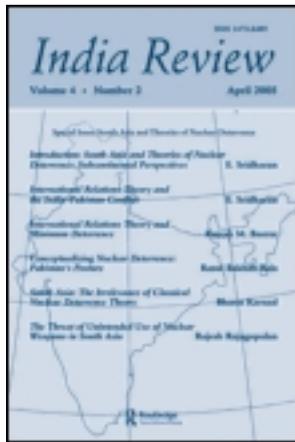


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### The Un-Argumentative Indian?: Ideas About the Rise of India and Their Interaction With Domestic Structures

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# The Un-Argumentative Indian?: Ideas About the Rise of India and Their Interaction With Domestic Structures

MANJARI CHATTERJEE MILLER

## Introduction

Today India's status as a rising power is taken as a given. It has a GDP of \$1.8 trillion,<sup>1</sup> a projected GDP growth rate of seven percent in the fiscal year 2014–2015,<sup>2</sup> a 46.8 billion dollar defense budget, a nuclear stockpile of more than 80 warheads and ballistic missiles,<sup>3</sup> a newly-built aircraft carrier,<sup>4</sup> and expectations that by 2020 it will overtake Japan, France, and Britain to become the world's fourth largest military spender.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, along with discussions of China, the *other* rising power, there are expansive international discussions of the ramifications of and possible obstacles to India's rise.<sup>6</sup>

In response to these international discussions, China has extensive domestic debates about its own rise.<sup>7</sup> The fact that, along with the international discussion, a rising power would have domestic ideational frameworks to discuss its changing status is not surprising. Historically, when the United States was a rising power, it too had significant discussions about the repercussions of its growing strength.<sup>8</sup> Domestic ideational frameworks in India on its rise, however, are glaring by their absence.<sup>9</sup>

The puzzle therefore becomes: *why* does India not discuss its rise? This article argues that the absence of ideational frameworks on rise in India can be only be understood through both the content of international ideas about India's rise combined with the domestic structure and process of idea diffusion in the country. It shows that the benign nature of international discussions about India's rise, along with strong Indian elite control of foreign policy decision making and weak domestic epistemic communities, has resulted in the absence of pathways by which new ideational frameworks can emerge and influence foreign policy.

## Why Would We Expect to See India Discuss its Rise?

The question of why India does not discuss its rise implies that we would *expect* to see the existence of domestic ideational frameworks that explain and analyze India's rise for a domestic and international audience. By domestic ideational frameworks on rise, I mean in-country discussions, debates ideas, and analyses, of the consequences and ramifications of India's rise. These discussions would exist at both the elite level and

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leader/decision maker level with considerable interaction between the two. There are three reasons why it is puzzling that we do not see these types of ideational discussions and interaction in India.

First, international discussions of India's rise are ubiquitous. A cursory search of the major world publications in the Lexis-Nexis academic database for headlines containing the words "India AND rise" after 2001, reveals over a thousand results. If that search is expanded to include all English language news sources, the number of news articles found jumps to well over three thousand. As Evan Feigenbaum at the Council of Foreign Relations pointed out:

Until the late 1990s, the United States often ignored India, treating it as a regional power in South Asia with little global weight . . . today, however, India is dynamic and transforming . . . [and] . . . the United States in turn has developed a growing stake in continued Indian reform and success, especially as they contribute to global growth, promote market-based economic policies, help secure the global commons, and maintain a mutually favorable balance of power in Asia.<sup>10</sup>

There is, thus, enough superpower and global awareness about India's rise that the causes, consequences, and weaknesses of its transitive position are constantly debated,<sup>11</sup> and the international relations literature has extensive research showing that these kinds of popular international ideas diffuse to domestic regimes.<sup>12</sup>

Second, India is a flourishing democracy. The existence of these prolific ideas combined with India's status as a stable democracy implies that it should be possible to map and measure pathways by which they impact domestic foreign policy structure within India. This is because existing theoretical arguments about the impact of ideas, their transmission to the domestic arena and their influence on domestic structures are predominantly geared toward democracies and domestic democratic mechanisms. The thinking behind empirical cases of democracies is usually either that audience costs can make it risky for elected leaders to ignore values and ideas,<sup>13</sup> or that the democratic framework creates opportunity structures for many different actors with different ideational orientations.<sup>14</sup>

Third, rising powers talk about their rise. China, the other rising power today, for example, has a proliferation of such ideational frameworks. It has sought to explain its rise for a domestic and international audience. Bonnie Glaser and Evan Medeiros have, for example, outlined the domestic debate around the theory of "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*).<sup>15</sup> They point out that, "beginning in the late 1990s, Chinese scholars and analysts began to appropriate Western thinking and terminology by publicly writing and talking about 'China's rise' and these ideas increasingly became part of Chinese popular discourse around 2002."<sup>16</sup> Historically, too, other rising powers, such as the United States, have had domestic ideational frameworks that accompanied their changing status—an example would include the debate around isolationism versus interventionism, and global responsibility.<sup>17</sup>

As is the case with China today, the pace of India's economic and military growth is debated, but its standing as a rising power is undisputed. Thus, given the proliferation of international discourse on India's rise combined with its status as a vibrant

democracy, and the evidence that rising powers have domestic ideational frameworks about their rise, one would expect to see these international ideas translate into domestic ideational discourse and frameworks. By this, I mean we would expect to see formal and informal discussions within the Indian foreign policy decision making establishment, as well as between them, and influencing agents such as epistemic communities and prominent intellectuals. These discussions on the international and regional implications, and consequences of India's rise could take concrete form through white papers, external and internal policy papers solicited by the government, regular exchanges between government officials and epistemic communities, as well as the solicitation of non-governmental people to serve within the institutions of foreign policy.

A distinction needs to be made here between grand strategy and ideational frameworks on rise, as well as between historical influences and ideas on rise. Those who do study ideational influences on Indian foreign policy can be classified into two categories. First, there are those who focus on historically mapping and categorizing "world views" among the elite.<sup>18</sup> Second, there are those who focus on policy and strategic issues that either generate or are affected by these historical worldviews.<sup>19</sup> Both of these two categories of scholars assume that foreign policy ideas do not differ from grand strategy and these ideas, if they do matter, are mostly drawn from historical sources (for example Nehruvianism).<sup>20</sup>

Ideational frameworks on rise, however, imply first, that the ideas that influence foreign policy can be seen as a *part of* grand strategy but need not be conflated *with* it; and second, we would expect to see ideas that have risen as a response to India's *changing* status. This does not negate the importance of historical ideas on Indian foreign policy, particularly those of influential figures such as Nehru, but rather highlights the lack of modification of these ideas, and the generation of new ideas to explain and understand India's status today.

We would expect to see these types of discussions particularly among the Indian foreign policy decision-making elite and epistemic communities. The question, therefore, is why we do not see these frameworks and explicit formal and informal discourse in India on its rise. The lack of these frameworks can be explained, I suggest, through a catalyst effect represented by the content of international ideas and a mechanism of a particular type of domestic structure of foreign policy decision-making, which is less conducive to ideational diffusion.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Catalyst: The Content of International Ideas**

One of the key questions that international theorists seek to answer is when and how do ideas shape the interests of states? The fact that international ideas can and do affect the behavior of states, often serving as "road maps" and influencing policy has been persuasively argued.<sup>22</sup> In Germany and Japan, for example, norms and beliefs have been used to explain internal security policy—German policy conceives of its security and security cooperation as undeniably intertwined with the European community while Japan has a Hobbesian view that leads to a greater level of comfort with isolationist policies.<sup>23</sup> It has also been extensively shown that ideas affect the interests and identities of states. The organizational structure of the French army in the early twentieth

century, for example, was affected by the beliefs of civilian policy makers,<sup>24</sup> whereas it has been argued that Chinese decision makers cross-temporally hold beliefs consistent with *parabellum* strategic culture.<sup>25</sup>

When discussing which international ideas become important and influence states, the answers have ranged from those that domestic "norm entrepreneurs" advocate<sup>26</sup> to international lobby groups and their influence on individual leaders<sup>27</sup> to those that dominant powers endorse.<sup>28</sup> However, the content of international ideas, which is usually taken as a given in this literature, also matters to the state.

More specifically, I argue that if the state is the dominant *subject* of the international ideas, how it perceives its international reputation to be affected by those ideas becomes important. Thus, benign content, where a state's reputation remains tied to the values assigned to a status quo state, is not perceived as harmful. Negative content, where its reputation is tied to the values assigned to revisionist states, is perceived as problematic. As has been pointed out, unlike status quo states, revisionist states seek to change the international structure and gain from the redistribution of benefits.<sup>29</sup> The values associated with revisionist states are negative in that they are perceived to be a threat to the international system. Thus, if the content of international ideas about a state is negative, it puts pressure on that state to respond. It acts as a catalyst getting the state to attempt to change the international discourse. If the content is benign, there is little pressure to respond to the international discourse.

If we turn now to the case of India, we find that although the international community is avidly discussing its rise, the content of this discussion is benign, in that India is not seen as a threat to the existing international structure. India is, thus, arguably in an unusual position—strictly defined it *is* a revisionist state due to its changing status, but it enjoys the reputation of a status quo state and is not seen as a threat to the structure of the international system.

It has to be noted here that benign content does not imply protection from criticism. There has been ample criticism and analysis of the obstacles facing India as it rises. Amrita Narlikar has focused on the poverty levels of the average Indian as the most severe hurdle facing India. She argues that poverty breeds discontent in the country's largest employment sector, agriculture, leads to corruption, and even fosters violent terrorist activities like the Naxalite movement.<sup>30</sup> Sumit Ganguly has debated whether the Kashmir conflict is a threat to India's changing status, and he has pointed out that the chances of India and Pakistan reaching a settlement on their own are low.<sup>31</sup> Amartya Sen has most recently shown that India is failing to provide essential public services that would "raise life expectancy, expand general education and secure health care for its people."<sup>32</sup> This gap is particularly evident when compared with China. None of these criticisms of India's rise discuss it as a potential threat to the United States or Europe, however.

Criticisms aside, discussions of the consequences of India's rise are benign in that they have concentrated predominantly on whether India can be used as a counterweight to China. Ashton Carter explicitly suggests:

Down the road, the United States might also want India to serve as a counterweight to China. . . . For now, the United States and India are largely eager to improve trade with China and are careful not to antagonize it. But it is reasonable for them

to want to hedge against any downturn in relations with China by improving their relations with each other. Neither government wishes to talk publicly, let alone take actions now, to advance this shared interest, but they very well might in the future.<sup>33</sup>

That China is well aware of this and discusses this aspect of India's rise is also obvious.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as far as China is concerned, the blame for this maneuvering of a rising India into the position of a counterweight to it lies squarely with the United States: India is a thorn; the United States is the threat.<sup>35</sup>

Even India's neighbors, who may have justifiably been expected to be spooked by India's changing status, were in fact suspicious of India long before it was classified as a rising power, and, with the possible exception of Pakistan, have no reason to expect the security situation to deteriorate further.

The lack of a catalyst effect, namely the benign content of international ideas about India's rise, is exacerbated by the nature of the foreign policy mechanism in India through which ideational diffusion could take place. India, as I will show, falls into the category of a statist society with strong elite control of foreign policy decision-making and weak epistemic communities resulting in less pressure on the elites to "learn" and respond to international ideas.

### **The Mechanism: Statist Domestic Structures**

Within the literature on ideas and their influence on state behavior, identity and interests, some theorists have demonstrated that the impact of ideas can only be properly understood if it is acknowledged that the domestic structures of states are crucial to ideational diffusion. The crux of ideas is "consensual knowledge" or a shared set of beliefs about particular cause-effect and ends-means relations held by members of an epistemic community<sup>36</sup> and "learning" of this knowledge is crucial to ideational diffusion.

"Diffusion" is defined as "the transfer or transmission of objects, processes, ideas and information from one population or region to another."<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Checkel's work identifies four types of domestic structures that affect the mechanisms of norm diffusion: liberal, corporatist, statist, and state-above-society.<sup>38</sup> The liberal structure is bottom up diffusion where societal groups and individuals have a central role in policy making and societal pressure leads to the impact of international norms. The corporatist structure is defined by policy networks that connect state and society. Both social pressure and elite learning lead to "norm empowerment." In the statist structure, elite decision makers are the predominant actors through whom "global norms reach the domestic agenda" and there is some societal pressure on them. The state-above-society structure is one in which the state is separate from societal influence and has strict control over it; the only way that norms can penetrate is if elites learn and allow it.<sup>39</sup>

The ease of ideational diffusion in the four types of structure is dependent on how dominant the elites are in a state. For example, in a state with a liberal structure, societal groups and individuals have a significant role in decision-making and, therefore, it is less dependent on elites for ideational diffusion; in such a society, societal groups can be the

agents of ideational change with little constraint on them, and ideational diffusion is less dependent on elites “learning.”<sup>40</sup> In a statist society, however, the primary way in which there can be ideational diffusion is if elites “learn” and since societal pressure on them is modest, the pace of ideational diffusion is slower.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that theories of idea diffusion account for the control that elites have over policies, that is, strong elite control over policy does not make ideas superfluous, and it simply affects the pace of ideational diffusion. Matthew Evangelista’s work shows, for example, that even in the closed and secretive regime of the former USSR, windows of opportunity provided transnational actors with access to the leadership and the ability to transfer ideas.<sup>42</sup>

The process of ideational diffusion in a statist society is important to understanding why international ideas on India’s rise have not percolated into domestic discourse and structures. India’s domestic structure is consistent with a statist structure. In Indian foreign policy, a small group of elite decision makers are the predominant actors, and there is very modest societal influence. I show that Indian foreign policy decision-making is dominated by elites from the Indian Foreign Service while domestic societal foreign policy influences—as represented by the epistemic community of foreign policy think tanks—are very limited.

In India, foreign policy decision-making rests predominantly with three bodies.<sup>43</sup> First, there is the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The MEA is the foreign ministry that is headed by the Minister of External Affairs who is the political head and the Foreign Secretary who is the administrative head. Second, there is the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). The PMO is headed by the Prime Minister who is aided by a number of secretaries, additional secretaries and joint secretaries from various ministries including prominently, the Ministry of External Affairs. Several prime ministers beginning with Jawaharlal Nehru have held the portfolio of the Minister of External Affairs simultaneously with the prime ministership. Third, there is a national security advisor and his office. The post of the national security advisor in India is a recent creation. In 1998, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee’s principal secretary, Brajesh Mishra, was the first to be appointed to the office. The national security advisor reports directly to the Prime Minister on domestic and international security issues. While these are all separate bodies, one of the key things that link them is that all three are heavily staffed by officers of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

The IFS is a part of the Central Civil Services of India that was created by the British in the nineteenth century to help administer its extensive colonial empire. Dubbed the “steel frame” of the British government of India, it was retained by independent India after 1947. The IFS is a body of career diplomats and along with the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), it is one of the most powerful and prestigious body of civil servants in the country. Only the highest ranked in the Civil Services Examination are admitted into the IFS, and by some accounts the acceptance rate is 0.01 per cent.

These officers are the key advisors to the prime minister’s office, the national security advisor and his council, and the MEA. They also hold some of the most powerful offices within these bodies—the foreign secretary is the administrative head of the MEA and an IFS officer; three of the four officers to hold the position of the national security

advisor, including Shivshankar Menon, the current national security advisor, have been IFS officers. All the most significant ambassadorial and foreign policy appointments and offices are likely to be filled by IFS officers rather than political appointees. As a result, eventually IFS officers fill the most influential foreign policy decision-making slots.

In addition to this, the IFS has two defining characteristics which make them the predominant actors in foreign policy decision making in India and resistant to influences from domestic society, including discourse on India's rise. First, the exclusive admission process means that IFS officers are seen as capable of assuming massive authority. This powerful role produces a decision making process that is highly individualistic. Officers have a lot of leeway in crafting policy. Interviews with top officials reveal that there are few, if any, top-down guidelines.

An official said, "We have a great deal of flexibility and autonomy in shaping policy on a day-to-day basis within the over arching framework of policy." On being pressed to detail the "overarching framework," he first said, "It is not written anywhere or formalized . . . it's expressed in speeches and parliamentary statements" before admitting with a laugh, "but those damn things are also written by us (the IFS)."<sup>44</sup> The sample of statements below from top ambassadors corroborates the officer's statement on the enormous latitude given to the IFS:

You make up your own goals which is hugely enjoyable and has impact. [But] it would have been nice to have direction from time to time.<sup>45</sup>

I could never find any direction or any paper from the Foreign Office to tell me what India's long-term attitude should be towards Country X. Positions are the prerogative of the individual ambassador.<sup>46</sup>

I was completely autonomous as ambassador. There is little to no instruction from the PMO, even in case of major countries. I had to take decisions based on a hunch. I sometimes got very very broad directives. But I virtually violated all of them. The PM was a temperamental man who told me that politically it was suicide and that if it were made public he would disown me. The fact that I got it right had a lot to do with luck.<sup>47</sup>

The coordination from top . . . isn't there. If you reach [a] position where you are appointed ambassador to a middling country you get briefs—information about the country, problems, bilateral relationship. Ambassadors many times improvise brilliantly. And many times not so brilliantly.<sup>48</sup>

Although there is a political head who bears ultimate responsibility for decisions, the Minister of External Affairs or the Prime Minister for example, the IFS often shoulders the task of persuading him to accede to their decisions. As an official pointed out: "the minister has to make a decision between what he has to say to the media and what's actually happening on the ground. Depending on the personality of the minister, they can be very courageous. It is still bottom-up not top-down [decision

making] because unless the minister is very powerful, the minister's duty is to stick by [our] broad policy."<sup>49</sup> Jaswant Singh, politician and former Minister of External Affairs, agrees with this statement: "If a minister [of external affairs] has the skills to command the respect of the MEA officers, he will make policy and implement it. Otherwise it is the civil servants who make the policy and the minister is simply the figurehead."<sup>50</sup>

Second, as another consequence of its exclusivity, the IFS is severely understaffed. As a result, individual officers are given large portfolios with immense responsibility and left with little time or inclination for long-term strategizing or ideological thought. Across the interviews, officials confirmed that there are no internal documents or white papers produced on long-term strategy or ideational frameworks. Moreover, newly-minted ambassadors are given loose guidelines and background about their region of responsibility, and neither have to read nor to produce reports on long-term strategies or goals:

"[There are] no internal [documents] or white papers on long-term foreign policy assessment. We realize of course foreign policy goals have to be emphasized, so we chant all the mantras."<sup>51</sup>

Another official admitted, "There's not much thinking about India or what it will be doing in five or ten years. Goals are not set out anywhere."<sup>52</sup> Across the board, the interviews showed that officers think of themselves as "fire fighting" on a daily basis. As some officials said: "We are bogged down with the mundane. The shortage of personnel is a huge issue. We are worried about this."<sup>53</sup>

While there are two departments within these bodies that are supposedly for strategizing and brainstorming ideational frameworks, the Policy and Planning Division and Public Diplomacy, they not only have a shortage of staff but are widely thought to lack teeth. The dominance of the IFS is compounded by the weak foreign policy epistemic community in India represented by think tanks.

Think tanks in India focusing on foreign policy have modest to weak influence for three reasons. First, these kinds of think tanks are a relatively new phenomenon. Despite India's democratic regime, even a decade ago there were almost no non-governmental think tanks that focused on international relations. Second, whereas today the number has increased, there are simply not that many that have any kind of adequate funding.<sup>54</sup> Thus, due to sheer lack of numbers and funding research output is limited.

Third, private think tanks in India that have burgeoned and do have funding are usually funded by industrialists. Businesses in India are now heavily involved in Track II diplomacy. The focus of these think tanks, as a result, is much more on economics and international political economy than foreign policy.

As a result, think tanks in India have limited access and almost all have little to no influence. This includes a think tank like the Institute for Defense Studies Analysis (IDSA), which is the most well-known Indian think tank both domestically and internationally. IDSA is funded by the Indian Ministry of Defense, and personnel at the Institute are quite candid about their lack of visible influence. They complain about the limited access to both government officers and material.<sup>55</sup> Even a think tank such

as the Centre for Policy Research which, under its director Pratap Bhanu Mehta, has substantially raised its profile in recent years and houses first-rate experts—is not regularly consulted. IFS officers are quite candid about their lack of reliance on think tanks:

It is very different from the United States. . . . I sometimes talk to individuals [at think tanks] but on a personal basis—the problem is think tanks don’t have much information or access to government information.<sup>56</sup>

We just don’t have that kind of intellectual input yet. We recognize that we can’t become a superpower without it.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, when ranking the top fifty think tanks worldwide in 2012, the University of Pennsylvania report did not include a single Indian think tank, let alone one focused on foreign policy.<sup>58</sup> The only Indian foreign policy think tank included in the worldwide ranking was IDSA coming in at number 54.

The enormous power and near-anonymity of action wielded by the IFS combined with the very modest influence of the foreign policy epistemic community corresponds to the statist category of domestic structure. This statist domestic structure combined with the lack of impetus given by the benign content of international ideas explains the lack of ideational frameworks on rise in India. Indian foreign policy is dominated by a small group of elites whose characteristics are not conducive to fostering this type of discourse; the epistemic community of foreign policy think tanks is weak and has little influence, and benign international ideas on India’s rise provide little incentive for response. As a result, there is little compulsion on the part of these elites to respond to and “learn” from international ideas or consult epistemic communities on rise. This can be better understood if the case of China is briefly illustrated.

### **China: The Contrasting Case**

Along with the rise of China, two facts are apparent to China watchers. First, China pays an inordinate amount of attention to international discourse about it.<sup>59</sup> It is very sensitive to its international image and because “they do not want any dirty laundry exposed in public, they pay close attention to the international press.”<sup>60</sup> Second, as a result of this, China has had rich internal debates and intellectual discussions on the ramifications of its rise that both, respond to international discussions and seek to shape it.

In contrast to India, the content of international ideas about China’s rise has been dominated by “China threat” theories.<sup>61</sup> China is seen as a revisionist power—the United States as well as most of China’s regional neighbors and Europe are at best, ambivalent and at worst, utterly dismayed by the prospect of China as the next super power. Thus, Zheng Bijian’s ideational framework of “peaceful rise” was formulated after his visit to the United States where he was shocked by the dominance of China threat theories. Zheng Bijian, who was a close confidant of Hu Jintao wanted the government to emphasize that China’s primary commitment was building a wealthy state

*within* the existing rules and regimes of international society and integrate further in globalization. It was meant to be an explicit reassurance that the rise of China would bring benefits to its neighbors and the world rather than offer new threats, and an avowal that China would not seek “external expansion.”<sup>62</sup> It was a reaction to the perception that China would act as a revisionist power.

Even when the theory of “peaceful rise” eventually declined as opposition to its tenets reared, other ideational frameworks such as *heping fazhan* or “peaceful development” arose to take its place. The debate around “peaceful rise” versus “peaceful development” serves as an excellent example of how Chinese leaders are not only acutely sensitive to external debates about China’s rise but propagate internal discussion of it as well. Today, depending on whom one talks to in China, there are anywhere from two to five domestic schools of thought that have differing perceptions of what it means for China to rise; some are well-articulated and published,<sup>63</sup> others are informally acknowledged. They all touch upon the question of what China’s changing international status means for it domestically; what it means *vis-a-vis* the United States and China’s neighbors; and how China should be rising. And, they are all acutely conscious of the negative content of international ideas about China’s rise.

Although China leans toward the state-above-society model<sup>64</sup> with ideational diffusion spurred by elite “learning,” the catalyst effect of the content of international ideas has been one of the factors that has led China to muster its epistemic community and brainstorm the implications of its rise. The Chinese government has been instrumental in actively soliciting and empowering a domestic discourse on rise. When it comes to foreign policy ideas, China has a dynamic group of think tanks and prominent intellectuals (usually affiliated with a think tank or respected university) who are tapped by the government and regularly asked to write briefs, articles, and reports.

Think tanks such as the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the China Institute of International Studies and, the Center for International and Strategic Studies at Peking University, to take just a few, are staffed by policy experts, and academics and are solicited for thinking on foreign policy including on China’s rise. The Chinese domestic community produces articles, policy papers, memos, and white papers outlining its perceptions of China’s rise and its response.

In fact, the role of think tanks and their input into foreign policy decision making has dramatically increased in the last ten to fifteen years. “It is no longer confined to the closed realm of top leaders or dominated by factions—think tanks are useful instruments to promote rationality and democratization in the policy of decision making process.”<sup>65</sup> These think tanks are not independent in the Western sense—they cannot determine the mission and timing of research to be undertaken.<sup>66</sup> However, they are “stable and autonomous” and conduct research and provide advice on policy issues. In contrast to Indian foreign policy think tanks, they also have an international reputation—the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was ranked #5, the China Institutes of Contemporary International relations was ranked #25, and the China Institute of International Studies was ranked #36 in the 2012 Global Think Tanks Report.<sup>67</sup>

Prominent policy experts and scholars are also often invited to small confidential meetings with officials from the Foreign Ministry (*waijiao bu*), particularly before an important event is about to take place such as President Xi's 2013 visit to the United States, and asked for opinions. While it is impossible to tell if and when an idea produced by a scholar or policy expert will actually be picked up by a high ranking government official or the President,<sup>68</sup> the fact remains that it always *could* be and the Chinese government, therefore, has an extensive body of work to rely on for new ideas.<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has used the literature on domestic structure and idea diffusion to explain why India, a rising power and thriving democracy, lacks the ideational frameworks on "rise." In doing so, it makes three contributions to the literature on Indian foreign policy. First, it shows why we would expect to see domestic ideational frameworks on "rise" within India. Second, analyzing the type of international discourse that exists about India and using interviews in the top echelons of foreign policy decision making in India, it shows that the content of these international ideas, and India's statist structure have led to the absence of such frameworks. Third, briefly using the example of China, the present study shows the forms an ideational discourse on "rise" can take, and how the negative content of international ideas combined with domestic structure can act as a catalyst for this discourse.

There is enough evidence that the world cares and is avidly discussing India's rise. Moreover, India is a leading democratic nation. As this article has detailed, theories of ideational influences on foreign policy confirm that international ideas and norms often influence domestic epistemic communities and regimes, and these theories are particularly relevant for democracies. Democratic regimes are perceived to have higher audience costs that make it risky for leaders to discount ideas and norms. Also, the nature of democratic regimes creates opportunities for many different actors with different ideational influences to lobby foreign policy decision-making. In addition to these facts, China, the other rising power and a non-democracy, has elaborate ideational frameworks that discuss its rise and the domestic and international ramifications of its rise. Thus, the puzzle raised in the article: why doesn't India talk about its rise?

In this article I have argued that even though India, as a rising power is by definition a revisionist state, it has the benign reputation of a status quo state—unlike China, India is not perceived to be a threat to existing international institutions. This combined with theories of domestic structure and ideational diffusion provides an answer to the puzzle in India's case. States with differing domestic structures may allow differing levels of idea diffusion depending on who "learns." India falls into the statist domestic structure with highly influential elite decision makers and low societal influence. Thus, IFS officers comprise the dominant foreign policy decision-making elite, and foreign policy think tanks have minimal influence. Unlike China, the lack of negative international ideas about India creates even less imperative for its statist structure to respond.

This state of affairs is obviously not static. A number of factors may allow eventual structured discussions of India's rise: the increasing role of other actors in foreign policy

decision making in addition to the IFS; the rise of a strong leader such as Nehru who put their ideational stamp on foreign policy; the gradual strengthening of think tanks; or a change in the content and tone of international perceptions of India's rise. Until then, there may continue the paradoxical situation of a democratic rising power debating and deliberating its rise less prolifically than a nondemocratic rising power.

Beyond the important and timely case of India, this puzzle also raises the question of generalizability. Do rising powers necessarily talk about their rise? And does it matter whether they do or do not? While answering that question is out of the scope of this article, one may speculate that an answer would have to include a focus on factors beyond domestic structure. The variation in rising powers across time and space means that there would also be significant variation in domestic structures. We can, therefore, hypothesize that additional variables such as image-making or building audience support could be at play. The generalizable aspect of the India-specific puzzle addressed here remains a fascinating question and begs further exploration.

## NOTES

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  15. Glaser and Medeiros, "Changing Ecology" (see note 7 above).
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  17. Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Barry Buzan and Michael Cox, "China and the US: Comparable Cases of 'Peaceful Rise'?" *Chinese Journal of International Politics* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer 2013), p. 12.
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  19. See Kanti P. Bajpai, "India's Strategic Culture," in Michael Chambers, ed., *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 2002), pp. 245–303; Vipin Narang and Paul Staniland, "Institutions and Worldviews in Indian Foreign Policy," *India Review* Vol. 11, No. 2 (2012), pp. 76–94.
  20. The conflation of ideas with grand strategy is not exclusive to scholars who work on Indian foreign policy. From the classic contemporary definitions of grand strategy formulated by Liddell Hart and Andre Beaufre to enunciations of grand strategy by Collins, Kennedy, Posen and Ross; Rosecrance and Stein; and Luttwak, there is little distinction drawn between grand strategy as comprising of ideas and grand strategy as influenced by ideas, or even both. Yet, discussions of foreign policy by themselves do not constitute grand strategy even though they may inform it. Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1954); Andre Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965); John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1973); Paul Kennedy ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy," *International Security* Vol. 21, No. 3 (1996–97), pp. 5–53; Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategic Power: Military Capabilities and Political Utility* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, 1976).
  21. This article draws on extensive interviews conducted in both India and China by the author. The interviewees are highly influential elites involved in the foreign policy process in each country. As such, by request, all identities have been kept confidential.
  22. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
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  24. Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine Before World War II," in Peter Katzenstein, eds., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 186–215.
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  28. John G. Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power," *International Organization* Vol. 44, No. 3 (1990), pp. 283–315.
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  30. Amrita Narlikar, "All That Glitters Is Not Gold: India's Rise to Power," *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 28, No. 5 (2007) p. 990.
  31. Sumit Ganguly, "Will Kashmir Stop India's Rise?," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85, No. 4 (2006), pp. 45–56.
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34. Jing-dong Yuan, "India's Rise After Pokhran II: Chinese Analyses and Assessments," *Asian Survey* Vol. 41, No. 6 (2001), p. 984.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 984–85.
36. Jeffrey Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 4.
37. Jeffrey Checkel, "Norms, Institutions and National Identity in Contemporary Europe," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 1 (1999), p. 85.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.
40. Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Public Opinion, Domestic Structures and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies," *World Politics* Vol. 43, No. 4 (1991), pp. 479–512.
41. Checkel, "Norms, Institutions and National Identity" (see note 37 above), p. 90.
42. Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).
43. In the Indian government, who actually has foreign policy, decision-making authority is seen as a sensitive subject. Despite the involvement of the MEA and the NSA, the PMO is seen to be the ultimate seat of authority and the others jockey to get closer to that office.
44. Interview 14, New Delhi, India, July 2012.
45. Interview 5, New Delhi, India, June 2012.
46. Interview 6, New Delhi, India, June 2012.
47. Interview 17, New Delhi, India, July 2012.
48. Interview 8, New Delhi, India, June 2012.
49. Interview 20, New Delhi, India, July 2012.
50. Jaswant Singh, New Delhi, India, in discussion with the author, July 12, 2012.
51. Composite quote from two top officials, New Delhi, India, in discussion with the author, Summer 2012.
52. Interview 20, New Delhi, India, July 2012.
53. Composite quote from three top officials, New Delhi, India, in discussion with the author, Summer 2012.
54. "Why India's Think-Tank Community Fails in Raising Funds from Indian Entrepreneurs," *The Economic Times*, April 8, 2012.
55. Interview 13, New Delhi India, July 2012.
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57. Interview 11, New Delhi, India, June 2012.
58. Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, University of Pennsylvania, *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report*, [http://www.repository.upenn.edu/think\\_tanks/7/](http://www.repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/7/).
59. Glaser and Medeiros, "Changing Ecology" (see note 7 above), p. 292.
60. Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), p. 31.
61. The Chinese are acutely aware of "China threat" theories. A simple Google or Baidu search of *zhongguo weixie lun* ("China threat theory") throws up dozens of Chinese media websites and blogs discussing this. Here is a 2010 example of an article in *China Daily*: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-09/02/content\\_11245047.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-09/02/content_11245047.htm)
62. Glaser and Medeiros, "Changing Ecology" (see note 7 above), p. 295.
63. Feng Zhu, "US Rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific: China's Response and the Future Regional Order," Discussion Paper No. 12 (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies, University of Wellington, 2012).
64. I deliberately use the phrase "leans toward" rather than "falls into the category of" because Jeffrey Checkel's model implies extremely fragmented and weak societal influence, and ideational diffusion is utterly dependent on elites. (See Checkel, "Norms, Institutions and National Identity" (note 37 above.)) But in China, today, societal pressures, even on foreign policy are growing—for example, interviews confirmed Chinese media is getting more strident and nationalistic and is a force that the Chinese government cannot ignore. It would be a mistake and gross oversimplification to assume the Chinese government faces little to no audience costs simply because it is an authoritarian regime.
65. Xufeng Zhu and Lan Xue, "Think Tanks in Transitional China," *Public Administration and Development* Vol. 27, No. 5 (2007), p. 452.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 453.
67. Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, University of Pennsylvania (see note 58 above).
68. As evidenced by appearing in a speech, for example, or a policy initiative.
69. This analysis of foreign policy ideas and diffusion in China is based on interviews conducted by the author in Beijing and Shanghai, June 2013.