

What it takes

Does India have what it takes to become a great power on the world stage?

University of Chicago political scientist Paul Post wrote in *World Politics Review* that he is skeptical.

While India's population and economy are growing and the country appears ready to invest more to make its military top class, the massive country – the world's largest democracy – still faces major issues, from poverty to ethnic rivalries and violence among its many different cultures, languages and ethnic communities, Post argued.

"It is not yet a great power, let alone a superpower," he explained. "For now, it remains a sleeping giant, and there's no guarantee it will ever awaken."

India boosters like Martin Wolf of the *Financial Times* might disagree. Martin recently argued that India will rise to the top of the geopolitical hierarchy for no other reason than its population is now the largest in the world and growing.

India, noted Martin, is on track to hit 1.67 billion people in 2050, while 1.32 billion people will live in China and the US population will be 380 million.

Post was also raising questions about a "great power partnership" between India and the US, as outlined in an Atlantic Council article by Free & Open Indo-Pacific Forum President and Atlantic Council non-resident senior fellow Kaush Arha and Samir Saran, the president of the Observer Research Foundation, India.

Among India's greatest challenges to achieving its full potential arguably is caste, or "the most important fault line in Indian society," noted the *Economist*. As the BBC explained, the caste system is a 3,000-year-old form of social stratification that divides society into rigid hierarchical groups based on economic class, profession, family history, and so forth.



FRANCE

Not our pick

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of French cities over the weekend to protest President Emmanuel Macron's decision to appoint a conservative prime minister – despite left-leaning parties winning most seats in the July parliamentary elections, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

Around 110,000 people, including students and opposition politicians, marched across the country, claiming that Macron "stole" the elections and demanding his resignation.

Among their chief grievances was the appointment of Michel Barnier, a conservative from the *Les Républicains* party and the European Union's former chief negotiator for Brexit.

His appointment came weeks after Macron's ruling centrist coalition lost its majority in the lower house of parliament in the July 7 election.

The result was a hung parliament that consisted of the left-wing New Popular Front (NFP) coalition securing the most votes and the far-right National Rally coming in third place as the single largest party.

The NFP – made up of socialists, greens, communists, and far-left parties – expected their candidate, Lucie Castets, to be named prime minister. But Macron rejected her, saying Castets did not have enough support in the lower house to survive a confidence vote.

Observers told France 24 that the president had to seek assurances from other parties, particularly the National Rally, over the pick for prime minister – potentially casting the far-right group as a kingmaker.

Barnier's appointment drew ire from NFP leaders who accused Macron of ignoring the will of the French voters and empowering the far-right.

In his first interview, Barnier vowed to focus on reducing immigration, addressing France's deficit, and raising low wages. He said he was open to discussing Macron's contested pension reforms but maintained the changes would not be repealed.

Barnier also expressed openness to work with other political parties, but the NFP has refused to join the new government.

Leader of the far-right National Rally party Marine Le Pen said she would wait to see Barnier's policy proposals before deciding on whether to support him.