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1. Contextualising the Indo-Pacific

As repetitive as it may appear, one cannot deny that the centre of global power is rapidly shifting towards Asia (see Shambaugh, 2005; Kissinger, 2010; Beeson & Bisley, 2010). According to Gareis and Liegl (2016, p. 99), "the historical predominance of the West […] is coming to an end due to Asia's rise in world politics". The putative end of a unipolar world and the emergence of non-western countries has led to a strategic flux in global security. As the new rising powers, India and China have become essential shapers of the changing regional order. Other characteristics of the regional evolution are the retreat of the United States (US), the growing salience of Southeast Asia (SEA) and East Asia (EA), specifically given Japan's resurgence, and the emergence of the new geopolitical construct—'Indo-Pacific'.[1]

Drawing comparisons between the rise of India and China with the rise of united Germany in the 19th century and the US in the 20th century, scholars argue that Beijing and New Delhi "will transform the geopolitical landscape, with impacts potentially as dramatic as those in the previous two centuries" (National Intelligence Council, 2004, p. 9). India and China are economic giants with divergent models of development and distinct external orientations. Concurrently, they are racing to increase their strategic footprints in the near and distant regions. A complex future is forthcoming where non-western entities will dominate the security landscape and give birth to new geopolitical configurations.

As the world lies amid this unprecedented shift, it has become increasingly necessary to understand the foreign policy motivations and security conduct of these emerging Asian powers. While China's rise and foreign policy conduct have attracted immense scholarly and analytical attention, the same has not been valid for India. The world's largest democracy, India, is home to one-sixth of the global population. It is one of the fastest-growing economies and possesses the world's second-largest military after China. Despite this, as noted by Wagner (2015, para.1), China has been the "primary focus … [and] often lost in the discussion is India, its strategic objectives, and its political influence in Asia and the world".

One of the most tangible strategic implications of India's ascent is the emergence of the geopolitical construct, the Indo-Pacific.[2] The Indo-Pacific has gained sudden eminence in strategic and geopolitical discourse (see Mohan, 2013a; Chacko, 2016; Tourangbam, 2014, 2018; Chaudhury & de Estrada, 2018; Mahapatra, 2019). The concept of Indo-Pacific supplants the term 'Asia-Pacific' to convey the regional views of many countries more fittingly. The Indo-Pacific encompasses an expansive area that includes many sub-regions, including the eastern coast of Africa, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), SEA,

EA, Oceania, and the west coast of the US.[3] Brewster (2011, para.1) puts forth that India's rise has changed the geographical "mental map of Asia".[4] The emergence of the Indo-Pacific encapsulates the power shift towards Asia and acknowledges the growing interconnectedness between developments in the Indian Ocean (IO) and the Pacific Ocean. It would not be an exaggeration to state that without India, there would be no Indo-Pacific (Gupta, 2011). By dint of its importance in the IO, India forms an indispensable part of the Indo-Pacific. It is poised to play a crucial role in shaping regional security architecture. Given this, India's security cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region warrants greater research attention. As mentioned above, the Indo-Pacific stretch includes many sub-regions. The scope of this book is limited to the eastern part of the Indo-Pacific, i.e., the space from eastern IO to the west coast of the US.

India's security cooperation with the SEA and EA regions has displayed a notable qualitative and quantitative change over the last two decades. Interestingly, the SEA and EA together form the central part of the Indo-Pacific region. To understand India's emergence as a security actor in the Indo-Pacific, it is essential to understand the motivations to increase security cooperation with the SEA and EA. Although contemporary scholars have examined India's rise and foreign policy at large (see Malone, 2011; Ray, 2011; Paul & Shankar, 2014; Mazumdar, 2015; Ganguly, Chauthaiwale & Sinha, 2016; Basrur & de Estrada, 2017; Ayres, 2018; Bekkevold & Kalyanaraman, 2020; Davar, 2021), there is a dearth of literature on New Delhi's engagement of SEA and EA (rare endeavours include Devare, 2006; Das, 2013a; Mukherjee & Yazaki, 2016; Grare, 2017; Wagner, 2018; Basrur & Kutty, 2018; Mayilvaganan, 2021). Overall, the Balance of Power (BoP) theory dominates the record on India's foreign policy's theoretical explanations towards SEA and EA, followed by constructivism. These theoretical perspectives provide, at best, only a partial explanation of the phenomenon.

With the larger objective of understanding India's security rise in the Indo-Pacific, the book examines the drivers of heightened security cooperation with SEA and EA over the last two decades. Despite the limited geographical scope of this book, it does not discount the influence of crucial powers such as China and the US on India's policy decisions and actions. The study focuses on the years between 2001 and 2021 while also covering a historical overview of India's foreign policy towards Asia.

At this juncture, it is necessary to clarify that this book focuses on examining parts of the Indian foreign policy that are relevant to its external security conduct in the Indo-Pacific and not the broader all-encompassing concept of foreign policy. This clarification is needed to obviate the possibility of equating the two concepts (foreign and security policy) as one. To quote Joshi (2016, p. 9), "external security policy is basically a subset of foreign policy which largely concerns issues pertaining to external security in inter-state relations".

Hence, whenever the term foreign policy is used in the book, it refers to India's external security orientation and behaviour.

Further, even 'security cooperation' is a broad concept and can mean different things to different people. In the context of this book, security cooperation refers to inter-state cooperation on traditional and non-traditional security issues. It is conducted through defence consultations and strategic dialogues (at multiple levels), defence exchanges, port calls, joint military exercises, educational and training exchanges, counter-terrorism cooperation, and disaster relief/crisis response operations.

1.1   Mapping India's Rise in the Indo-Pacific

Since its independence, New Delhi has attempted to project its power in the Indian subcontinent, which comprises India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives (northern IO). Because India's security threat perceptions were primarily related to land-based issues vis-à-vis China and Pakistan, other regions such as SEA and EA remained a secondary priority. Even when New Delhi was involved extensively in Asian affairs under Jawaharlal Nehru, it eschewed an active security role. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the Singaporean Prime Minister (PM) repeatedly requested New Delhi to assume a regional security role. To this, the Indian Foreign Minister (FM) Swaran Singh responded by stating that their interests were in "keeping its *western* sea lanes open" (Lee, 2000 in Brewster, 2009, p. 600). This clarification confirmed India's limited interest in the eastern region. Fast forward to some decades later, when New Delhi initiated the Look East policy (LEP)—a policy of engaging SEA—it was believed that India's geographical location, size, economic, and military potential might impact Asia's security landscape (Jeshurun, 1993). However, contrary to expectations, it remained a negligible player economically, politically, and security-wise for more than a decade. C. Raja Mohan argues that New Delhi was irrelevant in the "ordering of Asia-Pacific security" as it was the "weakest of the major powers in Asia" (Mohan, 2009a, p. 2). In stark contrast to that era, perceptions about India's pertinence as a security actor have changed.

Since the advent of the third millennium, India's military budget has swelled. Between 2000 and 2017, military expenditure increased by more than 121% (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], n.d.). Standing at US $72.9 billion, India became the world's third-largest defence spender in 2020 (Lopes da Silva, Tian, & Marksteiner, 2021). From 2016 to 2020, it was the world's second-largest arms importer accounting for 9.5% of the global arms trade (Wezeman, Kuimova, Wezeman, 2020). These trends indicate New Delhi's desire to modernise and expand its military forces and project

power beyond South Asia. New Delhi's interest in farther regions is also illustrated by its deepening security cooperation with Vietnam, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, the US, and Australia.

Traditionally, India shied away from infusing a security link in its foreign policy relations. This thinking is no longer carved in stone. The security-related interactions with SEA and EA have undergone a quantitative and qualitative change in the last fifteen years. Within the broader security and defence ties, maritime cooperation is the most conspicuous. New Delhi has strengthened its power projection potential and indulged in extensive naval diplomacy (naval exercises, port calls, Coordinated Patrols [CORPAT]) with regional countries. Comparing the first ten years of LEP [1993–2003] with the next ten years [2003–13], the number of Indian naval exercises with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries has more than doubled. In the first decade, India conducted 22 naval exercises with the ASEAN countries, which jumped to 51 in the following decade (Das, 2013b).

The qualitative changes in the context are evident in developments that denote a break with tradition. For instance, since 2004, New Delhi has allowed Singapore to train its air force and army personnel in Indian facilities because of the limited space in Singapore (Jha, 2011). This decision marked a shift in the historical standpoint of forbidding foreign militaries on Indian soil. Similar changes have been visible in ties with the SEA and EA countries, especially after introducing the Act East Policy (AEP) in 2014. Since then, there has been a steady stream of high-level exchanges between India and the SEA and EA countries. For the ASEAN region, New Delhi has emerged as a provider of capacity building, especially in the maritime sector. Today, the Indian Navy (IN) boasts of conducting regular overseas operational deployments to the regions of SEA, the South China Sea (SCS), and the Western Pacific, a trend that would have been unforeseen 15 years back. The IN's operational reach has expanded exponentially. Since 2017, the IN has carried out Mission Based Deployment (MBD), which involves deploying ships and aircraft along the crucial Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs)[5] and chokepoints in the IOR (Jaishankar, 2019). India has also inked 22 White Shipping Agreements (WSAs) with multiple countries, including Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, the US, and France (Das, 2021). The WSAs help enhance the MDA and situational awareness in the IOR through maritime information sharing.[6]

Furthermore, India has been active in naval and space diplomacy and even issued Lines of Credit (LoC) to countries for defence procurement. Space diplomacy and providing credit lines for arms export are distinct features of India's outreach under the AEP. New Delhi's practice of exporting military hardware to countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Mauritius marks a change from its "historical stand of not exporting defence equipment which can indirectly fuel conflicts" (Guha, 2015, para. 3). In recent

years, the Indian government has been actively pushing for defence export and undertaken policy reforms to pursue it. Between 2012–13 and 2017–18, defence exports increased by more than 320%. Although the current recipients of supplies are mostly the IO littorals, New Delhi has been tapping into the SEA markets. In mid-2018, the Indian state-owned aerospace and defence company Bharat Electronics Limited established its representative office in Vietnam to cater to the region's potential market. India also offered LoC to countries in SEA and the IOR, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Mauritius. In January 2022, New Delhi and Manila finalised a US $375 million deal for the sale of three batteries of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile system to the Philippines.

India is also set to upgrade Vietnam Navy's two Soviet-era Petya-class frigates for an anti-submarine role by providing a modern sonar, torpedo launchers, a new fire control system, and an antisubmarine rocket launcher system (Pubby, 2018a). In addition to ongoing India–Vietnam discussions on the export of defence systems such as BrahMos cruise missile, Hanoi is also looking to buy *Varunastra* 533-millimetre heavyweight torpedo and *Akash* missile defence system (Jha, 2016). Additional deals include the sale of avionics to Malaysia for Su-30 MKM fighters and HMS-X2 sonars to Myanmar (Jha, 2016). New Delhi also handed over a diesel-electric submarine to the Myanmar Navy in a bid to enhance its Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). Space diplomacy is another instrument of security cooperation. India and Vietnam finalised a deal wherein the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) would set up a Data Reception, Tracking, and Telemetry Station at Ho Chi Minh City (Chaudhury, 2016). The ISRO already has satellite tracking stations in Indonesia and Brunei, and the eventual aim is to build a network of satellite monitoring stations in the ASEAN region.

India's growing involvement in regional affairs is also denoted by its relatively vocal stand on the South China Sea (SCS) dispute, a trend that has been conspicuous since 2011. Although not a claimant in the SCS, Indian officials have repeatedly asserted the importance of freedom of navigation and reiterated the need to adhere to international law. India's direct involvement in the SCS region comes from its cooperation with Vietnam in oil exploration activities. The relevant oil fields fall within Vietnam's jurisdiction based on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). However, China claims the area as its sovereign maritime zone based on the dubious nine-dash line. Given this background, China has occasionally warned India against cooperating with Vietnam in the SCS. Nonetheless, it remains involved in energy explorations in the SCS.

India's interest in the region emanates from the fact that SEA acts as a "bridge to East Asia and Asia-Pacific region" (Chaudhury, 2013, para.7). It is home to strategic SLOCs, which allow smooth passage for merchant ships and energy supplies. One of the most vital maritime checkpoints, the Malacca

Straits, facilitates the transit of more than 40% of Indian imports (Umaña, 2012). Southeast Asia is also important to ensure the "defence of the Indian peninsula" (Chaturvedy, 2015, p. 361). This emanates from the fact that some of India's eastern island territories "lie barely 90 miles from the Straits of Malacca" (Ayoob, 1990, p. 9) to ensure sustained presence in these strategically important areas. Since 2017, the IN has been undertaking mission-based long-range deployments in the IOR. These periodically-held deployments stretch from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca and Sunda (Pandit, 2017b).

Apart from growing ties with the SEA region, New Delhi is engaging the EA countries more seriously. The unprecedented progress in Japan–India ties within the last two decades is a case in point. In 1998, when India conducted its nuclear tests, Tokyo recalled its Defence Attachés from New Delhi and froze its grants and aid. However, within the next decade, there was a drastic change in how Japan viewed India and approached it. Despite the restrictions inherent in Japan's constitution, the two sides have made remarkable advancements in security cooperation. Since 2012, the IN and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force have participated in the annual bilateral naval exercise, Japan–India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX). Much to China's consternation, Japan has been a permanent participant in the Indo-US Malabar naval exercise since 2015. They also hold a 2+2 Dialogue at the level of foreign and defence ministers. This is in addition to other arrangements such as National Security Advisors (NSAs) Dialogue, Annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue, and Defence Policy Dialogue.

Even South Korea has attracted greater Indian attention and vice versa. Before 2005, India and South Korea could only boast of lower-level naval exercises and a few Korea-supplied Offshore Petrol Vessels to India in the 1980s. From signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Logistics and Supplies in 2005 to announcing a Special Strategic Partnership in 2015, their security relations have gained momentum. Security cooperation was institutionalised by signing the MoU on sharing military expertise and technology. In 2012, India established a Defence Wing at its embassy in Seoul (Tayal, 2014). The two sides hold a 2+2 Dialogue at the defence and foreign secretary levels. India is a crucial partner for Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy. This speaks volumes about the progress they have made over the last few decades.

Another indicator of India's security rise in the Indo-Pacific is its heightened security interaction with other crucial powers of the Indo-Pacific, such as the US and Australia. Despite their chequered past, the Indo-US ties have strengthened over the years. In 2016, the US designated India as its 'Major Defence Partner'. Pant and Joshi (2016) view the improved Indo-US ties as India's alignment with America's strategy for the Indo-Pacific region. This was apparent in 2015 when the US and India announced their 'Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region'. Today, New Delhi stands

as one of the lynchpins of the US Indo-Pacific strategy. The two countries hold a regular 2+2 Dialogue at defence and ministerial levels and are involved in multiple joint military exercises, including the Malabar naval exercise and tri-services joint exercise. Washington persistently encourages India to take up a larger security role in the Indo-Pacific and strengthen its security relations with SEA and EA. Notably, it was only after the improvement of the Indo-US ties that countries, including Japan and Australia, began looking at New Delhi as a potential security partner. The India–Australia security-related interactions have gained steam in recent decades. In June 2020, New Delhi and Canberra elevated their relations from Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). Since 2015, they have held the biennial naval exercise, AUSINDEX. They also engage through the 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial dialogue. Further, they interact in trilateral formats at the FS levels (with Japan) and the Senior Officials' Strategic Dialogue (with Indonesia).

Indian practices have evolved when engaging countries in minilateral or multilateral arrangements. During the Cold War years, when India followed a non-alignment policy, it was against joining multilateral security groupings. Far from its extreme reluctance, New Delhi now engages a range of countries in multilateral settings on various security issues. One of the most crucial multilateral frameworks that India has embraced in recent decades is the Quad. The Quad is a grouping of four democracies (India, the US, Japan, and Australia) of the Indo-Pacific region. It is regarded as a pivotal multilateral mechanism to address the challenges posed by China's geopolitical and military rise in the region. Through the strategic dialogue, the Quad members seek to cooperate on converging areas of geostrategic interests and coordinate their efforts to maintain the rules-based international order. Despite its earlier inhibitions towards the Quad, New Delhi now remains a more active member and has forged stronger partnerships with Quad member countries, particularly in maritime security. The sum of the developments stated above conveys that India has emerged as a relevant security actor within the last two decades. These changes have attracted some scholarly attention to India's motivations as a security actor in the region. Despite attempts to provide theoretical explanations, some anomalies are puzzling for theorists and policymakers alike.

1.2   The Puzzle

Since the 20th century, the field of International Relations (IR) has attempted to discern and explain real-world events and developments. Multiple theories have cropped up in the recent decades, claiming to explain global or regional events more effectively than the preceding theoretical approaches. Despite the vast array of IR theories, the literature on India's security behaviour in the

Indo-Pacific and cooperation with SEA and EA is grounded in structural perspectives such as BoP (part of neorealism). This school of thought views India's security cooperation with the SEA and EA regions as driven by its desire to balance China's growing political, economic and military influence in the region. The BoP theory propounds those countries (specifically major powers) that experience a disadvantage in the face of changing power equations tend to respond by balancing the rising power. Schweller (2016) explains that balancing is done both externally and internally. Internal balancing refers to investments in hard power to tackle the advantageous actor and respond to a potential clash at any given point in time. In other words, if a country intends to balance a rising actor, it is likely to invest in military capabilities to address the power imbalance. In terms of external balancing, the balancer forges alliances with countries that share concerns over the rising power.

Convinced by this logic, many scholars who study India's foreign policy have reached a near-consensus that the China factor drives its security conduct in the Indo-Pacific region (studies include Batabyal, 2006; Pant, 2007a, 2013; Rehman, 2009; Mohan, 2009c; Bötscher, 2011; Malik, 2012; A Singh, 2012; Jha, 2015; Rajagopalan, 2017; Smith, 2016, 2018; Paul, 2019). While some scholars refer to India's actions as a form of 'counter-containment' (Rehman, 2009, p. 114), others identify it with concepts of 'limited hard balancing', 'soft balancing' (Paul, 2018a) and 'evasive balancing' (Rajagopalan, 2020). Most scholars who privilege structural theories over other theories believe that the very phenomenon of China's rise and its growing power has motivated India to pursue a balancing act.

Based on the propositions of the BoP theory, India must pursue internal and external balancing against China at the regional level. It is worth probing if New Delhi's behaviour aligns with theoretical expectations. While some actions merge with the characteristics of internal or external balancing, other policy decisions belie the expected course of action. For instance, for India to internally balance China in the Indo-Pacific (which has a substantial maritime stretch), its naval modernisation should be directed strongly towards a buildup of submarines. However, as Walter Ladwig III claims, the trends indicate otherwise (Ladwig III, 2012). He studied the trajectory of India's naval modernisation (from 1992 to 2012) to conclude that New Delhi appears to be driven primarily by the objective of safeguarding crucial SLOCs and undertaking "softer aspect of power projection" instead of "deterring hostile powers" such as China (Ladwig III, 2012, p. 18). He adds that India would have focused more on the submarine fleet if it aimed to deter or truly balance powers such as China (Ladwig III, 2012).

Furthermore, concerning external balancing, the BoP theories would expect New Delhi to address the imbalance created due to China's rise by seeking an alliance with Washington. The US would be a default choice because Washington (and its allies) share India's discomfort regarding Beijing's military rise

and assertive behaviour in the region. Besides, the US is the only country that can materially respond to China. Nevertheless, contrary to expectations, New Delhi continues to be opposed to an alliance with the US or any other power. Besides, India continues to reject America's proposal to undertake joint patrols in the SCS. In 2012, the Indian Defence Minister opposed the idea of concentrating on military partnerships and urged Washington to "strengthen multilateral security architecture in the Asia-Pacific and to move at a pace comfortable to all countries concerned" (PTI, 2012b, para. 3).

There are striking trends in India's China policy that dilute the relevance of the BoP theory as a viable explanatory theory. For instance, in 2018, New Delhi decided to improve and 'reset' relations with Beijing. Both countries had held two informal summits in Wuhan (China) and Mamallapuram (India) in 2018 and 2019, respectively. These informal summits demonstrated India's intent to iron out the bilateral differences with China, thus contradicting the impression that it was balancing China. The deadly clashes of June 2020 proved to be an inflection point in their bilateral relations and hardened New Delhi's perceptions of Beijing (Panda, 2020). Despite this, scholars and commentators believe that India has "far too long acquiesced to Chinese aggression without sufficient retaliatory military action" (Haqqani and Pande, 2021, para. 15). Despite an ongoing border standoff with China, India participated in a Russia–India–China (RIC) meeting and even agreed to initiate a defence ministers' dialogue. This was indicative of a nuanced strategy rather than pure external balancing. Similarly, New Delhi became a more vocal and enthusiastic supporter of the Quad after 2020. Still, it takes extra efforts to "minimise perceptions of the Quad as a U.S.-led containment coalition" (Smith, 2021, para. 26). New Delhi also projects its conception of the "free and open Indo-Pacific" as inclusive and nonconfrontational. It is equally important to note that India does not mention China by name in its joint statements with the US or Quad countries. According to Ambassador Kenneth Juster, former US Ambassador to India (2017–2021), New Delhi displays a "restraint in mentioning China in any US–India or any Quad communication" because it "is very concerned about not poking China in the eye" (Times Now, 2022).

Going by the vantage point of BoP, China is the rising power, and the regional balance of power is shifting in its favour. Despite this, why is India not actively balancing China, especially as it has considerable support from crucial powers such as the US, Japan, and Australia? For neorealism, India's actions may appear anomalous and indicative of irrational behaviour. Other equally relevant questions cannot be reasoned by neorealism: why is New Delhi reluctant to the idea of an alliance with the US against China? Why did it reset ties and seek to improve ties with Beijing pre-2020, given the severe border contentions? Despite the border clashes of 2020, why does New Delhi continue to engage Beijing through the RIC grouping and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)? In short, the broader question remains as to why

is India increasing its security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, especially with the SEA and EA countries, if not to balance China?

Apart from the studies that rely on structural explanations, there are other works, although limited, wherein scholars have used constructivism (or social constructivism) to explain the drivers of India's security interactions with SEA and EA. Using the explanatory variable of 'identity', they argue that India's foreign and security policy behaviour results from a changed identity. For instance, Sandeep Singh (2014) reasons that India has embraced the new identity of an Asia-Pacific player. As a result, it has increased interactions with SEA and EA. While there is some strength in the argument that India's identity has changed, a review of its security-related actions and policies indicates that New Delhi is not pursuing the path of an Asia-Pacific power. Its power projection ability remains limited to the IOR. Moreover, its current policy actions or military modernisation trends do not resemble a country that aims to be a full-fledged Asia-Pacific power. Besides, India remains wary of taking up greater security responsibilities in areas beyond the IOR. It has also refrained from getting deeply involved in issues of the region, such as the SCS dispute, except for making periodic statements on the subject. Officials from some ASEAN countries and the US have frequently expressed that New Delhi is 'not doing enough' as a security actor in the Indo-Pacific region (see Prakash, 2018; Lalwani & Byrne, 2019a; 2019b). If India's identity has changed, why does its policy behaviour not correspond with the new identity?

Other works that opt for constructivism include Priya Chacko and Deepa Ollapally's postulations. Chacko (2014) believes that India's current foreign policy is best understood through the ideational changes taking place within the country. She states that there are two dominant perspectives that form a nationalist–pragmatist hybrid. To explain, the nationalists wish to limit the usage of military power. In contrast, the pragmatists are keen to expand India's security cooperation beyond the traditional limits (Ollapally & Rajagopalan, 2011, as cited in Chacko, 2014). Chacko argues that India's ideational changes related to the Indo-Pacific are also an extension of the preceding LEP and other policies in the extended neighbourhood. Despite providing a greater understanding of the subject, Chacko does not adequately address how these ideational factors translate into final policies, particularly related to security cooperation with SEA and EA. It is also worth questioning if the Indian policy is influenced primarily by ideational changes with only limited relevance to systemic factors or other developments at the sub-national levels.

Writings that study Indian security behaviour through the prism of constructivism raise more questions than answers. The primary question is, why is there a gap between the stipulated identity change and policy actions? Differently put, even if there is an agreement that New Delhi's identity has changed, why is this not evident in all Indian activities in the Indo-Pacific region? Apart from this, several additional questions remain unaddressed. Is In-