seems) weeks. Trade rules are being rewritten, old alliances are being tested, and some of the foundations liberal democracies have rested on for most of our lives no longer feel as solid as we assumed. Nobody can say with confidence what will emerge or what the current rules-based order will evolve into.

This year's theme is the future of the social contract: what states and citizens owe each other, and what happens when the promises and rules are no longer being kept. Our contributors come at it from very different places and analyse different types of the contracts our society is based upon. Many of them make a similar uncomfortable observation: the events that break this contract in a fast-moving week usually have roots that formed slowly and a long time ahead.

I don't think we can simply wait to see how things settle. Getting through this period, and coming out of it stronger, will take young leaders willing to be brave and prepared to think for themselves. I hope this collection encourages that. Read it, argue with it, disagree with it.

But above all, I hope it pushes you to do act on these ideas, because the decades ahead are being shaped right now.

Thank you for picking up this edition of the Public Sphere!



Aleksandra Jaremko
Co-Editor-in-Chief
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