

THE PARADOXICAL PRIME MINISTER: NARENDRA MODI AND HIS INDIA

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ABSTRACT

"Paradoxical Prime Minister" is a book written by Shashi Tharoor, an Indian politician, author, and former diplomat. The book provides a critical analysis of the policies and actions of the current Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. Shashi Tharoor explores the paradoxes of Modi's leadership, arguing that while the Prime Minister presents himself as a champion of development and modernity, his actions are often at odds with these values. The book is divided into four parts, each of which explores a different aspect of Modi's leadership. The first part, "Mythmaking," focuses on the creation of Modi's political persona. Mr. Tharoor argues that Modi has built an image of himself as a strong, decisive leader who is committed to the development of India. However, he suggests that this image is largely a myth, created by Modi's carefully crafted public relations campaigns. The second part of the book, "Ideology," explores Modi's political ideology and the policies that he has pursued during his time in office. Mr. Shashi argues that Modi's ideology is rooted in Hindu nationalism, and that his policies are designed to promote the interests of the Hindu majority at the expense of other religious and ethnic groups. The third part of the book, "Polarization," examines the impact of Modi's policies on India's social fabric. Mr. Tharoor argues that Modi's government has created a climate of fear and division in India, and that his policies have exacerbated existing tensions between different communities. The final part of the book, "Populism," focuses on Modi's approach to governance. Mr. Tharoor argues that Modi's leadership style is characterized by a focus on public relations and image-building, rather than substantive policy-making. However, the book's length may be intimidating to some readers, and Tharoor's writing style can be overly academic and verbose at times. Additionally, some readers may take issue with Tharoor's political perspective, which is that of a political opponent of Modi.

MYTHMAKING

In "Paradoxical Prime Minister," Shashi Tharoor argues that much of Narendra Modi's political success is due to the careful construction of his public image. Tharoor contends that Modi has created a myth of himself as a strong, decisive leader who is committed to the development of India. However, this image, Tharoor suggests, is largely a product of Modi's own propaganda. Tharoor notes that Modi's rise to power was facilitated by a massive public relations campaign. Modi has been masterful at manipulating the media, Tharoor argues, and has used social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to create a powerful personal brand. Modi's public image is characterized by a strong, masculine persona, which Tharoor suggests is calculated to appeal to traditional gender roles and social values in India.

Tharoor also notes that Modi's public persona is heavily influenced by his background as a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist organization. The RSS is known for its authoritarianism and its rigid adherence to traditional Hindu values. Tharoor argues that Modi has incorporated many of the RSS's ideological principles into his public image, including a strong emphasis on Hindu nationalism and the promotion of Hindu values.

Despite Modi's image as a strong and decisive leader, Tharoor suggests that there are many contradictions in his public persona. For example, Modi presents himself as a champion of modernity and development, but his policies often run counter to these values. Tharoor cites Modi's demonetization policy as an example of this contradiction, arguing that the policy actually hindered economic development and caused significant harm to the Indian economy.

Tharoor shows how Modi's public persona is carefully constructed and manipulated for political gain, and how his policies often contradict the values he claims to champion.

IDEOLOGY

In "Paradoxical Prime Minister," Shashi Tharoor argues that Narendra Modi's political ideology is rooted in Hindu nationalism, which he suggests is at odds with India's secular and pluralistic identity. Tharoor contends that Modi's ideology has shaped many of his policies and has led to the marginalization and discrimination of minority groups in India.

Tharoor notes that Modi's political career has been closely associated with the RashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist organization. The RSS promotes an exclusivist vision of Hindu identity, and has been accused of promoting violence and discrimination against minorities. Tharoor suggests that Modi has adopted many of the RSS's principles and has used them to build a political base among Hindu voters.

Tharoor argues that Modi's ideology is at odds with India's secular and pluralistic identity. India has a rich history of diversity and pluralism, with many different religions, languages, and cultures coexisting in a complex social fabric. Tharoor suggests that Modi's promotion of Hindu nationalism threatens to undermine this diversity and to create a society that is more exclusive and intolerant.

Tharoor provides numerous examples of how Modi's policies have marginalized and discriminated against minority groups in India. He cites the Citizenship Amendment Act, which grants citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from neighboring countries but excludes Muslims, as an example of how Modi's ideology has been translated into policy. Tharoor also notes the rise of vigilante violence against minorities, particularly Muslims and Dalits, under Modi's government.

Tharoor shows how Modi's ideology is at odds with India's secular and pluralistic identity, and how it has led to the marginalization and discrimination of minority groups in India.

POLARIZATION

In "Paradoxical Prime Minister," Shashi Tharoor argues that Narendra Modi's political strategy is built on polarization, which he suggests has deeply divided Indian society and undermined India's democratic institutions. Tharoor contends that Modi's tactics of polarizing voters along religious and caste lines have created a toxic political environment that threatens to tear apart the fabric of Indian society.

Tharoor notes that Modi's political career has been characterized by a willingness to exploit social divisions for political gain. Modi has consistently used religious and caste identity as a means of mobilizing voters, Tharoor suggests, and has often played on fears and prejudices to create a sense of Us versus Them. Tharoor argues that this strategy has been particularly

effective in recent years, as rising inequality and economic uncertainty have created a climate of fear and insecurity.

Tharoor shows how Modi's polarization tactics have had a profound impact on Indian society. He notes that communal violence has increased under Modi's government, with incidents of violence against minorities, particularly Muslims, on the rise. Tharoor suggests that this violence is often instigated or tacitly encouraged by political leaders, who use it to shore up their base of support.

Tharoor also argues that Modi's polarization tactics have had a negative impact on India's democratic institutions. He notes that freedom of speech and the press have been curtailed under Modi's government, and that civil society organizations and NGOs have faced increased harassment and scrutiny. Tharoor suggests that these trends are indicative of a broader erosion of democratic norms and institutions in India.

Tharoor shows how Modi's tactics have deeply divided Indian society and undermined India's democratic institutions, and he suggests that this polarization threatens to have long-lasting consequences for the country's political and social fabric.

POPULISM

In "Paradoxical Prime Minister," Shashi Tharoor argues that Narendra Modi's political style is rooted in populism, which he suggests has been used to build a cult of personality around the Prime Minister and to create a sense of Us versus Them in Indian politics. Tharoor contends that Modi's populism has been used to mobilize voters, but has also led to the erosion of democratic norms and institutions in India.

Tharoor notes that Modi's political career has been characterized by a focus on his own image and persona. Modi has been adept at using social media and mass rallies to project an image of strength and charisma, he suggests, and has often framed political issues in terms of his own personal story. He argues that this focus on Modi's personality has helped to create a cult of personality around the Prime Minister, and has led to a depoliticization of Indian society.

Tharoor suggests that Modi's populism has been used to mobilize voters, particularly among India's growing middle class. Modi has positioned himself as a champion of economic growth and development, and has often promised to provide jobs and opportunities for young

people. Tharoor notes that this message has been particularly effective in recent years, as rising inequality and economic uncertainty have created a climate of fear and insecurity.

However, Tharoor also argues that Modi's populism has had a negative impact on India's democratic institutions. He notes that Modi has often relied on divisive rhetoric and on demonizing his opponents, which has created a toxic political environment in India. Tharoor suggests that this rhetoric has been used to undermine democratic norms and institutions, and to silence dissenting voices.

Tharoor shows how Modi's focus on his own persona and his use of divisive rhetoric has helped to build a cult of personality around the Prime Minister, but has also led to the erosion of democratic norms and institutions in India.



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