



Protectionism Will Not Protect Jobs Anywhere

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CAMBRIDGE – As US and European political leaders fret about the future of quality jobs, they would do well to look at the far bigger problems faced by developing Asia – problems that threaten to place massive downward pressure on global wages. In India, where *per capita* income is roughly a tenth that of the United States, more than ten million people per year are leaving the countryside and pouring into urban areas, and they often cannot find work even as *chaiwalas*, much less as computer programmers. The same angst that Americans and Europeans have about the future of jobs is an order of magnitude higher in Asia.

Should India aim to follow the traditional manufacturing export model that Japan pioneered and that so many others, including China, have followed? Where would that lead if, over the next couple of decades, automation is going to make most such jobs obsolete?

There is, of course, the service sector, where 80% of the population in advanced economies works, and where India's outsourcing sector still tops the world. Unfortunately, there, too, the path ahead is anything but smooth. Automated calling systems already have supplanted a substantial part of the global phone center business, and many routine programming jobs are also losing ground to computers.

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