
The Choice: India, America and the Future of Human Freedom

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Rarely in history are the choices put before one nation and one people so consequential, and not simply to that country's own future, but to the course of humanity. Rarely does such a momentous time emerge that will decide the fate of many nations. Rarer still do the forces in such a world come together in a way that *one* nation's choices and actions may reverberate for good or for ill across the decades to come. *Such a time is upon us now.*

The decisions that India makes in this decade will decide the fate of the 21st century. India's choices will decide whether the future of the international system remains in the hands of free nations. Or whether this world system weakens, fragments, and is overwhelmed by forces that could destroy its most important virtues and possibilities and leave them in ruins for generations to come.

The question before the world today is this: Will India stand amongst the world's free nations as a leader in our cause? Will India do this and do it wholeheartedly? Can India become the linchpin in a coalition of democracies, a binding force, the essential piece, without which the democracies cannot prevail against the expansionary forces that gather against us now?

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Or, will India embrace a dangerous temptation: the temptation called “the multipolar world?”

The “multipolar world”. For many, this idea represents an opportunity. A world in which power is held by different major states: acting in their own interests; standing on their own, recognised, powerful and significant. Significant, yes, but loosely held together, working together mainly when necessary or convenient. *Such a world carries with it the risk of self-destruction. Not only the destruction of one, but eventually of all.*

The “multipolar world” is a world which China can overwhelm and dismantle, divide and conquer, devouring or subordinating each different “pole” over time. What free nations must remember that ‘united we stand, but divided we fall.’

The world understands what China’s true ambitions are. They are on display from the Himalayas to the West Pacific. The character of its regime is evident from Xinjiang to Hong Kong to Tibet. Its thirst for overwhelming power is explicit: “Backed by an invincible force of 1.4 billion people, we have an infinitely vast stage for our era,” its leaders say. But this “invincible force” must not be allowed to realise its dreams of unending power.

What is needed is a coalition of democracies. It is not the cause of one or two of us, or some of us, or just a few. It is the cause of *all of us* that must be brought together and unified. And we cannot do this without India’s vital role.

The conditions in the world today are far different from those in which India achieved its independence and its freedom. They are different from the Cold War world, in which India worked for autonomy and led the non-aligned. India arrives just in time to play its part to pull the world back from a perilous course, and set it back upon a path towards ever-growing freedom. Only with India can the coalition of democracies be built. Only with India’s essential contributions can the cause of human freedom continue. *But will India choose the democracies? Will India be a leader in this cause? Or will India choose “the multipolar world?”*

In the 20th century, India achieved independence, and with this independence, India achieved great importance on the international stage. Sought after by both the United States and the Soviet Union, feared and attacked by the People's Republic of China, looked up to for leadership by many emerging Asian and African nations, India's "tryst with destiny" was met with the attention of nations large and small. India's journey as a nation essential to the progress of the world began in the aftermath of its newfound freedom.

In the 21st Century, India's time of power will arise, and this has already begun. India's economy is now among the largest in the world, and it will grow further. India's military forces enjoy a warm welcome and coordination on leading-edge technologies with the United States, Japan, and other major democracies. India's diplomatic importance spans the planet, drawing many nations to its door in their desire to be part of India's future. And this is just the beginning of the good that is in store for India, as it rises.

India, better than many nations, understands what it is to suffer through years of darkness, to know the pain of foreign conquest, and to rise past these evils to secure its place in the full possibilities of human freedom. And now, what kind of place the world will be, not only for us, but for the generations to come, will once again be decided by those who have such resilience. Today, the choices laid in front of us will decide not only our own destiny, but that of many other nations. Let us make no mistake about it: whether or not the future shall be one in which free nations may secure their own path and realise their full potential, or whether we shall be subsumed by a ruthless reigning force—this will be decided by those free nations who stand upon the world stage today. *The destiny of all hang on just one question: will we stand together?*

The question of whether or not hard-earned freedom, earned by each free nation in our individual way, will it be squandered, lost, and left to

ruin, or will we band together and in joining one another, ensure that our victories can now endure as one, that question is before us today.

Our adversaries beckon. They hope to divide us. They hope to pull India away from deep commitments to the free and democratic world and to keep India from tipping the balance of history towards the arc of human freedom. And India must choose. For the sake of all, let India choose the world's democracies. India's choices will decide the path of our century, and the destiny of us all.

