

The Idea of Nation

Sketching the Idea of a nation is an audacious undertaking, particularly in Asia's plural and complex societies that are endowed with a rich ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity, where ideas are in competition and evolving, in a region that has experienced profound changes since 1945. Yet in broad brushes it is useful to delineate the shared conceptual framework that embodies a sense of national identity and speaks to the abiding question of who we are. Concepts of nation pre-date our post-1945 timeframe, but without straying too far into the distant past it is useful to examine the process of agitation and consolidation and how nation states in Asia came to be. Who projected what onto the broad canvas of nation and to what extent have their ideas held or been reevaluated and with what consequences?

I am inspired by Sunil Khilnani's, *The Idea of India* (1997), a *tour de force* that captures India's idea of itself and asserts that there is a broad and resilient consensus about what that idea is. Perhaps, but it does seem that the cultural wars we discuss later in this chapter and the next indicate that this broad acceptance is challenged in India, just as in all our focus nations where people are contesting, shaping and seeking 21st-century identities. With the exception of China where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong was monolithic in power and scope, crushing dissent and any forces deemed counter-revolutionary, the nations have endured political competition and bouts of authoritarian rule, contexts in which longstanding fault lines have been a recurring source of tension and contestation. Defining a nation always raises questions about who is in and who is not, based on various criteria such as ethnicity, language, religion and customs that marginalize, divide and antagonize in ways that arouse nationalist sentiments.

The first step involves a strong leader—for better or worse. In our five countries, five leaders put their stamp on the idea of nation that emerged from the aftermath

of war and revolution. Mao Zedong in China, Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Sukarno in Indonesia, Park Chung-hee in South Korea and, with some caveats, Shigeru Yoshida in Japan, were the architects of their post-1945 nations.

Secondly, in each of our nations a strong central state was key to the Idea of nation even if not always realized. Mao, Nehru and Sukarno had been leaders in their nation's struggle for independence and were keenly aware of the need to consolidate their power, and sought unquestioned authority to tackle the massive socio-economic problems they faced in trying to construct a unified nation with a strong and stable government. In addressing the pressing needs of the people, the legacies of colonialism in India and Indonesia, and imperial domination of China, contributed little to economic development or modernization. Japan already had a strong central state and the indirect nature of the US Occupation meant that it relied heavily on that state to remake Japan. This reliance reinforced the power of Tokyo's central bureaucracy. South Korea had the legacy of Japanese colonial rule and a relatively well-developed administrative structure and infrastructure to build on, although these legacies remain controversial among Koreans given the reluctance to credit Japan with any positive influences.

Thirdly, the nationalist resentments aroused by imperial humiliation powerfully shaped the Idea of nation. Japan is an outlier in this group because Japan was not colonized or subjugated by any imperial power and had already established a constitutional monarchy with a functioning democracy and representative government prior to 1945. It does share, however, the sense of humiliation and rancor stemming from having to submit to imperial domination. The unequal treaties imposed in the mid-19th century motivated Meiji-era (1868–1912) modernization efforts aimed at creating conditions that would enable Japan to revise the treaties by catching up with the West. The leaders who plunged Japan into war from the 1930s deeply resented entrenched western racism, a sentiment shared by nationalist leaders throughout Asia. Following defeat, the US Occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952 was an intense period of reinventing Japan directed by an outside power, while China, India and Indonesia sought their own way forward from the debilitating consequences of imperialism. South Korea, like China, was baptized by a horrific civil war (1950–1953) and faced similar challenges to overcome the devastation. Unlike mainland China, the Korean Peninsula remained divided after its civil war, a division that persists until now. Like Japan, South Korea has been a client state of the US during and since the Cold War (1947–1989), and Seoul was also heavily dependent on, and influenced by, Washington in its formative years. The term client state means that security and foreign policy in both nations is subordinate to Washington's agenda and interests.

Subjugation and humiliation at the hands of imperial powers resonated powerfully among people in new nations who faced dire circumstances, ones that could be blamed persuasively on the former regimes. India had Great Britain, Indonesia had The Netherlands, while China and South Korea had Japan to blame. All of these nations could draw on shared traumas, while legitimacy was bestowed on the new leaders who provided a vision infused with hope. The Idea of nation also drew on

powerful possibilities opened by realization of self-determination, overthrow of old orders and a sense of mission. Equally, perceptions of continued external manipulation and intervention remained resilient.

By contrast, Japan as the defeated aggressor occupied by the US was not in a position to blame anyone but its own military and political leaders. Nonetheless, it awkwardly embraces the narrative of “victim,” awkward because it joined western nations in colonizing and subjugating Asia. The powerful discourse of Japan’s victimization that has come to dominate wartime memories perturbs its former victims in East Asia (see Chapters 7, 8 and 9). During Japan’s long war against Asia (1931–1945) it invoked past humiliations and resentment about a biased and racist international order, asserting unconvincingly that its invasions and occupation were part of a Pan-Asian crusade for liberation from western colonial rule, but after 1945 it was not able to tap these well-springs of identity because of all the devastation it inflicted in Asia. Yet in recent years this war has become contemporary Japan’s chosen trauma and reactionaries have made headway in promoting the myth of Pan-Asian liberation and justifying the war as a defensive response to western hostility and encirclement. Thus in a triumph ofchutzpah over history, one that only works within Japan’s borders, the selective exhumation of the painful wartime past highlights suffering endured, overshadowing what its wartime leaders perpetrated.

Fourthly, the five nations split on the issue of ethnic identity as the basis of the Idea of nation. India and Indonesia celebrate diversity as intrinsic to their national identities, in contrast to Japan and South Korea which emphasize their relative homogeneity, while China tries to have it both ways, paying lip service to diversity while promoting a Han-centric identity. An Idea of nation based on common culture, language and ethnicity does not require quite the same tending and continual reinforcement. Diversity places an emphasis and burden on tolerance as a virtue, which is not always realized in China, India and Indonesia (or anywhere else). The ethnic Han in China have been inadequately attentive to minority sensitivities, especially the Muslim Uighurs and Tibetan Buddhists, as we discuss in Chapter 11. Other minorities that don’t pose a threat because they lack the capacity to resist have done relatively better.

Nations also pick and choose which aspects of their past to celebrate. Mao Zedong sought to eradicate China’s common Confucian identity, seeing this as one of the impediments to modernization, and replace it with Maoism, a cult of personality mixed with communism, but customs and traditions proved resilient and have made a comeback as the government now promotes Confucius Institutes around the world to nurture influence and project soft power. The convulsions under the banner of promoting a Maoist identity had an enormous impact on Chinese society in the second half of the 20th century, but the economic reforms unleashed by Deng Xiaoping since 1978 have marginalized Maoism as a source of collective identity even as he remains revered as a revolutionary.

Religion and language are another source of identity cohesion—and division. In Indonesia, ethnic Javanese hailing from its most populous island have dominated the state since independence, generating regional resentments against a Java-centric

Idea of Indonesia, but 90% of the population share an Islamic orientation, creating considerable common ground for understanding and empathy, if not always unity. The national motto is Unity in Diversity, a bold assertion that belies the inherent challenges in achieving this. The spread of the Indonesian language around the archipelago since 1945 has had a powerful unifying impact even as linguistic and ethnic differences remain powerful countercurrents. India is predominantly Hindu, but, as with Indonesian Islam, it is not practiced or embraced monolithically; while Hindi, the most widely spoken language, shares official status with regional languages; and English serves as a lingua franca. India also has a huge Muslim population that remains marginalized and poorly integrated, while the multitudinous ethnic and cultural variations in the sub-continent belie assertions of a shared vision. Yet, vibrant regional identities are subsumed within the inclusive Idea of India and portrayed as one of its strengths.

Each of our nations embraces a transcendent civilizational identity drawing on a rich and established heritage and history stretching back several centuries. In the context of this venerated and glorified past, the shocks of imperialism can be viewed as a prolonged and disruptive interregnum. This past is usefully malleable, accommodating various interpretations and lessons to be learned depending on the needs of the day. In some respects, all of our nations nurture a sense of a shared past and collective destiny that taps into this civilizational identity, while also brooding about the humiliations inflicted during the imperial encounter. The Idea of nation is embellished in reference to bygone eras of glory and splendor. Close scrutiny of the 'glorious past' in each of our countries yields inconsistencies and inglorious moments that are not part of the official story, but that is precisely the point; nationalism nurtures a convenient all-embracing history for contemporary use. The distant past can be invoked to ratify the current order, and if priorities shift, this can be recalibrated to match changing circumstances.

India's prevailing Idea involves tension between secular and religious values and between (and within) religions. Contemporary religious antagonisms are traced to Partition in 1947, involving the tumultuous movement of over 12 million Hindus and Muslims that ensued when the British presided over the hasty establishment of an independent India and Pakistan, thus dividing the sub-continent and sowing seeds of discord. Great Britain's rushed exit was to avoid becoming embroiled in civil war at a time when it had limited resources, faced difficulties in recovering from World War II and appetite for Empire had ebbed. During the upheaval as many as one million people were killed as newly displaced refugees moved across the new borders to join the presumed relative safety of majority religious communities. Following Partition, about 10% of India's population was Muslim, climbing now to about 15%, numbering almost 180 million, the world's third largest Muslim population. Overall, India's Muslims remain economically marginalized and poorly integrated. Islam is India's other great tradition (Mughal dynasty 1526–1707), but it is not monolithic and features various sects (Sufi, Shia, Ahmadiyya), caste divisions and stratification according to ancestry. India's national identity is inseparable from the concept, and still robust practice, of caste, the finely delineated social hierarchy

that defines one's status from birth based on Hindu precepts. The large Sikh minority denies this caste hierarchy and has carved out a relatively successful place in Indian society, but was tragically targeted by Hindu violence in 1984, a stark reminder of the consequences of assertive majority nationalism for minorities, which we discuss in Chapter 11. The multitudinous ethnic and cultural variations in the sub-continent further challenge assertions of a shared vision or common heritage, which has been managed by elaborating and improvising an encompassing Idea of India that embraces immense diversity, if not always successfully.

Each of the national Ideas is fundamentally secular. In China, this was uncontroversial since the communists were eager to root out what it dismissed as feudal practices and superstitions. In secularism, Nehru and Sukarno saw a path to modernity, which was threatened by religion and sectarian violence. Japan's secularism was born in the ashes of surrender when the US constitutionally separated the state from religion and Emperor Hirohito renounced his divinity. He had been the head priest of State Shinto, a Japanese animist religion that became intertwined with Japan's Holy War in Asia and goal of extending the Emperor's realm. As such it was implicated in and discredited by the wartime debacle. The American-led Occupation of Japan peeled religion away from the basic structure of democratic government that was hijacked by militarists in the 1930s. The Idea of South Korea is also secular, one liberated from the impositions of Japan's empire that is imbued with US influences and the modernizing policies of the state.

Forgetting

Forgetting is crucial to the Idea of nation in the sense of putting aside or burying whatever contradicts or undermines the core of the unifying and inspiring identity. Forgetting is expedient, artful and necessary, serving to bridge gaps, forge a shared consciousness and overcome divisive memories and experiences. But such concessions are difficult to sustain, festering within the nation, setting the stage for future battles. There are good reasons to put aside the unresolved and painful memories, but associated undercurrents also pull at the fabric of identity and generate tensions. Forgetting they were embarking on mission impossible was crucial to the nation-building projects of Nehru and Sukarno as they tried to stitch together sprawling nations out of unpromising colonial legacies. South Koreans also had a need for forgetting as many had collaborated with the Japanese and could thus be looked upon as traitors to the nation. But many of the collaborators had the skills, training, networks and wherewithal to help South Korea recover from war, and therefore gained positions of power and influence. Park Chung-hee, the general who took power in a military coup in 1961, served in the Japanese colonial army—an army that repressed Korean independence activists and supported Japan's empire. Park presided over an authoritarian state that imposed a collective forgetting because building Korea's future was considered more important than settling its past, and those in power had much to lose from historical scrutiny. Indeed, Park normalized

relations with Japan in 1965, receiving \$800 million in grants and loans from Tokyo to cover all compensation claims related to the colonial era; but because there was no apology, reconciliation has proven elusive. Sukarno also had dubious ties with the Japanese that were best forgotten. His collaboration involved actively assisting in the mobilization of romusha (forced labor), a program that claimed more than a million lives, and acquiesced to forced rice deliveries that drove many families to the brink of starvation. Throughout the war, however, he remained a stalwart cheerleader for Japan's Holy War, seeing this as Indonesia's best chance for ending Dutch colonial rule. Japan failed to reciprocate Sukarno's unequivocal support, infuriating and humiliating him by granting independence sooner to other Southeast Asian nations, but refusing Indonesia until it was clear the war was lost and Tokyo had no choice in the matter. This also was something to forget so that the nation could move forward.

Japan also had good reasons for forgetting, especially since the public had supported the war in Asia (1931–1945), at least until the consequences of the national folly rebounded, inflicting horrific devastation on Japan's cities and people. Also to be forgotten were the stunning continuities between Japan's wartime and postwar elite, embodied in Emperor Hirohito, senior political leaders and bureaucrats. The Americans rehabilitated the conservative elite that had planned and waged war because they could deliver a successful postwar recovery and political stability suitably deferential to US interests and their Cold War anti-communist agenda. The US also protected Japan from demands for a reckoning about its shared past with Asia and significant reparations that might slow recovery. Allying with the US, and relying on it for protection, also took a leap of forgetfulness as America had firebombed 66 Japanese cities and dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing an estimated half a million civilians. Forgetting was thus central to the postwar Idea of Japan because remembering would raise too many awkward questions for those with much influence and lots to lose. A mere 12 years after the war, Nobusuke Kishi, a Class A war crimes suspect, became prime minister in 1957, a remarkable act of forgetting unthinkable in postwar Germany. His grandson, Shinzo Abe, subsequently became prime minister (2006–2007, 2012–) and seeks to rehabilitate Japan's wartime history while shedding constraints on Japan's military embodied in its pacifist Constitution.

Indeed, in 2015 Abe's statement on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II elevated an exonerating revisionist narrative of history to Japan's official policy. The vague and ambiguous references to past misdeeds, the inadequate recognition of Japanese aggression and the horrors inflicted, the minimalist nods toward contrition, and putting an end to apology are now state policy. This is a major watershed in Japan's postwar history that digs a deep diplomatic hole and tarnishes the nation's significant and praiseworthy achievements of the past seven decades.

There was a very interesting contrast in the 70th anniversary commemoration statements by Abe and Emperor Akihito that highlights the ongoing political divide between the revisionists and most Japanese in their understanding of how the nation got to where it is today. Noting the deaths of more than 3 million Japanese during



Figure 1.1 The Hiroshima Dome Attests to the Folly of Nationalism. Photo © Jeff Kingston.

World War II, Abe asserted: “The peace we enjoy today exists only upon such precious sacrifices. And therein lies the origin of postwar Japan” (Abe Statement, August 14, 2015, Prime Minister’s Office Japan). This assertion that wartime sacrifices begot contemporary peace is the revisionist conceit, one that Emperor Akihito clearly rejected on August 15, 2015. He said:

Our country today enjoys peace and prosperity, thanks to the ceaseless efforts made by the people of Japan toward recovery from the devastation of the war and toward development, always backed by their earnest desire for the continuation of peace. (Address by His Majesty the Emperor on the Occasion of the Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead, August 15, 2015, Imperial Household Agency)

Peace and prosperity, in the Emperor’s view, did not come from treating the Japanese people like cannon fodder during the war, but rather was based on their postwar efforts to overcome the tragedy inflicted by the nation’s warmongering leaders. The Emperor has been a vigorous and popular advocate for a national identity based on pacifism that most Japanese support.

Like Japan’s revisionists, Mao also embraced selective remembering. The Kuomintang (KMT) had done most of the fighting and, unlike the CCP, had grounds to claim credit for helping to defeat Japan. This too was forgotten for the time being as the CCP and People’s Liberation Army (PLA) portrayed themselves as the saviors of the nation and the KMT were vilified as corrupt stooges of the US. Mao then

proceeded to inflict a series of catastrophes on the Chinese, most notably the twin tragedies of the Great Famine (1958–1960) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), traumatic events that also needed forgetting, facilitated by China's authoritarian state and repression of dissent. In 1972, when Japan and China normalized relations, Mao thanked the visiting Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka for the invaluable assistance of the Imperial Armed Forces in helping the communists to victory by inflicting heavy losses on the KMT. Mao's gesture of reconciliation involved focusing blame on military leaders and absolving the Japanese people of responsibility for the horrific devastation inflicted on China, claiming an estimated 10–15 million lives from 1931 to 1945.

Forgetting, however, is challenged by those seeking to exhume the buried memories and experiences, drawing attention to what has been ignored. The reasons for remembering are as varied as those for forgetting, but it can be driven by personal loss, political agendas and changing geo-political considerations. For the Idea to prevail in the first place often required aggressive disremembering, leaving scars to be avenged. In a democracy, the Idea of nation can be hotly contested. Nehru's secularism prevailed over religious communalism, but not by much. Hindutva religious chauvinists never accepted defeat, never conceded, and so the battles have simmered and flared over the ensuing decades. Inclusiveness appeals to liberals as a fundamentally reasonable principle to defend, but for religious zealots this is a target, a sacrilege to be overturned. They have not forgotten Partition or other religion-based grievances and see no reason to support the compromise and concessions of forgetting. In Indonesia, Sukarno also managed to overcome zealous support for an Islamic state, establishing a government based on secular principles that were strongly supported by most nationalist leaders and, crucially, the army. But in an overwhelmingly Muslim nation, shifting religion to the side and asserting tolerance required constant vigilance. From the outset, Islamic leaders challenged the new Republic of Indonesia, claiming they had been betrayed by 'forgotten' promises of the Jakarta Charter of 1945 that elevated Islam to a central position in the Idea of nation. True or not, it was an effective call to arms that challenged Sukarno's Idea. Indonesian unity was threatened by separatist Islamic rebellions throughout the 1950s, forcing Sukarno to recalibrate the Idea by concentrating power in the executive and relying on his powers of persuasion and compromise along with the security forces. Sukarno visited Beijing in 1956 and was impressed by what he encountered, seeing what a stronger, less democratic state might achieve. Always ambivalent about western-style parliamentary government, Sukarno reconsidered the Idea of secular, representative democracy, siding with the military in moving to Guided Democracy, eschewing elections and serving as guide. Alas, as we discuss in Chapters 5, 7 and 8, he steered the nation into crisis, leading to his ouster and the ensuing massacres of 1965–1966. This required another collective forgetting under the New Order government that succeeded him.

The military assumed the reins of power under General Suharto and in 1967 the New Order was proclaimed, an authoritarian government that put the final nail in democracy, stamping out dissent and free elections, while also strengthening

secularism. Sukarno's free-wheeling improvised Idea traded on his charisma, but was discredited by the prevailing sense of chaos and the growing despair of poverty. The New Order Idea of Indonesia was praetorian, espousing stability and development for a people who knew neither. It also drew on a conceit of selective memory, portraying the military as the saviors of the nation. The military had "saved" a largely Islamic nation from godless communism, then quickly moved to strictly control Islam's political role. The military, paramilitary and religious groups that carried out the bloody purges in 1965–1966 were never held accountable for the massacres of as many as one million people; responsibility for the slaughter was shifted onto the Partai Komunis Indonesia, the Indonesian communist party, and its alleged plans to take power through a coup. The actual perpetrators were represented throughout the highest levels of the New Order government that ruled between 1967 and 1998, facilitating a collective amnesia, at least on the surface. But with the end of the New Order in 1998, that horrific chapter is currently being disinterred and subject to ongoing reconsideration. Incrementally, the organized forgetting of the mass carnage is receding, and there has been fitful progress in exhuming the painful memories, but accountability remains unfinished business. While passage of time matters—most of those responsible for the bloodbath have died—these events remain embarrassing for powerful institutions such as the military and religious groups who stand to lose considerable credibility if held accountable for the deep scars they inflicted on the nation, a burden they have shirked ever since.

For China, forgetfulness about policy bungling and unachieved targets was part of Mao's surreal style, but the Great Forgetting began after his death in 1976 with economic reforms in 1978 that abandoned Mao's bedrock communist principles. Deng hit the reset button because Maoism was an abject failure and his legacy risked dragging the CCP into the grave with him. Of course the official view now is that Mao was 70% right, but the other 30% includes some whopping megaflops. Mao's manmade disasters are not forgotten, but he remains almost universally admired by Chinese because they are continually reminded that he led the CCP to victory in the 1949 revolution. Like all of our founding fathers, Mao is a flawed figure, but perhaps the most egregiously so, and it is thus not surprising that the evolving Idea of China repudiates almost everything he stood for. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the official euphemism for this stunning apostasy.

Legacies

The Idea of nation was sown in the poisoned soil of imperialism, colonial subjugation and humiliations that bred resentments. These same resentments were subsequently nurtured during the Cold War. What happened in the first half of the 20th century left an indelible imprint on the leaders and the ideas they projected onto their nations. The poverty and scars, physical and psychological, which lingered in the postwar era could be attributed persuasively to imperialism and war. China and

South Korea had both suffered from Japanese subjugation while India and Indonesia had endured British and Dutch rule. Japan had also felt pressured by western imperialism in the 19th century and in response embarked on rapid state-led modernization and industrialization. In doing so it became like the other imperial powers, aggressively expanding its power in Asia through a series of conflicts stretching over half a century from 1895, that eventually led to confrontation with the US and defeat in 1945. Alone among the five countries, it was a marauding imperial power in Asia and thus has had quite a different legacy to come to terms with in crafting its new Idea, under US guidance.

Subsequent efforts at nation-building in our focus countries were shaped by this imperial past, but also by the Cold War and the tensions generated by this global contest for power and influence between Moscow and Washington. China was a US adversary squarely in the Soviet camp, while India and Indonesia tried to steer a middle path and launched the Non-Aligned Movement at the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, with like-minded leaders who did not want to be pawns in the superpowers' rivalry. In the feverish Cold War context, such machinations earned the ire of Washington. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) intervened in Tibet and in regional rebellions in Indonesia, provoking anti-Americanism, while Nehru leaned towards the Beijing/Moscow axis, at least until 1962 when a border war erupted with China. The Cold War helpfully established a credible US bogeyman for China, India and Indonesia that could be used to mobilize support while providing handy reasons for domestic failures.

In contrast, the US was in charge in Japan and South Korea and could impose its agenda. The example of Germany rebounding from defeat in World War I only to launch World War II inspired the American mission in Japan; a harsh peace would be counterproductive. In Cold War Japan, the US demilitarized and democratized on its own terms, imposing a pacifist constitution, prosecuting a handful of wartime leaders in a show trial with foreordained verdicts, while letting Emperor Hirohito off the hook for a war waged in his name. It established a network of military bases and a military alliance while embracing the wartime conservative elite in a bid to fast-track Japan's recovery from war devastation so it could be a shining triumph and showcase of the superiority of the US system. Clearly, the US Occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952 gave it a key role in shaping the Idea of Japan, establishing the guidelines for the postwar order as it promoted a series of extensive political, economic and security reforms aimed at ensuring Japan would never again be a threat to the US. To regain sovereignty, Japan had to do so on US terms and accept a liberal Constitution that enshrined civil liberties and universal human rights, forgoing a military, while acknowledging unequivocally its war responsibility in the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco. In the hothouse of the Cold War, the CIA also intervened to help fund and launch the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that has dominated Japanese politics since 1955.

Thus, the Idea of Japan that held sway until the 21st century was a hybrid, partly made in the USA, generating a backlash across the political spectrum. Shigeru Yoshida, premier from 1948 to 1954, was less the architect of this Idea than its

exponent. Previously a diplomat, Yoshida's incarceration during the war bestowed legitimacy in the eyes of the US, while his impeccable conservative credentials reassured powerful domestic constituents in business and politics. Americans were impressed that they had a pragmatic leader with whom they could do business and who could deliver. But he was not an American stooge and is remembered for the Yoshida Doctrine in which he deflected US pressure during the Korean War (1950–1953) to rearm and ignore the military- and war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution the US had imposed on Japan. He declared that Japan needed to focus on rebuilding its economy and thus would not divert scarce resources to a defense buildup, instead relying on the US for its security. In this way Yoshida indigenized the Idea of Japan foisted on the defeated nation by the reformist victors. His articulation and embrace of “GNPism” (emphasis on economic growth) and pacifism have been defining aspects of the postwar Idea of Japan, as is the ceding of autonomy in security. He took the American template and made it Japan's Idea, championing what the US Occupation had insisted on and then defying Washington's pressure to rearm, paradoxically asserting nationalism within the confines of dependence. This “clipped-wing” nationalism was the grand bargain that subsequent leaders had to swallow, a client state relationship that has been an irritant in bilateral relations. Ironically, nationalism is usually associated with the right wing, but the demands of alliance management required Japan's conservatives to downplay their nationalist inclinations, especially on any issue related to the US alliance. Lobbying for return of Okinawa to full Japanese sovereignty should have been a right-wing issue, but left-wing agitation played a leading role in pressing for the 1972 reversion, arguably the most important assertion of Japanese sovereignty in the postwar decades, while the right-wing government agreed to host the US bases that remain concentrated in Okinawa. The ongoing anti-base movement among Okinawans commands overwhelming local support, while the conservative LDP continues to support the US military presence. In signing the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco, the right wing also had to swallow its pride about war responsibility and agree with the judgments of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) that pinned full blame on Japan's right-wing wartime leaders. Yoshida played a central role in promoting the democratic, demilitarized, war-perpetrator- and economic-growth-oriented Idea, but was ambivalent about democracy, invoking the pun “demokureshi,” which sounds like how Japanese pronounce democracy, but also means, “it hurts.”

South Korea owes its existence to the US intervention from 1950 to 1953 in the civil war initiated and nearly won by Pyongyang until US forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur turned the tide of war at Incheon. Eventually this provoked Beijing's massive counter-intervention against the US-led forces operating under a United Nations mandate, creating North Korea. Three million people, about 10% of the peninsula's total population, were killed, and the war devastation was extensive, creating grim circumstances for a new nation dealing with the mixed legacies of nearly four decades of Japanese colonial rule. Like Japan, South Korea became a US client state and had little leeway, accepting the ineffectual, corrupt and authoritarian Syngman Rhee as president because Washington chose him. In doing

so, Washington discredited the democratic principles it was trying to foster, and promoted bad governance, facilitating the subsequent rise of a military authoritarian regime led by Park Chung-hee.

China faced overcoming the legacy of the western imperial powers from the mid-19th century, the depredations of Japan (1931–1945) and the civil war (1945–1949) against the Kuomintang. The war against imperialism and the internecine struggle for power in China were the crucible in which Mao conceived his Idea of nation, one that drew not only on communism, but also on China's longstanding quest for a modernizing state. He was at the end of a long line of would-be reformers who sought inspiration in China's humiliations, and consequent need to become strong to regain what had been lost—power, status, dignity and influence. Mao, like Nehru and Sukarno, tapped into a sense of civilizational grandeur, invoking the past to legitimize this ambitious agenda of reform aimed at restoring China's greatness.

Indonesia had to overcome the relatively neglectful Dutch colonial presence, one that maximized profits and minimized outlays for education and other social welfare policies. Sukarno had been jailed and exiled by the Dutch colonial government for his role in the national struggle for independence and knew well their repressive ways. He also knew about the dire consequences for Indonesians stemming from the Great Depression and the collapse of global capitalism. Nehru had similar anti-colonial struggles and experiences that made him and Sukarno soulmates of a sort, both controlling their nations' destinies for most of the formative two decades after independence. They relied on personal charisma to convince others that their vision was the only way forward, even if many resolutely disagreed.

Partition was a particularly divisive crucible for Indians, not one that could be forgotten, but one that Nehru did his best to set aside and overcome by vigorously promoting secularism in a context primed for religious fanaticism. The Idea of India stripped to its essentials owes most to Nehru's vision of the nation. Mahatma Gandhi was the only Indian leader who could claim greater moral authority, but his Idea of India was rooted in tradition and the village sphere, the antithesis of Nehru's modernizing vision. His Idea is based on a secular, inclusive constitutional democracy espousing tolerance, with a strong central state committed to promoting modernization and striving to eradicate poverty while helping and protecting the vulnerable. Establishment of an independent India was the goal of the Congress Party and anti-colonial swadeshi agitation that gained momentum from the 1920s, and both Gandhi and Nehru were outsized figures in this movement. Following Gandhi's assassination in 1948 by a disgruntled Hindu zealot, Nehru was left to improvise a nation from decidedly inauspicious circumstances. He ruled India from its birth in 1947 until his death in 1964, putting his stamp on modern India and establishing the foundation for the Idea. The Indian elite, led by Nehru, bestowed a Constitution and nurtured what has become a vibrant—and the world's largest—democracy, at least during election campaigns when parties vie for support from over 800 million voters.

The Idea of Indonesia is succinctly encapsulated in the Panca Sila, the five core principles of the nation's basic ideology: (1) Belief in the one and only God; (2) Just and civilized humanity; (3) The unity of Indonesia; (4) Democracy guided by the

inner wisdom in the unanimity arising from deliberation among representatives; (5) Social justice for all. Also emerging from inauspicious circumstances, Sukarno's Indonesia was improvised from this philosophical foundation, passing on an encompassing vision that enthralled the people and stoked pride in nation even as his erratic policymaking undermined the agenda of nation-building and economic development.

Each of our nations is secular, features a strong central state, has drawn on the humiliation and traumas inflicted by imperialism to forge unity and nationalism, has engaged in organized forgetting of certain inconvenient trauma, and draws legitimacy by promoting development and improvements in living standards. The Cold War (1945–1989) profoundly influenced each of the nations, but nowhere more dramatically than the Korean Peninsula, as the proxy war fought there from 1950 to 1953, involving China, left it divided into two nations. China, India and Indonesia were targeted by US machinations during the Cold War, while Japan and South Korea were allies, hosted US military bases and experienced considerable political intervention by Washington. Only China is not democratic, but all have experienced authoritarian or prolonged one-party rule that facilitated coherent policymaking, even if not consistently pursued, that boosted economic growth. Each has also made a transition towards more market-oriented economic policies, even as there is an abiding distrust of unfettered market forces and inclinations favoring strong government intervention.

In the next chapter we examine more closely how the Idea of nation nurtured in the second half of the 20th century has been reconsidered and revised in the early 21st century. Much remains the same, as the appeals of forgetting and humiliation remain strong. China remains an authoritarian one-party state and India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan remain secular democracies, but prevailing norms and values confront evolving realities, while the state copes with economic, social and international challenges that influence national identity and status. Nationalism is a powerful binding force of shared identity and common purpose, but also unleashes contemporary culture wars that resonate at home and overseas.