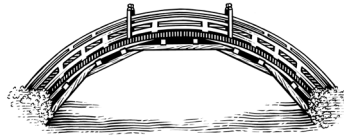


BOOK REVIEW ROUNDTABLE

Manjari Chatterjee Miller's
*Why Nations Rise:
Narratives and the Path to Great Power*
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Why Nations Rise and Why Regime Type Matters

Michael J. Green

With *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power*, Manjari Chatterjee Miller has undertaken a very ambitious project and largely succeeded in broadening how we think about rising powers. Her focus on national narratives and idea advocacy—or how national leaders conceive of and telegraph their own definitions of power—provides an important corrective to structural explanations such as power cycle theory that fail to explain variation. At the same time, the book stays focused on considerations of power and therefore anchors the study of national narratives in something more concrete and measurable than simply “identity.”

For policymakers, the most important takeaway will be that India’s trajectory and role in Asia must be considered on India’s terms. Too often, U.S. officials define success in India policy in terms of agreements, summits, and joint military exercises—in a word, through alignment. Certainly, India’s closer cooperation with the United States and Japan through the Quad and other arrangements is an important tool of dissuasion in the face of China’s growing hegemonic ambitions in the region. But ultimately what is more important than alignment is India’s own capacity to contribute to a more favorable strategic equilibrium. If India is secure and prosperous at home and able to protect the Indian Ocean and the Himalayas against Chinese expansionist impulses, that result will matter more to regional stability than how quickly India abandons nonalignment to work with the United States. The Reagan administration had this insight as early as 1984 in National Security Decision Directive 147, which argued that India’s emerging primacy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean was in and of itself in the United States’ strategic interests regardless of whether India explicitly aligned or allied with Washington.¹ Miller’s chapter on Indian narratives about its own rise (chapter 6) reminds us of this fact and should be required

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¹ Michael J. Green, *By More than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia-Pacific since 1783* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 415.

reading for the Asia leads in National Security Council and State and Defense Departments.

While *Why Nation's Rise* provides some critical insights to understanding India, however, it posed more questions than answers for me with respect to China.

The first question has to do with regional versus global power ambitions. The chapter on China (chapter 5) focuses primarily on Beijing's definition of its global role, but the primary danger in China's rise today lies within Asia. The pattern throughout modern history has been for rising powers to exhibit revisionist strategies in their own neighborhoods well before challenging the prevailing hegemon at the global level. Bismarck, for example, consolidated German power in Central Europe by knocking out the vestiges of the Holy Roman Empire but not challenging Britain; the United States did so in the Western hemisphere after 1815 by collapsing the decaying remnants of the Spanish Empire but steering clear of British Canada; and Japan restructured geopolitics in East Asia by displacing the faltering Qing Empire but not challenging Anglo-American primacy for a half century. China is repeating this pattern but with the important distinction that in its pursuit of a sphere of influence in Asia, Beijing is directly confronting the world's leading hegemonic power. Despite the relative decline in U.S. power, the United States, with its network of close alliances, remains far stronger in the Indo-Pacific today than the Qing, Hapsburg, or Spanish Empires were in their regions in their day. Yet, since Xi Jinping's 2014 speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, China has clearly aimed to expand its control over international security affairs in Asia at U.S. expense (hence Xi's call in that speech for Asians to determine Asian security without "external" powers).² There is significant danger in this trend.

Moreover, China's calculations in Asia are more a matter of power politics than national narratives per se. Xi's discourse on "common destiny" has few takers in Southeast Asia, judging from recent polling of the region conducted by the ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute that demonstrates a secular decline in regional trust toward China.³ Yet this disconnect between Chinese and regional narratives has not deterred China from continuing gray-zone

² Xi Jinping, "New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation" (speech at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, Shanghai, May 21, 2014) \approx https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml.

³ "The State of Southeast Asia: 2021 Survey Report," ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, February 2021 \approx <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/state-of-southeast-asia-survey/the-state-of-southeast-asia-2021-survey-report>.

coercion against smaller neighbors because, as the survey confirms, Southeast Asian leaders see the consequences of rising Chinese power and Beijing sees its coercive strategy working. As then Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi said dismissively in 2010 to his ASEAN counterparts in response to their complaints about Chinese coercive pressure: “China is a big country and other countries are small countries and that’s just a fact.”⁴ Xi Jinping’s approach to peripheral states is about raw power, and probably would be no matter what narratives Beijing peddled at home and abroad with respect to China’s rise.


The second question regards the relevance of external narratives to China’s rise. Miller rightly notes that rising powers’ narratives are also shaped by what the prevailing powers say about them. In China’s case, however, those narratives have become highly contested in ways that allow selective interpretation by leaders in Beijing. Trans-Atlantic discord has been particularly convenient for China’s leaders, who have argued that the global system is multipolar and that Europe is a fully independent power center essentially unaligned with the United States. This assertion ignores the neoliberal underpinnings of world order that actually unite Europe and North America, not to mention the strong preferences of middle powers across Asia for the prevailing international order. Beijing also points to the largely symbolic BRICS summits as evidence that there are like-minded allies in the “global South” that share China’s opposition to Western dominance of the international system, despite China’s growing friction with India. Because China’s narratives are not contested domestically the way they would be in a democracy, Chinese leaders have been free to select from these external discourses to validate China’s power plays and fuel social mobilization campaigns at home. From a U.S. policy perspective, this reinforces the importance of restoring trans-Atlantic solidarity with respect to strategic signals sent to Beijing. Yet one cannot help worrying that too much ground has already been lost in the frequent intramural spats with Europe over the past two decades.

The lack of contested narratives within China points to the third question prompted by *Why Nations Rise*, and that is whether regime type may be the most important variable worth examining. The reticent rising powers examined in the book—the United States in the nineteenth century, the Netherlands, postwar Japan, and India—are all examples

⁴ Quoted by John Pomfret, “U.S. Takes a Tougher Tone with China,” *Washington Post*, July 30, 2010
 ~ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/29/AR2010072906416.html>.

of liberal democracies. Their narratives are created by the governed, and their statecraft must be accountable to the governed. This suggests that the important distinction may not be between “active” and “reticent” rising powers but instead between authoritarian and democratic rising powers.

This brings us back to the case of India when one considers why and how a democratic United States shifted from being a reticent to an active rising power a little over a century ago. At that time, American narratives about power and purpose moved away from our own version of nonalignment and disdain for “perfidious Albion” and toward a broad acceptance that our republic had an interest in upholding and later leading the prevailing international system established by Britain in the face of new authoritarian hegemonic aspirants.⁵ Activism also required what Fareed Zakaria calls a “fiscal military state” that would transmit American wealth into power.⁶ Were India to develop such an effective fiscal military state (the Indian Ministry of External Affairs is still barely larger than New Zealand’s foreign office, for example), the country would likely shift toward greater activism. With greater aversion to Chinese attempts at revisionism in Asia, one might also see far more alignment with other democracies committed to a liberal international order. India’s accountability to the governed explains reticence about India’s rise today—and it could possibly be the reason for a shift to Indian activism in the future. The Modi government’s current democracy travails may seem to undermine that case, yet the history of American democracy in the nineteenth century was hardly one of linear progress. If nothing else, one should not come away from *Why Nations Rise* assuming that India is predestined to remain a reticent rising power.

In sum, *Why Nations Rise* does what an original and probing study on a huge topic should: it makes the reader smarter on some subjects (in my case India) while prompting new questions that go beyond the original scope of the project. 

⁵ Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

⁶ Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Why Nations Fail to Rise

Prasenjit Duara

The rise of China has spawned both an enormous and growing literature on great-power competition and apprehensions of a fraught transition to an uncertain world order. In the scholarly world, comparisons of Chinese political thinkers such as Han Feizi and Xunzi are frequently made with Western thinkers ranging from Hobbes to Habermas. As one example, using Google Search, there are well over a million and a half allusions to the entry “Thucydides trap and China.” Interest in the topic globally has spread across a great variety of fields and across the world beyond the specialty of international relations. Manjari Chatterjee Miller’s volume *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power* makes an important contribution to the topic by analyzing the conditions for the rise of great powers over the last two centuries and, additionally, by referencing a less than usual candidate in such considerations—India. To be sure, there has been a small cottage industry of India-China comparisons and relations over the last couple decades, yet the focus has typically not been about their great-power status. It is therefore intriguing to observe how Miller is able to bring these two different archives together in her study.

Miller examines the conditions and factors that transform a rising power into a great power, defined largely in terms of military and economic capacity but also in that state’s ability to establish norms that come to be recognized by much of the world. Miller’s principal argument is that those powers that make the transition rely both on economic and military prowess and on the will and determination to become a great power. Thus, this work makes a critical case for the role of culture and subjectivity in global politics. While Miller regards the objective attributes of power as a necessary condition, she sees them as insufficient without a national narrative that actively seeks global power. She makes her argument by probing the rising and risen great-power status of the United States, pre-war Japan, and post-Cold War China, as well as a number of counter cases where objectively and comparatively powerful states, including late-nineteenth-century Netherlands, postwar Japan, and India, renounce such ambitions or are “reticent” to make and pursue the required narrative.

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Although this may not be a startling discovery, it is an insight that invites different avenues for researching the historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors behind the emergence of one or the other narrative. Miller opts not to dive into the historical or causal questions in any depth; it would presumably take another, very large volume to explore these factors in each of these cases. One could, for instance, conceive of a historical or sociological study that compares militaristic regimes with agrarian empires across a matrix of variables (though Miller also suggests the role of relatively contingent factors). Rather, she focuses on different phases of the strategy or—since it may not be purposive—process through which this narrative becomes expressed. These include the active rise phase and the activist rise phase of the aspiring power, which is contrasted with the reticence of other rising powers (p. 18).

Among her most important findings, in my view, is the empirically rich analysis of the manner in which China's leadership is transitioning its nation-state from a rising power to a great power (chapter 5). In her terms, we can see China's increasing multilateral relationships in the region and around the globe since the 1990s (although one can see its activity in the developing world, especially in Africa, long before then) as indicative of a transition from an active to an activist phase. In her framework, the first active phase is one where the rising power accommodates or perhaps adapts to the rules of the existing great power. From the late 1980s through the 1990s, China resolved border issues, normalized relations with eighteen countries, and built strategic partnerships with other important global powers as well as a strong relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It joined the WTO and even took the lead in global multilateral agencies, projecting its own ascension as a "peaceful rise" until the word "rise" was dropped in 2004. It appears clear now that China in the Xi Jinping era may well have moved to a more activist role, in which it is beginning to develop certain global rules and norms of its own. In the realm of digital technology China is creating what Erie and Streinz call the "Beijing effect," where it controls the codes, protocols, and assemblages—as well as the technical and legal regulations—of digital infrastructures and data governance through the Belt and Road Initiative and other agreements.¹

While this strictly comparative approach offers a certain clarity to the story of rising to become a great power, it also occludes other factors beyond


¹ Matthew S. Erie and Thomas Streinz, "The Beijing Effect: China's 'Digital Silk Road' as Transnational Data Governance," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* (forthcoming 2021).

the narrative (and its practice) involved in the transformation. We may think of these as historically relational factors. After all, that postwar Japan and Germany (and also the Netherlands in an earlier period) had suffered defeat, loss, threats, and not least military dependence on a superpower were probably very significant reasons for their “reticence.” Had the Plaza Accord, which depreciated the dollar significantly in relation to the yen, not been imposed on Japan and catalyzed its “lost decades,” Japanese economic domination and military ambitions could have grown significantly. The Chinese have studied this currency lesson carefully. We might also consider the situations when narratives of greatness and global power develop and then fail, as in the cases of pre- to post-World War II Germany and Japan. Is it attributable to the material forces of the superior power or due to the failure to follow the phases of activism that the narrative suggests? Here again, some might argue that Japan’s failure to acquire fossil energy because of the U.S. embargo in the 1930s led to its path of reckless warfare and aborted efforts toward multilateral activism.

Finally, the inclusion of India (chapter 6) in the analysis fits a little oddly in the argument, although it points to other directions at which the author hints. Given India’s continuing problems of development and other disadvantages, the identification of indices such as nuclear power, military, and population size, combined with some years of rapid economic growth, does not make it a rising power. Twenty years ago, John Garver predicted that China would probably supersede India as the regional power in, notably, South Asia. Whether this has happened, from a historical relational perspective, Indian reticence—despite occasional claims to the contrary under Modi—is certainly connected to the threat from the mighty power to the north.

The Indian case also begs the question of the marketplace of ideas that Miller emphasizes (pp. 11–14). After all, Indian media and public opinion represent a flood of various ideas and policy prescriptions. Perhaps more attention might be placed on the ways in which state policymakers utilize, channel, or even control these opinions to develop the narrative they seek. Certainly, this is the case for China, and it was probably the case for the late-nineteenth-century American narrative as well. To be sure, even before independence, Nehru had grand ideas and strategies of making India a “great” power, not by the rules of the imperial and newly dominant Western powers but through the “Asian civilizational” and decolonial ideals of the time. His strategy in Bandung was to introduce and serve as a mediator between the other great peaceful civilization (then known as “Red China”)

and the world. The move was rapidly upended as India became cornered into a squabble with Pakistan over national boundaries and Zhou Enlai and China took center stage.

Nehruvian and decolonial ideals never had a chance in a world where the vision of success reproduced the competitive imperialist goal of conquering nature for national growth. Perhaps the unprecedented scale and multiplicity of disasters threatening the planet, crowned by the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, might give a chance to a noncompetitive model of power. 

Great Power Drives Great-Power Narratives

Jennifer Lind

“Blood and iron,” Otto von Bismarck argued to the Prussian parliament, would create national greatness. Japan’s leaders in the nineteenth century pushed for a “rich nation, strong army.” Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Zedong both vowed their countries would catch up with the United States. Such narratives inevitably accompany the rise of a great power, but international relations theory has emphasized material power while paying little attention to how countries describe their ascent.¹ In *Why Nations Rise*, Manjari Chatterjee Miller shines welcome light on this neglected subject.

Why do nations rise to great power? Miller agrees with other scholars who define great powers as having strong material capabilities, ambitious interests, and status. Yet she sees a puzzle: of the countries that possess strong capabilities, only some (“active”) rising powers seek to become great powers, whereas other (“reticent”) rising powers do not. What sets the two kinds of rising powers apart are their stories. Miller argues that “a country rising to *become* a great power has to think of itself in terms of being great”—that is, as having what Max Weber called a “historical task” (p. 11, italics in the original).

Why Nations Rise explores fascinating cases of leaders articulating their sense of national power and purpose. Yet the book leaves readers with two nagging questions: Do material capabilities more compellingly explain a country’s decision to pursue “active” rise, and what factors determine whether a country adopts an active versus a reticent narrative?

Those Who Can, Do

Miller argues that some countries with growing material capabilities seek great power, while others (“who also had increasing material power”) hold back (p. 15). Chapter 2 focuses on the Netherlands at the turn of the

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¹ An important exception is Stacie E. Goddard, *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

twentieth century. Miller argues that its high per capita GDP and extensive colonial holdings qualified the Netherlands as a potential great power. Its reticence to seek great power is thus a puzzle (one explained by, she argues, its lack of a great-power narrative). However, when measuring national power, as several scholars have noted, GDP per capita cannot be considered independent of population.² There were limits to what the Netherlands could accomplish then, just as there are limits to what Dubai can do today. In this view, Dutch reticence is not a puzzle: the Netherlands simply did not have the juice to compete with the rising powers of that era.

In fact, the characterization of the Netherlands as a rising power overlooks the fundamental transformation of geopolitics at the end of the nineteenth century. Before the development of the railroad (as Alfred Thayer Mahan argued), small countries with a powerful navy, commercial shipping, and a maritime geographic position could dominate geopolitics. In this era, the Netherlands (and other small maritime countries) fanned out around the globe, seizing colonies and accessing markets. But by the end of the nineteenth century, the Mahanian era was ending. As Halford Mackinder famously argued, the railroad enabled countries with large land masses and populations to dominate international politics.³ In an era in which the large land powers could bring their population and resources to bear on global trade and military competition, countries such as the tiny Netherlands could no longer compete.

Indeed, population and economic data show what the Netherlands was up against. As **Figures 1** and **2** depict, despite a high GDP per capita, the country was outclassed in population and thus in overall economic size.

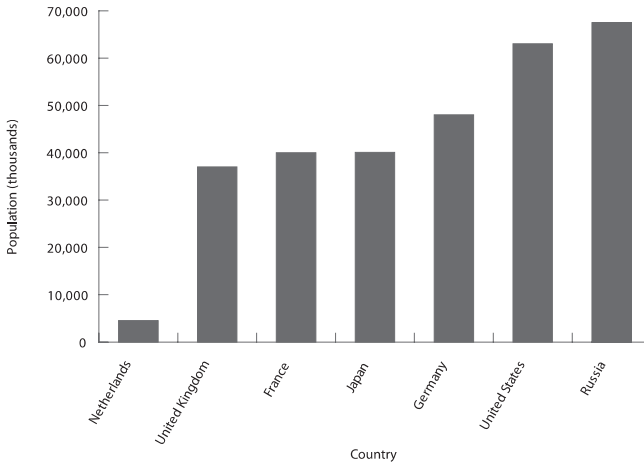
World leaders recognized this power disparity. “In spite of their wealth they have fallen from their high estate,” noted Joseph Chamberlain of the Netherlands in 1904. “The scepter they once wielded so proudly has passed into other hands and can never return to them. They may be richer, but they are poorer in what constitutes the greatness of a nation, and they count for nothing in the future opinion of the world.”⁴ Miller’s quotes from Dutch leaders show that they understood their situation too. The Netherlands’ self-perception as “a colonial giant but a political dwarf” (pp. 56–57) displays

² For a good discussion see Michael Beckley, *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World’s Sole Superpower* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

³ Halford J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 421–37; and Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (New York: Penguin, reprint 2017), chap. 7.

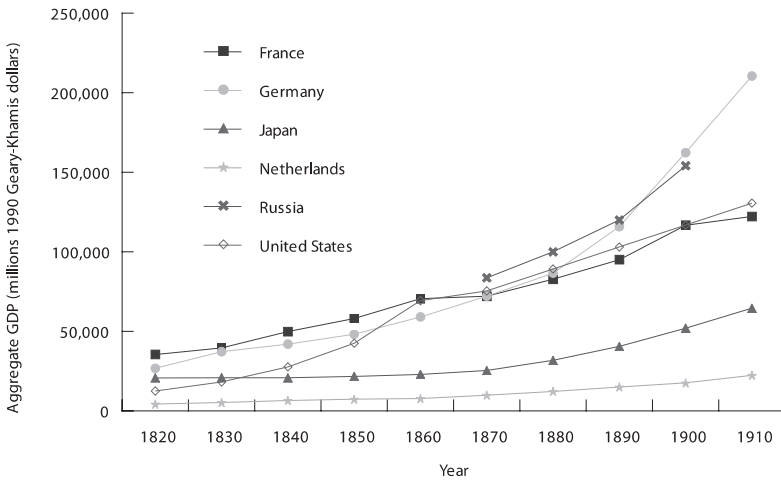
⁴ Quoted in Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 73.

FIGURE 1
Population, 1890



Source: Angus Maddison, *The World Economy* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2006).

FIGURE 2
Aggregate GDP over Time



Source: Maddison, *The World Economy*.

not puzzling reticence but sober realism. The reason that the country in 1900 had a “small state mentality” (p. 62) was that it was in fact, in comparison to the rising behemoths, a small state. To paraphrase Dirty Harry, the Dutch understood their own limitations.

Of the two rising powers in the world today, China and India, Miller argues that the former is actively rising while the latter is reticent. As Chinese capabilities grew, “elites began to engage in narratives about what it meant for China to become a great power” (p. 99). But Indian narratives “continue to be inward rather than outward looking” (p. 151). Miller argues that “Prime Minister Modi (unlike Xi for example) rarely, if ever, actively talks of Indian leadership in the world” but rather emphasizes economic development (p. 151). But once again, material power offers a compelling alternative hypothesis for Indian reticence and for China’s more active rise.

China and India occupy very different places in terms of material capabilities. Both countries have populations of over a billion people, and both have experienced rapid economic growth. However, China is much further along in its development. Adjusted for purchasing power parity, China’s GDP has surpassed that of the world’s largest economy, the United States, and the country is making impressive strides in cultivating an innovation-based economy.⁵ Furthermore, China has developed significant military capabilities that are challenging its neighbors (including India) and putting pressure on U.S. alliances.⁶ As its material capabilities have grown, China has jettisoned its gentler narratives about a “peaceful rise” and “hide your capabilities and bide your time.” Instead, Chinese leaders now increasingly emphasize historical grievance (its “century of humiliation”) and the need to reunify lost Chinese territory.⁷

India’s more reticent narrative is consistent with its weaker capabilities. Of course, scholars have good reasons to keep an eye on India—particularly given its economic growth and strategic significance. Yet, at this time, India is still in a different league from China, as **Figure 3** shows.

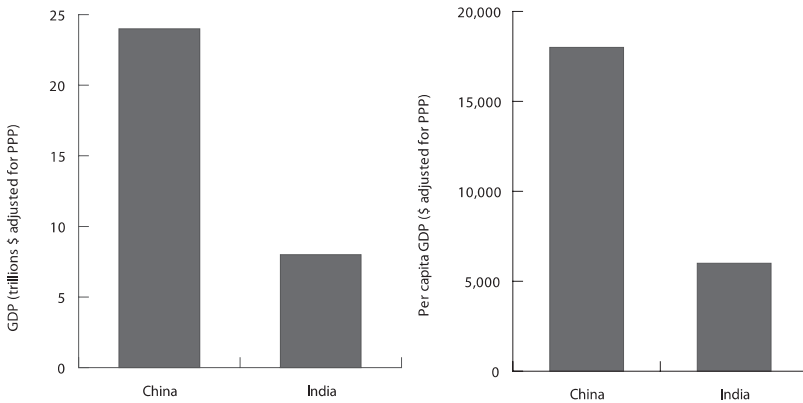
According to the material hypothesis, if India sustains its economic growth and graduates from the low-income category, it will likely adopt

⁵ Andrew B. Kennedy, “Slouching Tiger, Roaring Dragon: Comparing India and China as Late Innovators,” *Review of International Political Economy* 23, no. 1 (2016): 65–92.

⁶ Eric Heginbotham et al. *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015).

⁷ Jessica Chen Weiss, “The Stories China Tells: The New Historical Memory Reshaping Chinese Nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2021; and Ja Ian Chong, “Popular Narratives versus Chinese History: Implications for Understanding an Emergent China,” *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2014): 939–64.

FIGURE 3

China and India, Economic Indicators

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2019.

a narrative of active rise; reticence at that point would indeed be a puzzle. However, India is now doing what China was doing at that stage: focusing on economic development and “biding its time.”

Why Do Countries Adopt Great-Power Narratives?

A second question relates to the absence of an explanation for rising-power narratives themselves. Miller argues that a rising power becomes active or reticent depending on the narrative that it adopts. This raises the question of what leads a country to adopt a given narrative.

Perhaps a great-power narrative is available to any country that decides to go in this direction. This would be consistent with systemic-level international relations theories (which make this implicit assumption) and with arguments about narratives as highly malleable. As Jelena Subotić has argued, leaders “*activate* narratives or specific messages *within* narratives, to justify policy shifts, and *deactivate* those elements that no longer serve the policy purpose.”⁸ In this view, as a materially capable country seeks great power, its leaders can without much difficulty embrace a great-power narrative. As *Why Nations Rise*

⁸ Jelena Subotić, “Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 4 (2016): 616; and Jennifer Lind, “Narratives and International Reconciliation,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 229–47. Italics in the original.

shows in the U.S. and Japanese cases, countries can even adopt narratives that depart dramatically from prevailing strategic culture.⁹ The bottom line is that if a country needs an ambitious narrative to justify its rise to great power, but can easily adopt one, then the narrative itself is not a key driver of great-power rise.

But perhaps great-power narratives are not necessarily as available as this critique suggests. If true, this hypothesis would support Miller's focus on the causal effects of narratives; however, it is a hypothesis that *Why Nations Rise* does not sufficiently address (see pp. 25–26 and pp. 151–53 for discussion). Perhaps there is something in a country's history, politics, or culture that makes it more or less receptive to a great-power narrative; perhaps the adoption of a great-power narrative depends on elite bargaining or the country's normative environment.¹⁰ *Why Nations Rise* shows that narratives and “idea advocacy” are part of rising to the status of a great power, but the book does not explain why a country adopts an active versus reticent narrative. A competing explanation is that when materially capable countries seek great power (which they usually do), they easily create a supportive narrative. In this view, the narrative is the result (not the cause) of great-power rise.

To be clear, Miller is right that material power alone cannot explain everything. Although most materially capable countries do strive for great-power status, there are important exceptions: notably, West Germany and Japan after World War II.¹¹ Both countries had the demographic and economic wherewithal to become great powers, yet have been reticent. As many scholars have pointed out, there is something that needs explaining there.¹² These cases have been extensively scrutinized by constructivist scholars but have been absent from debates about great power, in which scholars usually focus on the “dogs that barked.”¹³ Miller's exploration of the reasons for an active versus a reticent rise connects these important cases to debates about how and why countries rise—or do not rise—to great-power status. ♦

⁹ Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

¹⁰ Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). On norms, see Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

¹¹ The United States is sometimes characterized as having been a reticent rising power in the late nineteenth century, before shedding its reticence over the span of a few decades. See, for example, Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹² On Japanese reticence, see Tom Phuong Le, *Japan's Aging Peace: Pacifism and Militarism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); and Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*.

¹³ An exception is Adam P. Liff, “Shadowing the Hegemon: Global Norms, National Identity, and the Military Trajectories of Rising Powers” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2014).

Great Power as Narrative Contestation

Chris Ogden

As scholars have long tussled over, the designation of being a great power in international affairs—and the pathway to achieving such a status—is dependent on myriad factors. Many observers maintain that it is those elements that are hard, tangible, measurable, and objective that are the most pertinent and meaningful. Analyzing these gives us the ability to cast a relative assessment of those states that are rising and those that are falling. Others seek to complement these perspectives by including factors that are softer, less obvious, more social, and subjective. Such notions serve to provide more specific insights concerning how history, memory, and identity impact how states rise and the motivations, goals, and ambitions underpinning such trajectories. Key to these understandings are the stories that states tell about themselves—who they were, who they are and who they want to be—through often selective renditions of the past and aspirant tales of the future. Within these assessments, it is importantly the narratives that states tell that are decisive, and this is the theme that Manjari Chatterjee Miller tackles in the geographically and historically wide-ranging (albeit slim) volume *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power*.

The most relevant contemporary case studies in this regard are the Asian behemoths of China and India, whose twin ascents look set to be the most consequential phenomena for the field of international relations (IR) in the 21st century. Both countries seek to re-establish their lost statuses as great powers, which were besmirched by external aggression after centuries as “natural” power-centers in the international system as investigated in Miller’s earlier book *Wronged by Empire*. Both also seek to do so via strategies designed to augment their domestic development and modernization, which frequently place them into the central vortexes of the international system and pull other major states and actors toward them. Understanding how China and India perceive themselves, and the rhetoric and narratives framing their re-emergence, has thus never been so critical. These stories underpin a process of mutual socialization between those states aspiring to be great powers and those that have already attained such a position, which involves the former group

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adhering to the criteria and standards set by the latter group. As Miller fittingly states, “a rising power is *not revisionist* (at least initially). It is, instead, accommodational. It has to *accept* and conform to the current international order before it can reject it” (pp. 9–10, italics in the original).


Miller makes a largely convincing case for understanding why some states achieve the status of great power and others do not by drawing our attention to the need to acquire material power (be it economic and/or military) in conjunction with having national narratives that adhere to current global norms concerning great-power conduct. It is the marrying of these narratives with capabilities and behavior that allows would-be great powers to become active ones that are welcomed into the great-power concert. At its core, such contentions point to the importance of a process of almost auto-socialization by states that rests upon the need for accurate knowledge and a willingness to replicate existing behaviors, whereby a rising power must recognize, learn, and then mimic the accepted conduct of contemporary great power. It is only once a contender state has been let into the great-power club that they can then alter the prevailing norms.

Following this logic, those states that are unwilling to play the current “great-power game” will be unable to gain access and the enshrining of great-power status that such entry brings. It is for these reasons that Miller cast China as an “active” state that has played by the rules and is thus a great power, and identified India as a “reticent” state that refuses to adhere to the current conventions and thus is not—nor appears likely to become—a great power (chapters 5 and 6). In these ways, becoming a great power is accurately portrayed as a process within which Miller places a special emphasis upon “idea advocacy,” whereby it is imperative to have narratives about how to become a great power rather than simply stating that end as a goal. The book uses highly thoughtful, fluid, and well-considered case studies on three active powers (the United States, Meiji Japan, and post-Cold War China) and three reticent states (the Netherlands, Cold War Japan, and post-Cold War India) to interrogate these ideas further. All the elements in this book are highly laudable, and certainly add fruitfully to debates concerning how—and, most importantly, why—states become great powers. Detailed empirical chapters underscore these strengths, albeit with very distilled case studies, and lead to a valuable, interesting, and thought-provoking volume. In some ways, though, the author could have gone further in her analysis so as to better maximize the argument’s impact.

Firstly, it is important to highlight in these debates how the process of becoming a great power is not only relative but is also an interplay that is innately co-constitutive in nature. From this basis, global politics is essentially *inter-national*, and thus revolves around competing narratives and visions, not solely the viewpoints of states, which this volume too often appears to end up returning to. Such an observation is perhaps most useful concerning India, which in many ways has not been as reticent as presented. From Nehru's mantra of "fate has marked us for big things" to Modi's proclamations of India dominating the 21st century that he backed up (at least in his first term) by spending considerable time outside of India promoting the country on the world stage, New Delhi is energetically seeking recognition via the promotion of national narratives. This would appear to question the assertion that "countries that engage only in increasing their material power are *reticent* powers—they will not rise to become great powers unless they engage in the other two behaviors [external and internal recognition]" (p. 10, italics in the original). As the author also notes in chapter 7, many of these narratives are also present domestically. The nuance here may be the lack of narratives relating to "*becoming a great power*" (p. 14, italics in the original), but this is also dependent upon the worldviews, norms, and narratives projected by existing great powers, and whether they coalesce or not. As such, we need to consider how multiple narratives exist simultaneously—both across the international system and within states—and the resultant shared meta-narratives domestically, regionally, and globally. This observation is most true of China, which concurrently (and broadly) signed up to norms relating to liberal economic trade but at the same time sought to preserve an approach resting upon "Chinese characteristics" that has resulted in, for example, the Belt and Road Initiative and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Nor is it always the case that "external recognition...is an element that is bestowed by international society, contingent on both established capabilities and proven global interests" (p. 10). Notably, in the cases of both China and India, the bestowal of recognition by the United States—via the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué and the long outcome of the Strobe Talbott-Jaswant Singh talks following India's 1998 nuclear tests, respectively—show how narratives of a state's future (and past) importance are also a key parameter in the giving of recognition, especially in conjunction with the geostrategic interests of the recognition giver. In these ways, the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué came when Beijing was almost entirely isolated diplomatically, politically unstable in the throes of the

Cultural Revolution, and economically weak under a command economy. Similarly, with India, the Talbott-Singh talks occurred when India was also an outlier internationally (particularly given the collapse of the Soviet Union as its major partner) and was only in the very earliest stages of liberalizing its socialist economy. What did bind together these two acts of recognition was the “shadow of the future” effect in IR, whereby policymakers in Washington could see the potential great-power clout of China and India on the horizon for the coming decades but also—and most crucially—that the United States needed to balance against the largest rivals to its hegemony at those particular times, thus using China to counterbalance the Soviet Union after 1972 and using India to fulfill a similar task versus China after 1998. In both cases, perceptions of future standing—rather than current material capabilities—together with geopolitical interests, drove the realization of these two recognition events.

Finally, as this reviewer read the volume, the greater the feeling grew that the author had missed a clear opportunity to embrace the implicit theoretical sentiment in her work. With the regular mention of narratives, norms, ideas, and beliefs, and, to a degree, the role that history has played in cementing these notions, the book called out for a statement of its notable constructivist leanings. Doing so would have also allowed Miller to better conceptualize the elements of change, evolution, contestation, and convergence threaded through this volume, and the wider contentions relating to the noted co-constitutive, simultaneous, and non-material dimensions of international affairs, as well as the specific critical junctures and historical events analytically informing these processes. It would have also acted as a useful foil and juxtaposition to the cited realist accounts as well as co-linked cases, such as Meiji Japan and Cold War Japan or post-Cold War China to, for example, Imperial China. Although it would appear to go against the dominant realist narratives underpinning the study and analysis of IR in the North American context, if so tweaked, this volume would have had the potential to augment, ameliorate, and even confront this hegemony. As China and India continue to rise, and as their actions find support from domestically derived IR theories that will start to permeate the global field of IR, it is the focus on narratives—and their underlying identities—that provides a way to bridge these domains. 

It Is Not Decided Yet: The Scripts of China's and India's Rise Are Still Being Written

Harsh V. Pant

The rise and fall of great powers has long preoccupied scholars of international relations. This moment in international politics is also rife with the possibility of a power transition as the United States starts to look inward and China asserts its power across the globe. As a result, debates around the concepts of “rising powers,” “emerging powers,” and “major powers” have attained a new policy relevance as well.

Manjari Chatterjee Miller has waded into this discussion with a fascinating new book that details an interesting argument about why some rising powers, like China, become great powers while others, like India, do not. In her assessment, while material capabilities are important, equally significant are the ways in which different states think about their own role in world politics. Miller compares the national narratives of rising powers and makes such narratives integral to the assessment of state power. Why some countries actively rise while others remain reticent is thus a function of “particular type of narratives, narratives about how to become a great power according to the prevalent norms” (p. 11).

What is just as interesting and important is Miller's focus on the process of rising to emerge as a great power, and she underscores the differences among rising powers by going beyond standard material arguments. So, “if a country seeks to increase its relative material power without attempting either to acquire global authority or to court both external and internal recognition of itself as a great power in the making, it is unlikely to become a great power” (p. 10). Such powers, which Miller terms “reticent,” lack narratives about their roles on the global stage. This results in their not acquiring global authority, thereby hindering their rise to the status of a great power. Rising powers that adopt and debate great-power ideas of the day emerge as great powers, while those who are not able to do this remain forever rising. Miller examines this argument using six cases: three active rising powers (the nineteenth-century United States, Meiji Japan, and

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post-Cold War China) and three reticent powers (the nineteenth-century Netherlands, Cold War Japan, and post-Cold War India).

With this book, Miller has brought together the material and ideational determinants of great-power politics like few others have managed, and has provided us with a new lens to examine shifts in global politics. Miller's argument once again underlines that ideas matter in shaping the trajectory of international relations, and as great-power politics return with a vengeance, it is important to be aware of how some rising powers will continue to have a disproportionate influence in shaping global outcomes. Not all rising powers are equal, and what makes some more important than others is what Miller explicates in her wide-ranging analysis.

In this context, the cases on China and India present an interesting contrast. Miller is right that Chinese foreign policy changed dramatically in the 1990s as China began to integrate itself much more robustly into global multilateral frameworks. This attempt by China to enmesh itself in global trade, diplomatic, and security regimes is an important marker in her argument, as "great power by the late twentieth century meant the exercise of power through multilateralism and international institutions" (p. 108). As China tried to set the global agenda through extant and new institutions, its narratives about its own role in global politics evolved. This included presenting itself as a stabilizing influence in the global order as well as promoting and strategically using regional and multilateral frameworks to burnish its credentials as a "responsible global stakeholder."

In contrast, Miller suggests that while India had the potential to emerge as a great power in the post-Cold War world, the country remained a reticent power, not seizing upon the opportunities that presented themselves. India's narratives remained similar to the ideas it propounded during the Cold War. In particular, Miller argues that India remained reluctant to embrace multilateralism the way China did, and thus did not reach out to other nations that were willing to cooperate with it in managing China. In her words, "although India was rapidly increasing in both military and economic strength, Indian officials did not seem to have consistent and concrete narratives about what that could mean, how India could use its rise for leverage, or what kind of great power India could become" (p. 3). This also generated frustration in other nations about India's ability to live up to its role as a rising power. In this respect, she notes in particular India's ties with the United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which she suggests failed to develop in any significant way.

The China-India comparison has been a staple of literature on emerging powers in recent years, and Miller adds a new dimension providing some interesting insights into this debate. But there are some important aspects of this debate that the book disregards and are worth highlighting.

First, she is examining Chinese and Indian behavior in the early post-Cold War years during which she suggests that their capabilities were comparable. To suggest that two nations with widely divergent economic growth trajectories and strategic environments would have viewed the world through similar prisms does not do justice to the on-the-ground realities. Many aspects of Chinese foreign policy in the 1990s and 2000s that are described in the book were a product of over two decades of sustained increase in Chinese economic growth and accordingly capabilities. In the case of India, the 1990s were just the beginning of its liberation from the structural confines of Cold War geopolitics.

When the Cold War ended, the Indian economy had collapsed and its strategic realities had been reconfigured beyond recognition. New Delhi was busy picking up pieces and building something new out of the old edifice of its strategic thinking. The fact that it could do that quite rapidly was a tribute to the ability of India to enmesh itself in a global economic order led by the West relatively easily and with diplomatic deftness. New Delhi had railed against the multilateral order during the Cold War, but after the end of the bipolar reality, it quickly changed tack and integrated itself rather nimbly into the new order. And after the 1998 nuclear tests (again, just eight years after the end of the Cold War), New Delhi moved swiftly to integrate itself into the same nuclear order that it had challenged and called “discriminatory” during the Cold War. Ties with the United States improved dramatically in a short period, and a “Look East” policy vis-à-vis ASEAN was envisioned. So to suggest that New Delhi was not willing to take advantage of opportunities after the end of the Cold War does not seem quite grounded in the empirical realities.

When the United States offered the nuclear deal in 2005, it was a politically difficult decision that could have led to the collapse of the Manmohan Singh-led government. But India negotiated hard, both bilaterally with the United States and domestically with various stakeholders, to achieve the deal on terms that even today some would argue benefit India disproportionately. Although Miller cites the role of American officials in making this deal possible, the role of Indian policymakers is equally significant. Without their commitment and foresight, it would not have been possible, especially in India’s democratic framework.

Herein lies the second issue with the China-India comparison in the book. It neglects the role of domestic institutions in shaping narratives. China is an authoritarian state that ostensibly can make major shifts in foreign policy with relative ease. India's democratic system makes such huge shifts slowly and is often tardy. This being the case, it is still difficult to agree with Miller that India-U.S. ties by the 2000s were evolving slowly. To some in Washington it would have seemed so, but to go from where relations were in the early 1990s to a nuclear rapprochement by the mid-2000s is not a mean achievement. And these ties have continued to evolve. Today, India has not only signed the foundational military agreements with the United States but is also part of the Quad security dialogue. In India, there has always been and will continue to be political contestation on foreign and security policy, which will imply that New Delhi will take time in making its moves.

Third, while India's capability differential with China has only increased and the state's capacity deficit has yet to be rectified, New Delhi's global engagement is perhaps more robust today than it has ever been. Contemporary developments point to some interesting contrasts. China has become more belligerent and less multilateral in its orientation. It seems more intent on challenging the extant order now than it perhaps did in the 1990s, which, according to Miller, was the high point of Chinese multilateral engagement. Its engagement with the United States and the broader West is at a historic low and making it more enemies than friends.

Having shed its ideological baggage, India is now, in sharp contrast to China, openly embracing the West. It is willing to step up to its global responsibilities, from climate change to global health, unlike any other time in its recent history. Its role as the global pharmacy hub has come into sharp relief during the Covid-19 crisis. The country is standing up to China on a range of issues—bilateral, regional, and global—and is willing to partner with like-minded countries for greater Indo-Pacific stability. Indian policymakers have started talking about their nation as a “leading power”—one that is willing to shape global agenda. And all this is happening even as the domestic debate in India about its global footprint continues to be sharp and divisive.

The story that India is telling about its own global role today is quite distinct from the one it was telling in the 1990s when it was a nation that was trying to come to grips with multiple crises. And certainly the story that China is telling now about its global role seems less charming than the one it was probably narrating in the 1990s. Recognizing the challenge,

perhaps, Chinese president Xi Jinping suggested to senior members of the Chinese Communist Party in June 2021 that China must improve the way it tells its “stories” to a global audience as it seeks an “international voice” that reflects the growing status of the world’s second-largest economy in order to make friends.¹ Yet this exercise at crafting and recrafting narratives does not make China’s eventual emergence as the great power of our times less likely, nor does it preclude the possibility of India’s continuing struggles with its own aspirations and capabilities. With this important book, Miller forces us to re-examine the debate on how great powers emerge, but the jury remains out on how important narratives actually are in shaping the rise of great powers. ◆

¹ “China Calls for Greater Global Media Reach,” Reuters, June 1, 2021.

Author's Response:
The Process of Rising—Ideas and Power in Power Transitions

Manjari Chatterjee Miller

A decade ago, Charles Glaser argued in the journal *Foreign Affairs* that China's rise was pitting two kinds of international relations experts against each other—the liberal optimists versus the realist pessimists.¹ By the latter, he was referring to those who held the view, which some would say is predominant today in the U.S. foreign policy establishment, that China's growing material power would lead the country to become more assertive on the world stage and in turn prompt the United States and its allies to balance this growing power. The former, he argued, were those who believed instead that China would join the existing international order because the United States and its allies would see the benefits of welcoming China into the fold.

What Glaser was implying, although he did not put it in these terms, was essentially a material-ideational divide between international relations scholars and how they perceive rising powers. In one perception, rising powers rise and behave the way they do because of their growing material strength; in the other, rising powers rise and their behavior may be socialized through existing and attractive norms. My goal in *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power* was to theoretically and empirically reconcile these two perceptions, which, contrary to many existing treatments of rising powers, are not oppositional. I am, therefore, honored and excited to respond to the comments of the distinguished reviewers who make up this roundtable. They come from rich and varied specializations and engage with the book through distinct theoretical paradigms.

Why Nations Rise argues that we need to understand that there are different kinds of rising powers. Some rising powers behave as we would expect and become great powers, while others seem stymied on this path. Rising to become a great power is dependent not simply on material power but also on the stories that these countries tell or fail to tell about their rise. Active rising powers acquire military and economic power, globalize their

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¹ Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?" *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2011, 81.

authority, and court internal and external recognition of their changing status because they develop idea advocacy or narratives about becoming a great power. Reticent rising powers acquire military and economic power but fail to develop such narratives as well as to globalize their authority or court recognition of their rise. Consequently, active rising powers are initially accommodational because they need to adapt existing global norms in order to be recognized as a great power-to-be. One of my most important findings in *Why Nations Rise* is that becoming a rising power is in fact a process, one that involves both material power and narratives about becoming a great power.

The reviewers agree that by emphasizing the importance of capabilities and narratives in power transitions, the book successfully brings together the material and ideational elements of great-power politics (Harsh Pant), gives weight to a more “concrete and measurable” variable than “identity” (Michael Green), and makes a “critical case” for the role of norms in global politics (Prasenjit Duara). They also point out that in tackling cases across geography and history (Chris Ogden) the book plugs a gap in the rising-power literature, which tends to focus on material power “while paying little attention” to specific countries and how they see their own rise (Jennifer Lind). But they also raise interesting and incisive questions.

In my reading of their comments, I located the following important big-picture questions:

- To what extent do ideas matter in foreign policy, and how can we isolate the effects of ideas versus material power in the behavior of rising powers? Particularly, how can we contend with geopolitical or capability disparities?
- To what extent can external ideational variables matter for rising powers?
- Does domestic politics, particularly regime type, play a role in narratives and subsequent behavior?

With respect to the first set of questions, Green, Lind, and Pant raise the issue of geopolitics and material power and their impact on behavior. Green points out that China is limiting its attention to the region. That is, it is pursuing a sphere of influence in Asia where it is confronting the predominance of the United States, and its calculations are driven entirely by power politics. His implication is that China is revisionist rather than accommodational in Asia, and that rising powers are revisionist within the region before they expand outside it. Lind raises the case of the Netherlands—specifically, its power disparity with countries with much

larger landmasses and populations—and suggests that this could account for its reticence. She and Pant also point to the material disparity between China and India as a reason for the difference in their behavior. I agree with all three reviewers that there is no doubt that power and geopolitics play a role in a country's rise and can even account for some differences in behavior. But it is far from clear that this is the predominant causal element and that ideas do not play a role in the process.

Green's point, for example, is about China under Xi Jinping today, but one could have also made this point (as many did) about China in the 1990s when "China threat theory" (*zhongguo weixie lun*) became pervasive in the United States.² This theory emphasized Chinese assertiveness and revisionism in the region and argued that this behavior reflected China's quest for regional hegemony and goal to displace the United States as the dominant power in the Asia.³ Given that we have been talking about China's quest for hegemony and the displacement of the United States in Asia for almost three decades, there are two conclusions we can draw: either China is very bad at assertiveness and revisionism or perhaps its behavior in the region has been more complex than can be denoted by just power politics. There is no question that China under Xi is now more activist than active.⁴ But as Duara states in his review, even though China in the Xi era may well have "moved to a more activist role," this behavior should be located instead in its attempts to develop "global rules and norms of its own." In short, even China's assertiveness in the region has varied over the years—clearly not in how the United States has perceived it but in the elements it contains. Which then begs the question of what else besides the constant of power politics has played a role. As the book shows, that answer can be located in narratives.

Lind raises an interesting point about the Netherlands. The nineteenth century ushered in the decline of Alfred Thayer Mahan's worldview about the primacy of sea power and saw the emergence of geographer Halford Mackinder's worldview that countries with large landmasses and populations were now more competitive than naval powers. The Netherlands, lacking both of those attributes, was obviously reticent.

² Emma V. Broomfield, "Perceptions of Danger: The China Threat Theory," *Journal of Contemporary China* 12, no. 35 (2003): 265–84.

³ Broomfield, "Perceptions of Danger," 266, 268; and Larry M. Wortzel, "China Pursues Traditional Great-Power Status," *Orbis* 38, no. 2 (1994): 57.

⁴ Activist/activism is the term I use in the book for revisionism, given the value judgment often attached to the latter word.

This point needs more context. Paul Kennedy, for one, discusses the decline of the Mahanian view and the emergence of Mackinder's theories in the context of the fall of British naval supremacy. But he argues that Mackinder's theory of "vast heartlands" and their impact on "vast economic worlds" was "simple, one-sided and deterministic." For him, the point that Mackinder made that was "prescient" was about "industrial power and the power of invention and science." Those who have these powers "will be able to defeat all others." Kennedy thus located the "root of Britain's long term [sea] decline" in its shrinking position as an industrial power.⁵ This perhaps illustrates why Mackinder's ideas on landmass and population could not explain the rise of Japan in that era but his ideas on industrialization and science could.⁶ Thus, there remains the question of why an industrializing (albeit late) and rich Netherlands in the throes of its "second golden age" did not innovate during that time or use its colonies to do so. Moreover, a small population and landmass do not explain why the Dutch were reticent, not only, as I explain in the book, in comparison with European powers like Germany but in comparison with similar countries like Belgium and Portugal. Rather, the Netherlands, even at that time considered a "colonial giant," bartered away its colonies and remained aloof from colonial opportunities in Africa (unlike Belgium, for example) as well as in China.

Lind and Pant also raise the disparity between India's and China's material capabilities as a possible explanation for the difference in behavior. This is a very important point because the power gap between China and India today is distinct and growing. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indian economy had been projected to overtake that of the United States by 2050, but it would still have been one-third smaller than China's economy, and the pandemic has exacerbated that gap.⁷ This disparity may very well be an element in Indian reticence over the past few years, but it does not explain the cases discussed in the book—that is, India and China in the 1990s when their capabilities were much more comparable. Pant makes the point that China's economic growth even in the 1990s was more sustained than that of India, which had only just begun economic reform.

⁵ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (New York: Scribner, 1976), 183–84, 186.

⁶ Mackinder viewed the "heartland" as comprising Russia, Mongolia, Tibet, and Central Asia, and it was the mastery of this landmass that he believed would make the next great power. This would exclude not just Great Britain but also Japan and the United States. See Colin Dueck, "Mackinder's Nightmare," Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 8, 2019.

⁷ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India's Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia," Carnegie India, September 14, 2017 ~ <https://carnegieindia.org/2017/09/14/india-s-strategic-choices-china-and-balance-of-power-in-asia-pub-73108>.

Although he is correct insofar as Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms began in the 1980s, a decade before the 1990–91 reforms of the Narasimha Rao government, some economists locate India's liberalization in the 1980s.⁸ But importantly in 1991, a year when Chinese prime minister Li Peng visited India, per capita GDP and foreign direct investment for both countries were "practically equal." By 2013, China's per capita GDP was six times that of India.⁹

With respect to the second question, Duara raises the importance of "historically relational factors" and asks whether countries "learn" from past defeats and failure, which then influence them to be reticent. Ogden asks whether the process of becoming a great power is affected not simply by the narratives of the rising power but also by the narratives projected by the existing great powers and whether they "coalesce or not." Both of these thoughtful questions point to the literature in international relations on history, memory, and the construction of narratives. The work of Dan Reiter and Yuen Foong Khong suggests that historical memories and learning are extremely important for states. Reiter's work is particularly applicable to the Netherlands. He looks at how small states learn from past failures to make alliance choices, including the case of the Netherlands' decision to join NATO.¹⁰ Khong argues that leaders analogize from history when making decisions about war.¹¹

The question that Duara raises is important because it is indeed possible that learning makes countries reticent. However, there needs to be a medium through which that learning is conveyed, and elite narratives seem the likely candidate. We know that framers choose particular narratives over others to shape policy.¹² Narratives of past defeat, for example, could be especially resonant for rising-power elites who seek to explain policies to a domestic

⁸ Dani Rodrick and Arvind Subramanian argued that "attitudinal shifts" among the Indian elite in the 1980s led to economic change. Arvind Panagariya noted that while these attitudinal shifts did occur, the subsequent changes in policies and implementation led them to be conveyed to entrepreneurs. See Dani Rodrik and Arvind Subramanian, "From 'Hindu Growth' to Productivity Surge: The Mystery of the Indian Growth Transition," National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper, no. 10376, March 2004; and Arvind Panagariya, "India in the 1980s and 1990s: A Triumph of Reforms," International Monetary Fund, IMF Working Paper, March 2004.

⁹ "Once Near Equals, China and India Have Radically Diverged," Quartz India, May 14, 2015 ~ <https://qz.com/india/404758/once-near-equals-china-and-india-have-radically-diverged-in-the-past-two-decades>.

¹⁰ Dan Reiter, *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliances, and World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹² Ariel Zellman, "Framing Consensus: Evaluating the Narrative Specificity of Territorial Indivisibility," *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (2016): 492–507.

audience to gain support. Ogden's question about whether rising powers can subsume great-power norms underlines the argument made in *Why Nations Rise* that active rising powers do accommodate existing great-power norms. This speaks to the current debate not just internationally but even within China about what a Chinese world order would look like. Would it draw on elements of the Western liberal order (as some have argued the Belt and Road Initiative has done) or other norms in world politics? Duara has argued elsewhere that indeed contemporary China's state policies have drawn not just on *tianxia* ("all under heaven") but also on the Enlightenment and Panchsheel (the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence).¹³ Ogden's point also speaks to Stacie Goddard's argument that rising powers are aware that great powers scrutinize their rhetoric to decide whether to accommodate or contain them, and therefore they legitimate their strategies by referring to existing norms of the international order.¹⁴

Third, there is the question of whether regime type makes a difference as to which countries are reticent. Green points out that the Netherlands, postwar Japan, and post-Cold War India are all examples of liberal democracies. Green is partially correct in that both postwar Japan and post-Cold War India are liberal democracies and remained reticent. The Netherlands in the nineteenth century was, however, a constitutional monarchy—a parliamentary, liberal state with political parties organized along ideological but also religious lines. Pant asks whether an authoritarian state like China finds it easier to be active than a slow democratic state like India, perhaps also explaining the difference in narratives.

We do know that state capacity plays a role in day-to-day policy and accounts for some differences.¹⁵ The book also examines the United States, which was a liberal democracy that at the time was increasing its state capacity and was active not reticent. But what Green and Pant seem to be speaking to is the deeper question of whether domestic politics play a role in why narratives about great power arise in some countries but not in others. While the book did not examine why particular narratives are present in some countries and absent in others, there is much work on the role of political institutions and how they can facilitate or hinder narratives that

¹³ Prasenjit Duara, "Oceans, Jungles and Gardens: World Politics and the Planet," in *Worldviews in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁴ Stacie E. Goddard, *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

¹⁵ Manjari Chatterjee Miller, "The Un-Argumentative Indian? Ideas about the Rise of India and Their Interaction with Domestic Structures," *India Review* 13, no. 1 (2014): 1–14.

is relevant. What has not been examined is how these political institutions play out in different rising powers and shape their narratives. This offers a fruitful path for further research.

The million-dollar question remains: will China become revisionist and India stay reticent? Even the reviewers in this roundtable do not agree about which country is active and which is reticent. Green, Duara, and Lind see India as reticent. Pant gives examples of issue areas, such as the nuclear order, where he believes India was not.¹⁶ Duara points out that India has so many disadvantages that it may not even be a rising power. Green sees China under Xi as assertive, even revisionist, while Duara offers that China is active and may be moving to activism under Xi. In the end, the answers depend not only on external perceptions and who holds them but also on future work on what makes a rising power revisionist and what makes it accommodational. Rising powers hold the key to war and peace in the international system, yet the field of rising-power research is surprisingly small. The goal of *Why Nations Rise* was not just to contribute to this body of work but also to offer questions that would lead to further research. ♦

¹⁶ Pant argues that after 1998 India “moved swiftly to integrate itself into the same nuclear order that it had challenged and called ‘discriminatory’ during the Cold War.” However, this is an overstatement. India did try to portray itself as a responsible nuclear power, but it did so without actually accepting any of the structural confines of the nuclear order such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. As Kate Sullivan de Estrada points out, even today “India remains, institutionally speaking, an outlier or ‘exception’ to key parts of the non-proliferation regime... India has succeeded in gaining recognition for its conformity with many of the regime’s core norms... [but it] is and remains far from being a regime insider. ... [It] does not enjoy a managerial role in the non-proliferation regime, nor does it function as a norm-setter.” Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “Understanding India’s Exceptional Engagement with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime,” in *India Rising: A Multilayered Analysis of Ideas, Interests and Institutions in Foreign Policy*, ed. Johannes Plagemann, Sandra Destradi, and Amrita Narlikar (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020), 42–53.

