

Making China and India Great Again?

Why China's and India's Paths to Power May Hit a Wall Part II: Foreign Policy Challenges

By Tommy Lamont

For the past decade, experts in international relations have suggested that the world's center of power is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the main reason is the extraordinary rise of China. They add that the equally remarkable, though slightly slower, rise of India will move the center of global power even further from the West. A number of observers strongly believe the efforts of the United States under former President Donald Trump's "America First" policy to restore or maintain American primacy contributed to this shift. The US's increasingly isolationist and unilateralist foreign policy weakened the country's relationships with its longtime allies around the world, including members of NATO and partners in East Asia such as the Philippines and South Korea. As the global footprint of the US, both militarily and diplomatically, appeared to have shrunk over the last four years, some countries, most notably China, have filled the vacuum.¹

China's relentless growth and its increasingly robust and expansive foreign policy under President Xi Jinping has led many Americans to view the PRC as an existential threat to the US and to argue that the best way to counter China's growing influence and power is to bulk up the US military to try to contain China. This marks a significant break with the earlier consensus that helping China prosper would create a large, property-holding middle class that would transform China into a more liberal, democratic society, just as Taiwan, South Korea, and other previously authoritarian regimes became democratic in the wake of their own impressive economic growth. Today, most foreign policy experts have come to accept that engagement with China has largely failed, and now even many people who served in the Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama administrations support a get-tough-on-China policy. All indications are that the Joe Biden administration's tone towards China will be less bellicose than that of the Trump administration. But Biden's Secretary of State Antony Blinken has indicated that the US will not significantly alter its approach to the PRC. Currently, the Biden administration plans to request US \$715 billion for its first defense budget.²

India, like China, views itself as an emerging great power that requires a larger voice in international organizations and affairs. As early as the mid-1990s, many Americans encouraged the US government to put aside any residual hard feelings caused by India's flirtation with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and encourage an Indo-American rapprochement as a way to counterbalance an emerging China. In 2006, the George W. Bush administration took the most significant step toward repairing Indian-American relations when it signed the so-called "nuclear deal" with India.³ The deal essentially gave India a pass on the fact that India never signed the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in 1998 revealed its status as a nuclear power when India surprised the world with a series of successful nuclear test blasts in its western desert. Signatories to the NPT, such as the US, are obligated not to help nonsignatory states gain nuclear technologies or capabilities, even for peaceful purposes. The 2006 deal did just that—pledge US help as India develops its antiquated nuclear power plants. The Bush administration was strongly criticized for undercutting efforts to contain nuclear proliferation by agreeing to the 2006 deal. However, the US security establishment felt that India would be such a crucial partner in the looming competition with

China and had sufficiently proven itself a reliable and responsible caretaker of nuclear weapons, that any criticism of the deal could be brushed aside. Indeed, since 2006, tentative cooperation between the Indian and US militaries has transformed into regular and significant cooperation, including intelligence sharing and joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean. The relationship between the US and India became even closer over the next decade as Indian-Americans, most of them proud of India's progress, flourished in their adopted country and proved influential in domestic politics, and as former President Trump came to see in India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi a fellow nationalist and muscular leader. On March 10, 2021, President Biden convened the first meeting of the "Quad," an informal name for the four countries (US, Japan, Australia, and India) who are all concerned about China's potential military threat, and in cooperation with Taiwan, hold joint defense

exercises in the Indo-Pacific region. The Biden administration appears to be, for the most part, following the last two administrations' partnerships with India,⁴ although Biden is wary of Modi's Hindu-fused nationalism, especially his government's persecution of religious minorities.⁵

Although India and China seem to be on opposite sides of the aisle when it comes to relations with the US, the two Asia giants face somewhat similar challenges. Relatively free trade with the US is significantly important for both India and China, and has been central to India and China's

growth rate during the past three or four decades. In the case of India, two-way trade with the US steadily rose beginning in 2016 until COVID-19 struck in 2020, but has been rebounding in the last few months. In the case of China, increasing tensions between Xi and Trump, as well as a new successful trade agreement with Mexico and Canada, are responsible for a significant 2019 trade decline of 17.6 percent, compared to 2018, where China lost its no. 1 trade ranking with the US dropping to third behind Mexico and Canada. India consistently ranked between ninth and eleventh from 2016 through 2020. As of March 2021, China is again the US's top trade partner and India ranks eleventh. The pandemic has hurt Chinese exports to other major markets, such as Western Europe and Latin America. India, while less dependent on exports than China, has seen its exports decline precipitously, especially since the pandemic emerged. Over the past several months, China has managed to bounce back, primarily by finding new markets in places such as Latin America and Africa, and exploiting older markets such as Europe. In response to broken supply chains in areas such as computer microchips, Xi is doubling down on making China more self-sufficient in many areas so that trade is less crucial to China's overall economy. Whether he can achieve this is a critical question. For India, trade is less of a priority than for China. But because India has continued to protect a range of industries, the Trump administration levied new tariffs on Indian goods. Currently, the Biden administration is negotiating with India to remove those barriers in order to achieve mutual economic goals, but it could also privilege India as a geopolitical ally in making the decision.⁶

The Biden administration signaled in January 2021 that the US will rejoin a number of international organizations and treaties that Trump withdrew the US from, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), now known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific

India, like China, views itself as an emerging great power that requires a larger voice in international organizations and affairs.

Partnership (CPTPP), a free trade agreement that includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Việt Nam, but notably not China, which last year expressed interest in joining. Thus far, because of other higher, priority agenda items, the Biden administration has not yet acted upon this last agenda item.⁷ Ignoring and weakening international institutions in the name of putting American interests first may have weakened some of America's adversaries, but probably also weakened the US and an array of Asia-Pacific and Latin American trading partners.

Trump and his supporters argued that aggressive American nationalism mirrored the nationalism that has been practiced by countries such as China, Russia, Japan, and Germany for decades. They believed that the former

intentionally promote Chinese interests internationally, whether intentionally or because of his lack of charisma, Xi has never drawn comparably sized audiences. A number of Indian nationals are vocal opponents of Modi, but at least 50 percent of diasporic Indians support him.⁸

Xi and Modi have each promoted themselves as economic "fixers" who can ensure continued prosperity and economic growth for their people. The problem for Xi and Modi now is that any failure to fulfill that promise may turn disastrous for them. Indeed, when the economies of India and China falter, even slightly, the pressure on those countries' governments to fix the problem is enormous. If the problem appears unfixable to Xi and Modi, might they be tempted to focus their citizens on hypernationalist agendas, and not

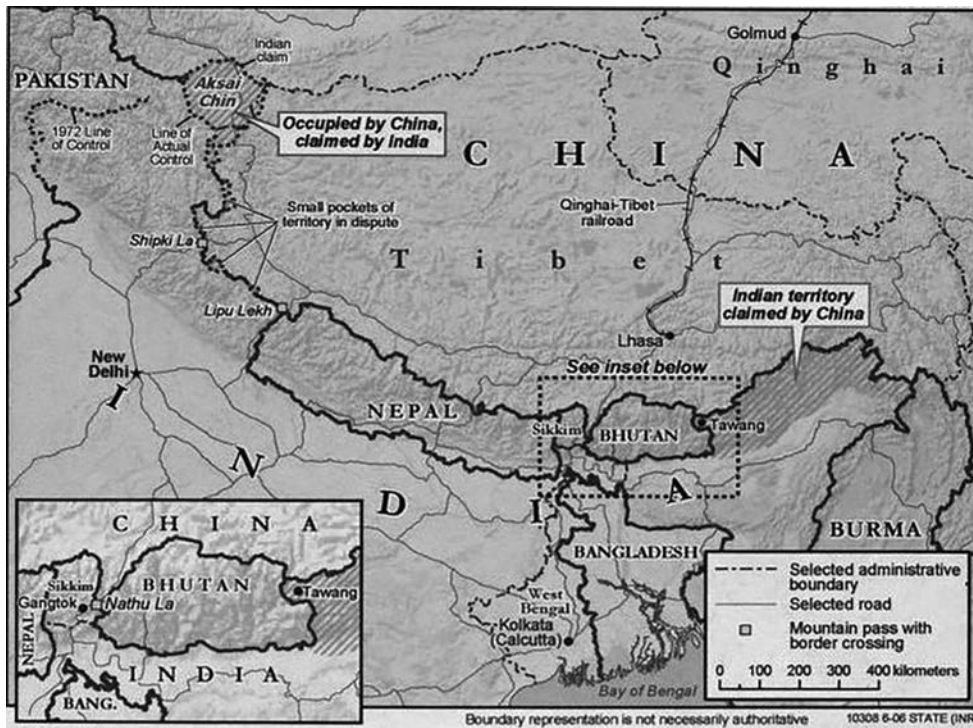
necessarily to distract their public but because they themselves believe in their own rhetoric? The equally high tariffs that Xi and Modi placed on American exports in response to Trump's tariffs suggest yes.

Like most hypernationalists, Modi and Xi often argue that restrictions on speech and other areas of personal liberty are done in the interest of national security. A more united nation, they claim, is a stronger nation. Modi and Xi correctly assert that Western colonialism and imperialism oppressed enormous numbers of Indians and Chinese. This is a powerful argument that deeply resonates with many Indians and Chinese. But is their strategy a smart one? Chinese and Indian hypernationalism might actually weaken India and China by exacerbating existing security challenges.⁹

Take Pakistan, for example. It was created in 1947 as a safe haven for South Asia's Muslims, and over the past few decades, as political Islam has spread beyond the Middle East, Pakistan has increasingly looked warily upon its own non-Muslim citizenry and maintained a poor record of protecting minorities in Pakistan. Pakistani Muslims have long warned their coreligionists in India that they would be better off in Pakistan. Since Independence, successive Indian governments have been

fairly successful at keeping India's Muslim population happy, as evidenced by the fact that few Muslims in India have left for Pakistan. The recent discriminatory policies of Modi and the BJP have now left some wondering if Modi is proving Pakistan correct. One thing is certain; many international security experts are not sanguine about the chances for warmer relations between these two nuclear-armed neighbors in the years ahead as India further embraces Hindu nationalism and moves away from the secular and pluralist traditions of India's founders and its constitution. Modi's muscular Hindu nationalism is also not a formula for winning India friends on other parts of its periphery, especially in Buddhist-majority countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Nepal.

International security experts note that China is also having trouble winning over its neighbors in East Asia, despite the sweet-sounding Belt and Road Initiative and other attempts to propagate China's soft power. China may be able to bully its smaller neighbors into submission like it did during imperial times. But Korea and Japan are now too big and powerful to be bullied. Already, Japan is considering amendments to its constitution that would allow for Japan's substantial military to be called upon in cases where Japan itself is not directly attacked. Even more alarming and surprising about Japan, the only country to have been victimized by nuclear warfare, is that some Japanese officials now openly argue that Japan should acquire nuclear weapons, talk spurred by China's rapidly increasing military might and aggressive foreign policy and by the Trump administration's apparent reluctance



China-India border, showing two large disputed areas in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh and several smaller disputes. Source: Wikipedia at <https://tinyurl.com/44uez87m>.

president was not a cause of the rising global tide of nationalism around the world but rather a reflection of it. Trump's supporters argued that countries need strong leaders to counter other great power leaders. Modi and Xi are indeed two such strong leaders who have been in power quite a bit longer than Trump was. Xi, who assumed power in 2013, and Modi, who came to power in 2014, still remain strong nationalists, which is not true of Biden. They regard nationalism as a key tool in furthering their political power and that of the countries they lead.

Xi's "Chinese Dream" and "Made in China 2025" campaigns, begun more than five years ago, each reflect this nationalist, if not hypernationalist, viewpoint. Modi's 2014 slogan, "Make in India," was created both to spur home-grown industries and to encourage greater foreign investment. Furthermore, Modi has very consciously linked the economic success of India to India's sense of growing power by connecting himself and India to the success of the almost twenty million members of the Indian diaspora who live and work in places such as Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the US. Xi has been less successful in his attempts to do the same with the Chinese diaspora of roughly forty million. During his 2019 visit to the US, Modi spoke to hundreds of thousands of Indian-Americans across the country, including a sold-out crowd of 20,000 at Madison Square Garden in New York City and 50,000 in Houston, which was the largest-ever crowd to hear a foreign leader speak in person on US soil. Although there is little question that Xi has an extensive number of Chinese nationals in the academy and various professions that

**In June 2020 and early 2021,
Indian and Chinese troops
skirmished over disputed
Himalayan territory with
reports of a total of at least
twenty-seven deaths.**

to commit to the defense of its allies. Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), and Taiwan political leaders appreciated aspects of the prior administration's support, given an aggressive Chinese neighbor, but Trump's arbitrary use of carrots and sticks, particularly with the ROK, and his vacillations in attempting to formulate ad hoc trade deals with Xi, tended to confuse allies. The Biden administration thus far has asserted that it will have more low-key but consistent support for Japan, the ROK, and Taiwan, given an often-aggressive China. China has already tested the Biden administration on Taiwan, and the administration promptly sent military assets to the Taiwan Straits. Taiwan's highly effective response to COVID-19 greatly increased international respect for the Taiwanese and stands in stark contrast to China's lack of transparency on the virus's origins and its brutally coercive measures related to containing COVID-19. As this issue goes to press, China continues to engage in regular military intimidation efforts regarding Taiwan, and some in the West believe that the prospect of an invasion of Taiwan by the PRC is higher than anytime since the 1950s.¹⁰ Taiwan's fears of the PRC have also grown in the past year as the PRC has brought to an end Hong Kong's de facto autonomy, decades earlier than many thought likely, especially given earlier promises by the PRC to honor the idea of "one country, two systems" until 2047.

Nations such as Pakistan, Japan, and Taiwan are not exactly existential threats to India and China. However, India and China might be existential threats to each other. Indian defense officials have never hid the fact that their country's development and acquisition of a nuclear bomb in 1974 was mainly a response to China's development and acquisition of nuclear weapons a decade earlier, and that India's unexpected nuclear tests in 1998 were intended mainly as a warning to a fast-developing China rather than to an increasingly dysfunctional Pakistan. Although most of India's massive army and less capable air force is positioned to strike Pakistan, much of India's nuclear arsenal is aimed at targets in China. Furthermore, as China's navy grows and China acquires access to ports throughout the Indian Ocean, India's navy is busy planning for a war at sea with China, not Pakistan, which has virtually no navy. These developments are forcing lesser state actors in Asia to hedge their bet, as they decide which horse to back, based on the carrots offered and the sticks threatened. China is wooing countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka, which for decades have been friendly with India but are now wary of it. India has been wooing states in Southeast Asia, such as Australia, that were reasonably friendly with the PRC but are now wary of China. Might this contest between China and India for allies in their neighborhood lead to proxy wars or undeclared wars between China and India, such as the brief and undeclared war that occurred over disputed Himalayan territory in 1962? In June 2020 and early 2021, Indian and Chinese troops skirmished over disputed Himalayan territory with reports of a total of at least twenty-seven deaths. This brings us back to the question of whether hypernationalism will enrich and empower China and India or instead impoverish and diminish them.

A number of observers suggest that today a rising China increases the possibility of war with the US or with China's neighbors. Harvard's Graham Allison argues that the current geo-strategic situation vis-a-vis the US and China may be another example of the "Thucydides Trap," a reference to how in the fifth century BCE, a rising Sparta was seen as a threat to Athens's hegemony. What ensued was the Peloponnesian War, which turned out to be a disaster for Athens. Deng Xiaoping, who orchestrated the landmark economic reforms that launched China's current trajectory, advised his government that China "hide [its] capacities, bide [its] time" until China would be able to convince any opponents that resistance is futile. This sound advice was first made famous by the legendary Chinese war strategist Sunzi (Sun Tzu) in his

classic, *The Art of War*, when on the other side of the world Athens and Sparta battled it out. Xi, it appears, seems to believe that China has reached Sun Tzu's inflection point. Certainly, China's very public and impressive expansion of military power in the East and South China seas, as well as its hypernationalist rhetoric, have raised more than eyebrows from Washington to Hanoi. A feasible question is whether China has actually reached Sun Tzu's tipping point, as Sparta had, or whether Xi is miscalculating.¹¹

The problem for Xi is that he and his predecessors may have become addicted to hypernationalism as a way to prop up their brittle regimes. Many Chinese disagree with policies

pursued by their government, but foreign policy is generally an exception, mainly because it is the lens through which Chinese can favorably compare themselves and their progress with the rest of the world. Polls consistently point to broad public support in China for confronting Japan over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, for forcibly reuniting Taiwan with the mainland, and for building Chinese military bases on islets in the South China Sea.¹² For most Chinese, such a foreign policy is not "aggressive" or destabilizing; it is instead restorative and stabilizing because it is returning the world to how they believe it should be, to a time when the world was more harmonious. From the Chinese perspective, the past 200 years have been so bloody precisely because the world order was upended by developments in Europe. Most Chinese view their foreign policy as good for the world as a whole. This view is disseminated in China through a steady diet of propaganda and a carefully crafted historical narrative that is taught in schools and displayed in popular culture. Over the past half-century, the CCP has successfully created a national narrative in China that posits that China's greatness was stolen from it during the nineteenth century by rapacious Westerners whose racism and greed impoverished and humiliated the Chinese. The term "Century of Humiliation," is familiar to every Chinese. It is used to describe the roughly 100 years when Europeans and Americans lorded over China and exploited its resources between the First Opium War (1839-1842) and the founding of the People's Republic (1949).¹³

Westerners are not the only villains in this historical narrative of a Century of Humiliation. Japan is castigated for its colonialism that began with the acquisition of Taiwan from China in the 1890s and culminated with Japan's vicious invasion and occupation of China during the 1930s and 1940s. While Japan's actions during World War II were truly awful and deserve condemnation, there are few nuanced and balanced accounts of this tragic era in China today. For example, ignored or forgotten is the fact that for decades before 1911, when hundreds of Chinese revolutionaries, including the "Father of Modern China," Sun Yat-sen, finally helped topple the Qing dynasty, which by then most Chinese were calling a "foreign" dynasty, Japan hosted these young Chinese patriots who viewed Japan as a model for a new, modern China. The CCP, especially since the death of Deng Xiaoping, has exploited its people's grievances and promoted Chinese nationalism at crucial times, trying to signal displeasure with other countries' policies by allowing protests at those countries' embassies and boycotts of their products and stores, popular actions that seem to miraculously stop just as quickly as they materialize. The CCP has long assumed that it can control Chinese nationalism to suit its own purposes. However, at what point does it become difficult, if not impossible, for Xi and the party to backtrack on this hypernationalist parade without risking their positions in a popular backlash against limits on expressions of Chinese nationalism? Just as President William McKinley was unable to dampen the fervor for war in the US after the battleship *Maine* blew up in Havana harbor in 1898, so too might Xi and the CCP find themselves boxed into a response that they know is dangerous, if not foolhardy.¹⁴



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the cities of Guangzhou, China and Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India for closer cooperation between the local authorities of the two cities. Ahmedabad, September 17, 2014. Source: *Wikimedia Commons* at <https://tinyurl.com/4t5xwamc>.

In contrast to the unelected Xi, Modi is the democratically elected leader of the world's most populous democracy, and therefore can legitimately claim to rule with the support of a majority of Indians. Furthermore, in 2019, he easily won reelection. Yet Modi won power in both elections mainly because a majority of Indians believed that he could replicate across India the impressive economic growth that he appeared to have achieved in the Indian state of Gujarat, when he was the chief minister there. Few of India's voters in 2014 or 2019 seemed worried that in 2002, while Modi governed Gujarat, a horrific episode of sectarian conflict occurred in the state; almost 2,000 Muslims were massacred by mobs of Hindu extremists.¹⁵ And even fewer Indians voted for Modi because of his foreign policy positions, which were hardly even known, much less promoted. Many Indians assumed that Modi would leave Indian foreign policy largely unchanged like most elected heads of state, focus on domestic issues and not foreign ones, and, that those domestic issues would be economic in nature instead of sectarian. Since Independence in 1947, India has pursued a largely unaggressive—some would even assert pacifist—foreign policy, despite a few wars with Pakistan, and, significantly, a brief, undeclared 1962 border war with China over Himalayan territory. Still, few of its neighbors besides Pakistan have worried that India would invade them, and India's weak economy made it easier for these smaller countries to bargain with India on issues such as trade. Yet today, India stands much taller, especially economically, relative to its neighbors. And those neighboring countries increasingly wonder whether India will treat them the way that the US treats Canada or Mexico, or in contrast, the way that China increasingly treats its neighbors.

While Modi's geopolitical ambitions for India are less known, they are perhaps no less ambitious than Xi's. Like most of his immediate predecessors, Modi would like India to have a seat on the United Nations Security Council and a much larger voice in international affairs, one that reflects India's massive population and its growing economic power. Like Xi, Modi speaks for most of his compatriots when he talks about seeking "dignity for Indians". And like Xi, Modi is not talking just about his people's access to toilets or better internet service, but also about their dignity on the international stage. Like most Chinese, most Indians have harbored grievances against the perceived injustices wreaked upon their country by the West during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And, just as the Chinese Communist Party has long trained Chinese to remember the Century of Humiliation, so too have most Indians grown up with a narrative, perpetuated in schools and in popular culture that portrays Indians as victims of cruel and dastardly Western domination. In this case, perhaps "Two Centuries of Humiliation" is more appropriate since British domination of India began at least as early as the mid-eighteenth century when Britain's interests were represented by the

rapacious British East India Company.

Modi's views on foreign policy are informed, in part at least, by his attachment to the narrative of the Hindu Right. Many, if not most, supporters of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism, believe that the Partition of India in 1947, which created both India and Pakistan, and a few other smaller countries, was a disaster for India's Hindus. In 1948, Gandhi's assassin was angered by the Mahatma's capitulation to the demand for a separate homeland for the subcontinent's Muslims by Ali Jinnah, the leader of India's Muslims and the eventual first president of Pakistan. One might think that a Hindu nationalist would support the Partition because it would imply that Muslims would depart India for Pakistan. But most of India's Muslims trusted India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, when he said that their rights would be protected in the new, secular India,

and thus India's Muslims stayed within the borders of the new India. This angered Hindu nationalists in 1948, and still does to this day. Yet the main source of Gandhi's assassin's hatred in 1948 was the murderer and his coconspirators' deeply held belief that Islam is simply an illegitimate belief system that needs to be eradicated from the face of the earth. This belief is still widespread among Hindu nationalists who boast about conquering Pakistan and Bangladesh, and forcibly converting or exterminating all Muslims. Modi grew up around this type of talk as a young member of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), a Hindu "national volunteer organization" founded in 1925 modeled on Mussolini's *Squadristi* ("Black Shirts"). Today the RSS trains, indoctrinates, and reportedly organizes civilians who attack non-Hindus, mainly Muslims, or Hindus whom right-wing Hindus believe to be insufficiently Hindu, by, for example, eating beef.¹⁶

Since being reelected in 2019, Modi has tacitly encouraged Hindu nationalists to push their agenda. Like Xi's manipulation of Chinese nationalism, including ethnocentrism among China's majority Han group, Modi is using Hindu nationalism to bolster his support among his base, in part because for him and these supporters there is no distinction between Hindutva ("Hinduness") and Indian nationalism; for them India has always been, and always will be, a Hindu country.¹⁷ Will Modi, like Xi, possibly lose control of the violence unleashed episodically by Hindu nationalists and walk backward into a war? Or will Modi happily lead India into war in the belief that God and destiny are on his side?

History has not been kind to zealots. Although a few have managed to inspire hugely successful movements, be they religious or political, most zealots are eventually exposed as horribly delusional. Yet change always throws up unforeseen challenges, and the historic changes in the international arena during the past three decades have made for a particularly tricky situation that seems to require bold action from bold leaders. Ironically, despite their flirtation with exclusionary and aggressive nationalism that is rooted in anti-Westernism, India and China have reemerged from at least a century of humiliation and degradation largely because of the system that the West created in the wake of the Second World War, a system that promoted and created free trade and international institutions that advance internationalism at the expense of nationalism. Only a few years ago, many "experts" were writing articles suggesting that nationalism was nearing the end of its natural life. It seemed abundantly clear to most educated people that this largely nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideology has proved too dangerous for humanity. These scholars dismissed Samuel Huntington's argument that the twenty-first century would be marked by a clash of civilizations.¹⁸ For Huntington's critics, the idea of an impending clash of civilizations seemed even more preposterous in 2007 than when he famously first penned the idea in 1993. His critics pointed out that since 1993, living standards around the globe had risen faster

and more widely than at any time in history. Globalization, they argued, was making the world not only wealthier but also safer and more stable (Thomas Friedman's flat world is theoretically more stable than a round one).

Hundreds of millions of Chinese and Indians were indeed among globalization's "winners," as their incomes increased substantially through global trade and more open societies. But then in 2008, the unanticipated happened. The world witnessed the greatest economic meltdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The 2008 economic collapse, now known as the Great Recession, discredited internationalists and many societies' experts and elites, especially in the West, similar to how the unprecedented carnage of the First World War discredited the political and social systems of "La Belle Epoch" and in its wake gave rise to communism and fascism. Since 2008, we have seen populists and extreme nationalists, joined at the hip, winning popular support and political power. In the West, that base of support has come from those who consider themselves the "losers" of globalization. In Asia, that base of support has come from those who consider themselves the "winners" of globalization, though they attribute their success, in many cases rightly so, to their hard work rather than the nature of the international economic system. With vast popular support, these populists and nationalists, whether Western or Asian, are targeting "the other," criticizing globalization and cosmopolitanism, and spreading narratives of national greatness and victimhood based on mythologies rather than history.

If the vast majority of Chinese and Indians have been among the winners of globalization, then why do so many of them increasingly distrust globalization and seek to change the status quo? They distrust a globalized world because it is a world, that in the opinion of many Chinese and Indians, was created in the image of the colonial oppressors of India and China. It is a world in which India is denied a seat on the United Nations Security Council and Chinese leaders, whether correct or incorrect, believe they are denied sovereignty over what they perceive as their legal territory (i.e., Taiwan and the South China Sea). It is a world in which a pandemic has exposed former models of good governance and sound economic planning, namely the US and Western Europe, as inept and perhaps culturally ill-equipped to deal with the crisis.

It would be nice to believe that the beneficiaries of globalization would see the benefits of continued international cooperation and view the Great Recession and the pandemic as anomalies. But there is little evidence as I write this that the tide of populism and the reemergence of hypernationalism will wane, and that the world will return to pre-2008 "normalcy." The coronavirus pandemic is further testing humanity's propensity for working together toward common goals. The rapid and strict closure of national borders at the onset of the pandemic and the subsequent and current lack of cooperation between nations does not bode well for the future of globalism. Like most countries, China and India have tried to work their way out of the pandemic in their own distinct ways, some successful, others not. And while most seasoned hands in China and India are generally relieved that Biden, with his deep experience in foreign affairs, has replaced Trump as president of the United States, they sense that a return to a more stable world, especially a sanguine US-China relationship, is going to be difficult at best.

India and China represent so much of humanity today and of humanity's past. And they stand at a crossroads. These fast-growing countries are rightly proud of their achievements of the past half-century, and, unsurprisingly, they seek further autonomy, power, and prosperity. They can help the world avoid such catastrophes as the 2008 recession, or they can believe that a better world awaits the bold who embrace what appear to be untested paths to utopia but actually have a long and dismal track record. Regardless of which path is chosen, most Chinese and Indians will probably not make the choice. Instead, it is likely to be made for them by their quixotic leaders in Beijing and Delhi, both of which may be more prone to be lured by hubris than deterred by humility. ■

NOTES

1. Today at the United Nations, four of its fifteen specialized agencies are led by representatives of the PRC, while only one is headed by a representative of the United States. In addition, PRC-backed agency director general candidates exist in at least one case (World Health Organization). One agency, The World Bank, has three divisions. See: <https://tinyurl.com/3ecmfhba>.
2. Roxana Tiron and Anthony Capaccio, "Biden's \$715 Billion Pentagon Plan Stirs Debate Over Size, Focus," *Bloomberg*, April 8, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/27r36bp7>.
3. The Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006.
4. Alexandra Jaffe, "Biden Joining Summit with Key Asia-Pacific 'Quad' leaders," *Associated Press*, March 9, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/v5dcrw9m>.
5. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd James Austin III met with Indian leaders in Delhi on March 20, 2021 to discuss the persecution of religious minorities in India. See Kallol Bhattacharjee, "US Defense Secretary Raises Human Rights Concerns with Jaishankar, Other Ministers," *The Hindu*, March 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5bbma28f>.
6. Tianlei Huang and Nicholas R. Lardy, "China Goes from Strength to Strength in Global Trade," *Peterson Institute for International Economics*, November 16, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/8uk338tm>; The United States Trade Representative, "2021 Trade Policy Agenda and 2020 Annual Report", <https://tinyurl.com/rzb5dsr7>; data from US Census Bureau on Total Trade 2016-2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2uyfu5e2>
7. Lindsay Maizland, "Biden's First Foreign Policy Move: Reentering International Agreements," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 21, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/xyxet9u8>.
8. Priyanka Suryaneni, "Indian Prime Minister Modi's US Visit Brings Record Crowd to Conference," *USC Annenberg Media*, October 8, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/3ef5zh6h>; Rajiv Shah, "48% Indians in US Support Modi, but 22% to Vote 'American Modi' Trump, Says Survey," *National Herald*, October 29, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/4spedupr>.
9. Ity Abraham, "Top Ten Things to Know About India in the Twenty-First Century" *Education About Asia* 25, no. 3 (2020): 5-8; Mark Metcalf, "The National Humiliation Narrative: Dealing with the Present by Fixating on the Past," *Education About Asia* 25, no. 2 (2020): 43-50.
10. Lucien Ellington, Jeffrey Melnik, and Thomas J. Shattuck, "Taiwan and COVID-19: Global Pressure, Domestic Success," in David Kenley, ed., *Teaching Asia in a Time of Pandemic* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies; New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 49-59; Lucien Ellington, "Taiwan's Economic Freedom: Xi Jinping's 'Central Planning,'" presentation at the 2021 Association for Private Enterprise Education Conference, April 12th, 2021.
11. Anthony H. Cordesman, "China's New 2019 Defense White Paper," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, July 24, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/avejary5>.
12. Edward Cunningham, Tony Saich, and Jessie Turiel, *Understanding CCP Resilience: Surveying Chinese Public Opinion through Time*, Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, July 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/3c35tuzh>.
13. See Metcalf, "The National Humiliation Narrative." Confucius, who over the past two decades has been "rehabilitated" by the Chinese Communist Party and welcomed back into the "New" China after being banished by Mao, is said to have observed that "humiliation stimulates effort." See also Orville Schell and John Delury, *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the 21st Century*, (Random House, New York, 2013), 396.
14. In China, Mao has become fashionable again, over the past decade or at least less denigrated, as school textbooks and cultural influencers have brushed aside the more unpleasant aspects of Mao's calamitous rule of China. Two of the biggest recent blockbusters in China are military action films (*Wolf Warrior II* and *Operation Red Sea*) that glorify the People's Liberation Army and hint, not so subtly at times, that China's main enemy is the United States.
15. Although Modi was cleared in 2012 of complicity in the massacres by an Indian government commission under the purview of India's Supreme Court, in 2005, the United States State Department decided to deny Modi a US visa, claiming that his role in the 2002 Gujarat riots constituted a violation of the United States's 1998 International Religious Freedom Act. After Modi was elected India's prime minister in 2014, the United States ended his visa ban.
16. For an authoritative explanation of Hindutva and the ideology of Hindu nationalism, see Ramachandra Guha, "The Biggest Gamble in History," In *India After Gandhi* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).
17. Some Hindu nationalists talk of a "Millennia of Humiliation", arguing that the first Muslim conquerors of the eleventh century and their successors, the Mughals, were an occupying force. One sees elements of a Hindu-centric narrative in recent blockbuster Bollywood films. For example, the pacifism of the third century BCE Indian Emperor Ashoka, portrayed in the eponymous 2001 film starring superstar Shah Rukh Khan, has been replaced by the gruesome battlefield exploits of a heroine of the 1857 Uprising, *Manikarnika, Queen of Jhansi*, and by the violently, vengeful hero of *Baahubali*, a 2015 largely ahistorical and mythological Hindu epic about a young king's battle to regain a throne that had been stolen from his family.
18. Samuel P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

TOMMY LAMONT teaches Indian history, Chinese history, world history, and international relations at the Groton School in Groton, Massachusetts, where she also leads student trips to India and China, and coaches frisbee golf.