

REPUBLIC OF KOREA - INDONESIA RELATIONS: MIDDLE POWER DIPLOMACY IN EAST ASIA

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This article analyzes how middle powers can contribute to regional peace and stability by examining the Republic of Korea – Indonesia relations in East Asia. The article suggests that there are potential contributions of like-minded middle power relations in regional governance amidst regional challenges. This is reflected by the extent to which these middle powers maneuver major problems in East Asia through various forms of regional institutions. By engaging with ASEAN, while trying to maintain good relations with the United States and China, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia are able to influence as well as promote regional peace and stability.

Keywords: middle power, regional governance, Korea - Indonesia relations, East Asian region, ASEAN, New Southern Policy

Introduction

In the 1990s, the term ‘middle power’ began to be debated in international relations discourse by scholars and foreign policymakers, in particular from Canada and Australia. This was done in relation to filling the power vacuum left following the end of the Cold War which resulted in the formation of a multipolar international system.¹ Together with great powers (which are associated to Western powers), non-Western powers in the international system increasingly began playing a greater role in international affairs. These countries began to be considered as ‘middle powers.’ Moreover, the economic and strategic difficulties experienced by the United States (US) and China internally constrained their ability to fully shape the international system which provided opportunities for non-great powers to make their mark in global affairs.²

Indeed, there is a growing academic literature that focuses on the role of middle powers that are neither great powers nor failing, but which are seeking to play a more pronounced role in the international system.³ The literature on middle power is normally focused on individual countries in enhancing their middle power status. Karim worked on how the ROK and Indonesia seek status as middle powers in East Asia by analyzing their regional contributions.⁴ Kusumaningprang explains the roots and evolution of Indonesia’s middle power activism as a reason to define the country’s

¹ Moch Faisal Karim, ‘Middle Power, Status Seeking and Role Conceptions: The Case of Indonesia and South Korea,’ *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2018, pp. 1-21.

² Christopher Layne, ‘The US – Chinese power Shift and the end of the Pax Americana,’ *International Affairs*, Vol. 94 No. 1, 2018, p. 93.

³ Eduard Jordaan, ‘The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers,’ *Politikon*, Vol. 30 No.1, 2003, pp.165-181.

⁴ Karim, 2018, pp. 1-21.

status as a middle power.⁵ In the case of South Korea, most literature focusses on the country's contribution as a donor through its activism in helping the development of developing nations.⁶ Others focus on the concept of Global Korea, an initiative by the Korean government to assert Seoul's position as a middle power.⁷

However, what is lacking is studies on cooperation between middle powers. Therefore, this article examines the extent to which middle power cooperation is viable at the regional level between countries who identify themselves as middle powers. Indeed, East Asian region contains a number of middle powers, such as Japan, Thailand as well as the ROK and Indonesia, who cooperate in promoting issues of common concern. The East Asian region here comprises of Northeast Asia (NEA), encompassing China, Japan, the two Koreas and Taiwan as well as the ten member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This article focuses on the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Indonesia cooperation since these countries identify themselves as middle powers. Generally, the ROK and Indonesia are known to have close relations which contributes to ensuring peace and stability in the East Asian region.

The Concept of Middle Power

Before examining ROK-Indonesian middle powermanship, it is important to understand the meaning of what constitutes a middle power. During the Cold War, most international relations research focused on great power politics in a bipolar international system. However, when the Cold War ended, changing the international system from bipolar to multipolar, the term middle power became in vogue. The term middle power has been around for several decades. In the 1990s, it was mainly associated to contributors of Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) or playing the role of mediators in international conflicts like Canada, Australia, or the Scandinavian countries. One can conclude these countries became the first self-professed middle powers. Following the end of the Cold War, new meanings to the concept of middle powers surfaced. Often, a great power within a geographic region can sometimes be identified as a "global middle power," like that of Japan, Germany, or Brazil.⁸ In terms of leadership in the new international order of the early 1990s, middle powers began playing not hegemonic but active roles in world affairs.⁹ Scholars argue that middle powers have the capacity to exert leadership in terms of capacity, influence as well as the ability to promote global cohesion and stability.¹⁰

This article uses a "behavioral approach" as the central analytical tool in order to understand middle powers as it emphasizes the agency capacity of a country's foreign policy. The diplomatic behavior of a country determines its status as a middle power. This is characterized by its preference for multilateralism, ability to compromise

⁵ Raditya Kusumaningprang, 'The Roots and Evolution of Indonesia's Middle Power Activism,' *The Indonesian Quarterly*, 2017, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 104-179.

⁶ Kyung Suk Lee, 'New Approach of South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Focusing On Global Agenda Setting,' *Global Politics Review*, Vol.2 No.2, 2016.

⁷ Balbina Hwang, 'The Limitations of 'Global Korea's' Middle Power,' The Asan Forum, 24 February 2017.

⁸ Matthew Stephen, 'The Concept and Role of Middle Powers during Global Rebalancing,' *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Summer/Fall 2013, pp. 37-53.

⁹ A.F. Cooper, R.A. Higgott and K.R. Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1993, p. 43.

¹⁰ Jordaan, 2003, p. 170.

in disputes and to play the role of “good international citizenship” in its diplomacy.¹¹ Accordingly, middle powers maintain international order through coalition-building and being mediators in conflict resolution issues.¹² Other scholars define middle powers who have limited material capabilities as seeking roles in international system in order to manage existing power relations.¹³ These days material capabilities possessed by countries is becoming less relevant in understanding middle powers. Middle powers can also be determined by the extent to which a country is a responsible global citizen. The next two sections examines the extent to which the ROK and Indonesia is being perceived as middle powers through their foreign policy agendas.

ROK as a Middle Power

Since 1991, the ROK has identified itself as a middle power to justify its greater involvement in global activities when President Roh Tae-woo used the term ‘middle power’ to represent the ROK’s goal for international status.¹⁴ From a historical point of view, the ROK has been sensitive to its status, given that it was humiliated by Japanese colonialism for 35 years and was a victim of Cold War great power rivalry. This created an impetus for ROK leaderships wanting to achieve a noticeable status in world affairs. It can even be argued that the ROK exhibits an ambition that goes beyond obtaining middle power status. Since the mid - 1990s, the ROK’s determination to achieve middle power status is evident. Given its remarkable economic development, and more significantly being admitted into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996, the status of middle power has become the primary goal in ROK’s contemporary foreign policymaking.

The ROK’s ambition finally gained currency under the presidency of Kim Dae-jung (1998 – 2003).¹⁵ Under his leadership, the ROK’s economy successfully recovered from the Asian Financial Crisis (AFC), which also hit Indonesia hard. With the economic success, Kim saw an opportunity to advance the ROK’s status by augmenting its role as a regional player. Hence, he proposed the establishment of the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) during the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) meeting in 1998 in Manila which later further institutionalized the East Asian cooperative process.¹⁶ Kim was also instrumental in improving relations with North Korea. He initiated the *Sunshine Policy*, through which the ROK’s foreign policy adopted a more accommodating stance towards North Korea. As such, Kim was the first leader who strove to advance ROK a

¹¹ Karim, 2018, p. 4.

¹² Laura Neack, *The New Foreign Policy: US and Comparative Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Rowman & Littlefield, Oxford, 2010.

¹³ Andrew Carr, ‘Is Australia a Middle Power? A Systemic Impact Approach,’ *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 68 No. 1, 2014, pp. 70-84; Ralf Emmers and Sarah Teo, ‘Regional Security Strategies of Middle Powers in the Asia-Pacific,’ *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 15 No. 2, 2015, pp. 185-216; Janis van der Westhuizen, ‘Class Compromise as Middle Power Activism? Comparing Brazil and South Africa,’ *Government and Opposition*, vol. 48 No. 1, 2013, pp. 80-100; Nukhet A. Sandal, ‘Middle Powerhood as a Legitimation Strategy in the Developing World: The Cases of Brazil and Turkey,’ *International Politics*, Vol. 51 No. 6, 2014, pp. 693-708.

¹⁴ Soon-ok Shin, ‘South Korea’s Elusive Middlepowermanship: Regional or Global Player?’ *Pacific Review*, Vol. 29 No. 2, 2016, pp. 187-209.

¹⁵ Choong Nam Kim, ‘The Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy Toward North Korea,’ *Politics, Governance, and Security Studies*, No. 11, 2005, pp. 1-28.

¹⁶ Cho Il Hyun and Park Seo Hyun, ‘Domestic Legitimacy Politics and Varieties of Regionalism in East Asia,’ *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 40 No. 3, 2014, pp. 583-606.

middle power through its foreign policy considerations, by emphasizing the role of Seoul as a mediator in regional affairs.¹⁷

However, the ROK continually faces challenges in its quest to be a middle power. One major factor impeding its goal is the lack of support from third parties, mainly the US which is ROK's closest ally. As ROK's ally, the US does not expect the ROK to act as a regional balancer. Seoul's role as a regional balancer is perceived by the Washington as departing from a strong alliance with the US in the region, but as a move towards closer ties with China.¹⁸ (Shin 2016). Under the leadership of Lee Myung-bak (2008 – 13), the ROK preferred to enact roles that enabled it to be more effective at the global level. Lee Myung-bak declared at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2009 that, "we are striving to become 'Global Korea,' harmonizing our interests with others and making our well-being to contribute to the well-being of all of humanity."¹⁹

As part of the Global Korea strategy, the ROK hosted the G20 leaders' meeting in 2010, the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011, and the Nuclear Security Summit in 2012. President Lee's focus on a global level is due to the fact that the ROK is hindered from playing a greater role in mediating the North Korean nuclear crisis. As compensation, the ROK took on a bigger role at the global level by supporting the non-proliferation initiatives.²⁰ It showed its commitment, by hosting the Nuclear Security Summit in 2010. The main aim was to advance the ROK's growing global influence in regional affairs without directly challenging US initiatives especially in non-proliferation issue.²¹

Moreover, under President Lee, the ROK pursued middle power status by promoting the role of an advocate of green growth as an alternative to the sustainable economic growth model, as well as advancing its role in development cooperation. During the East Asia Climate Forum in 2010, President Lee announced the establishment of the Global Green Growth Institute and later fostered the Green Climate Fund.²² In promoting the idea of green growth, the ROK used its experience as once a developing country that eventually achieved a developed status. It provided funding for green environmental projects through foreign aid and invested in the renewable energy sector in developing countries.²³

The ROK also pursues its middle power status by being a donor in overseas development cooperation. The ROK itself transformed from a donor recipient to a major donor in international development cooperation.²⁴ Since 1997, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the ROK has been providing development assistance to many developing countries. Seoul's contributions eventually propelled it to be a member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2009 (Lee 2010).

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁸ Shin, 2016, p. 200.

¹⁹ 'Keynote Speech at the 64th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.' Retrieved from http://overseas.mofa.go.kr/un-en/brd/m_5073/view.do?seq=746802&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&age=3

²⁰ Mitchell B. Reiss, 'Drifting Apart? The US – ROK Alliance at Risk,' *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 11-31.

²¹ Ibid, p. 13.

²² Karim, 2018, p. 15.

²³ Ibid, p. 17

²⁴ Kim et al., 'From Development to Development Cooperation: Foreign Aid, Country Ownership, and the Developmental State in South Korea,' *Pacific Review*, Vol. 26 No. 3, 2013, pp. 313-336.

Presently, the ROK is one of the leading donors in developing countries. Traditionally, the ROK's development assistance focused mainly on Asian countries.²⁵ In pursuing middle power status, the Lee administration used development assistance as a tool for the ROK's global engagement beyond Asia.²⁶

In order to achieve its middle power status, the ROK also plays the role of a bridge builder in specific global issues (for example in low-carbon green growth) by actively providing proposals that is acceptable to both developing and developed countries.²⁷ The role as a bridge-builder also resulted from the ROK's achievement in becoming part of the group of advanced nations on the strength of its successful experience as a developing economy.²⁸ The following section examines the ROK as a middle power. The main objective is to determine if the Indonesia's middle power status was a government led initiative or the country is perceived to be in such a position by its immediate neighbours and allies.

Indonesia's Role as a Middle Power

In employing the behavioural approach, it is important to emphasize that Indonesia has recently experienced a fairly rapid rise of status in the international system, particularly as a consequence of its successful post-Asian crisis economic development. Indonesia's GDP currently is the 16th biggest in the world compared to other middle powers like the ROK and Netherlands.²⁹

Since 2004, the Indonesian economy has shown rapid growth. Indonesia is the fourth largest country in the world in terms of population, as well as the largest country in Southeast Asia in terms of area and the size of its economy.³⁰ Due to the economic growth, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's, Indonesia began to enjoy greater political stability and speedy democratization. Furthermore, as the most populous Muslim country and achieving rapid economic growth, Indonesia has become a model as a functioning democracy in the Islamic and developing world. Indonesia's rapidly expanding middle class and its ability to successfully clinch peaceful democratic elections between rival political parties suggests that it has acquired some of the internal structures and values to reinforce some of the behavioral features of middle powers.³¹ These achievements have resulted in increased international calls for Indonesia to play a more substantial role at the international level.

Unlike the ROK, Indonesia has not exhibited any ambitions of wanting to be to be more than a middle power. Again, unlike the ROK, Indonesia has not publicly declared itself as a middle power nor mentioned its status as such in any official international speech or reports. But, when viewed through its foreign policy agenda, Indonesia acts like a middle power, especially when it deals with ASEAN. Middle powers frequently champion 'progressive' international causes because their status as democracies provides them with a suitable platform. Indonesia has traditionally been

²⁵ Iain Watson, 'Global Korea: Foreign Aid and National Interest in an Age of Globalization,' *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 17 No. 1, 2011, pp. 53-69.

²⁶ Karim, 2018, p. 15.

²⁷ Han Heejin, 'Korea's Pursuit of Low-Carbon Green Growth: A Middle-Power State's Dream of becoming a Green Pioneer,' *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 731-754.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 735.

²⁹ Karim, 2018, p. 14.

³⁰ Kusumaningprang, 2017, p. 130.

³¹ Moch Faisal Karim, 'Role Conflict and the Limits of State Identity: The case of Indonesia in Democracy Promotion,' *Pacific Review*, Vol. 30 No. 3, 2017, pp. 385-404.

the leader of the ASEAN grouping and a major influence on its trajectory.³² While President Soeharto was still the president (1967- 1998), Indonesian interests were aligned to ASEAN's primarily in reinforcing domestic sovereignty, reducing intra-regional tensions, and legitimizing ruling elites. Moreover, Jakarta believed in ASEAN's strengths, its collegiality, consensus and willingness to compromise.³³ However, increasingly as the East Asian region faces diverse challenges, Indonesia has difficulties in adhering to these principles. Hence, Indonesia is facing difficulties in acting ASEAN's framework in solving regional issues. The 'ASEAN Way' had its uses when Indonesia was an authoritarian state but now it looks like Indonesia may be beginning to outgrow ASEAN itself.³⁴ Rizal Sukma, the former Executive Director at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, advocated Indonesia to adopt a 'post-ASEAN' foreign policy.³⁵ His argument for such a stand relates to the fact that Indonesia has to continually acquiesce to the preferences of some authoritarian neighbors within ASEAN.³⁶

It is significant to note that Indonesia, has only recently begun to act like a middle power by getting actively involved in various multilateral organizations. For example, Indonesia is often referred to as a prospective member of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) as it shares a similar stage of advanced economic development and it is a member of the G20, one of the 20 major economies in the world. In addition Indonesia is seen as an influential member of ASEAN which has a common vision with the BRICS in terms of governance and global financial reforms.³⁷ Darnosumarto, the former advisor of the former President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's believe Indonesia is ready to be a middle power as it has the capacity to mediate as well as link small and great world powers alike. However, Indonesia's advancement and its external orientation of its foreign policy is increasingly at odds with some of the more conservative and authoritarian ASEAN member states. Jürgen Rüländ, a prominent scholar of Indonesian foreign policy argues that,

Indonesia's self-styled role as ASEAN's 'normative power' is regarded by fellow ASEAN member states as a dual threat: it nurtures apprehension about Indonesian hegemony in ASEAN and, especially in the non-democratic ASEAN member states, fears of an erosion of domestic political stability³⁸

Nonetheless, Indonesia is bent on playing a larger global role and sees an opportunity to work with other middle powers like that of the ROK in which Indonesia. For years the relations between the ROK and Indonesia has been characterized as

³² Kusumaningprang, 2017, p. 140.

³³ Mark Beeson et. al, *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order* p. 229

³⁴ Samuel Sharpe, 'An ASEAN Way to Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia?', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 231-250.

³⁵ Muhamad Arif, 'Indonesia's New ASEAN Foreign Policy,' *The Habibie Center*, available at <https://thcasean.org/read/articles/261/Indonesias-New-ASEAN-Foreign-Policy>, retrieved 10 December 2018.

³⁶ Karim, 2018, p. 16.

³⁷ Karen Brooks, 'Is Indonesia Bounded for the BRICS?' *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/indonesia/2011-10-16/indonesia-bound-brics>.

³⁸ Mark Beeson and Will Lee, *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2015, p. 229.

“problem-free” at the political and economic level.³⁹ To make Indonesia a middle power, its relations with the ROK which prides itself as a middle powers provides an important avenue for furthering its ambition in diversifying its foreign policy initiatives, befitting its economic strength.

The Evolving ROK – Indonesia Relations

The year 2018 marks 45 years of ROK-Indonesia relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1973. Over the years, bilateral economic, political and cultural relations have expanded and mutual understanding of each other has significantly deepened. There have been regular exchanges by high-ranking leaders that has served as a catalyst for strengthening bilateral relations into a higher level.

For the ROK, the Southeast Asian region’s growing economy, represents an opportunity to engage ASEAN, especially in seeking Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and obtaining alternate avenues for its small and medium size companies. Other factors are equally significant for the ROK in terms of geographical proximity as well as the stability offered by ASEAN. First, ASEAN is close to ROK in terms of geographical proximity. Furthermore, the ROK is attracted by ASEAN’s growing middle class population as well as cheap labor market offered by countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.⁴⁰ In this perspective, Indonesia has comparative advantages compared to the rest of the ASEAN countries. It has the largest population (260 million) and the biggest landmass in Southeast Asia.⁴¹ So it is not surprising to note that in 2006, ROK-Indonesia relations were expanded to a special strategic partnership. Indonesia’s strategic partnership with the ROK is one of its kind. Under this new level of partnership, relations now have expanded to security and defense cooperation, indicating an innovative form of partnership.⁴² More importantly, the ROK sees Indonesia as a gateway to expanding its presence in Southeast Asia in general and ASEAN in particular.

However, ROK’s policy towards ASEAN has not always been constant, or consistent before President Moon Jae In of the ROK. Moon took office in May 2017 and since then has made relations with Southeast Asia a major ROK foreign policy priority through the “New Southern Policy” (NSP). How it eventually plays out will be contingent on the management of several challenges. To be sure, ROK’s interest in the region is not new. Even before Moon came to office, ASEAN was already ROK’s second largest trade and investment partner, and Seoul had long recognized that Southeast Asian states play a key role in the management in dealing with North Korea. Compared to other ASEAN members, Indonesia has a unique history with the ROK.

Relations between ROK and Indonesia were negligible in the 1950s due to ideological differences during the Cold War period. The similarities these countries shared were the same. Both struggled to be independent nation states after facing

³⁹ Max Walden, ‘Why South Koreans in Indonesia are so Well Accepted, and How the Community is Set to Continue Growing,’ *South China Morning Post*, 5 April 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/article/2140096/why-south-koreans-indonesia-are-so-well-accepted-and-how-community-set>.

⁴⁰ Erdenesuren Sodonchmeg and Wang Jiu Geng, ‘ASEAN Countries: Investment Potential, Economic Challenges,’ *International Journal of Business Management and Economic Research*, Vol. 8 No. 2, 2017, pp. 926-933.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 927.

⁴² ‘Korea, Indonesia Establish Special Strategic Partnership,’ *Korea.net*, 10 November 2017. <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/policies/view?articleId=151102>. Retrieved 12 December 2018.

internal as well as external challenges and equally had a hard time recovering from the experiences of colonialism. Although the ROK and Indonesia established their diplomatic relations in 1973, relations during the Cold War period were muted because the ROK had a strong alliance with the US whereas Indonesia moved towards the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). As a founding member of ASEAN, Indonesia did not want to lean on the democratic or communist bloc. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s changed Indonesian foreign policy somewhat. The emergence of a multipolar system in Asia caused Indonesia to diversify its relations and as such deepened the ROK – Indonesia relations. In addition, the declining US influence and the rise of the rest of the Asian states economically, especially the rise of China led to the emergence of a post-American regional order. In this new environment, while the US remains an indispensable player, its decline resulted in a multi-polarity international order which in turn has influenced the regional architecture of the East Asian region. The emergence of middle powers like Indonesia and the ROK in the East Asian region has prompted these countries to diversify and seek deeper cooperation.

The importance of Indonesia to ROK is reflected in the trajectory of the bilateral relations. Indonesia was the first destination of ROK's FDI in ASEAN. To begin with, the South Korean Development Cooperation invested in developing forests in Indonesia in 1968.⁴³ For the Koreans, Indonesia's location was significant to the ROK national interests. Indonesia is located in the middle of Asia-Pacific region. The Asia Pacific region has one of the largest maritime trade lanes which makes Indonesia as one of the major points for international shipping. Having good relations with Indonesia is crucial as more than 80% the ROK's oil supply which originates from the Middle East passes through the South China Sea.⁴⁴

Yet, the main factor driving bilateral relations is economics and a need for manufacturing base for the ROK. On the other hand, Indonesia, needs Korean capital, technology and expertise to develop its economy.⁴⁵ The velocity of economic cooperation accelerated after the Indonesian-Korean strategic partnership agreement was inked by then president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and President Roh Moo-hyun in December 2006. The ROK lacks natural resources and to compensate Indonesia has been exporting resources like timber, rubber and rattan.⁴⁶ According to President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, during a press conference in Seoul on September 2018, bilateral trade is expected to USD30 billion by 2022.⁴⁷ According to the *Jakarta Post*, the ROK is assisting in developing the Indonesian economy by being its third-largest foreign investor. Soon, the ROK is expected to become one of its top five biggest trading partners. Recent report suggests that with the help of the Koreans, the Indonesian economy is going to benefit in beefing up its railways, real estate sector and smart

⁴³ 'South Korea, Indonesia Pledged to Boost Economic Ties, People-to-People Exchanges,' *The Strait Times*, 11 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/south-korea-indonesia-pledge-to-boost-economic-ties-people-to-people-exchanges>.

⁴⁴ Lee Jaehyon, 'South Korea and the South China Sea: A Domestic and International Balancing Act,' *Asia Policy* 21, 20 January 2016. <https://www.nbr.org/publication/south-korea-and-the-south-china-sea-a-domestic-and-international-balancing-act/>. Retrieved 10 December 2018.

⁴⁵ 'Indonesia-Korea Partnership,' *Jakarta Post*, 9 November 2017, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/11/09/editorial-indonesia-korea-partnership.html>. Retrieved 12 December 2018.

⁴⁶ 'Indonesia-Korea Partnership', *Jakarta Post*, 9 November 2017.

⁴⁷ 'Indonesia, South Korea Aim to Double Bilateral Trade by 2022,' *Jakarta Globe*, 10 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesia-south-korea-aim-to-double-bilateral-trade-by-2022/>.

transportation systems.⁴⁸ Under the strategic partnership agenda, security and defense cooperation has also been given importance. Indonesia is said to be an emerging market for South Korean defense equipment as well as a strong bilateral relations has resulted in both countries cooperating on a joint venture to build a fighter plane, dubbed KF-X.⁴⁹

Multilaterally, since the end of the 2000s, ASEAN has become a priority in the ROK's foreign policy. In 2009, ROK and ASEAN marked the 20th anniversary of the ROK - ASEAN relationship. In acknowledging the vast improvements in bilateral relations, the ASEAN - Korea Center was established in Seoul by the Korean government, designed to foster economic and socio-cultural ties with ASEAN and its member states. More importantly, the ROK views Indonesia as an important conduit in accessing ASEAN's economic and political cooperation. Since Indonesia is an important partner, the Korean government established the Mission of the Republic of Korea (ROK) to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta in 2012.⁵⁰ The establishment of the mission indicates that the ROK was already serious about fostering cooperation between Korea and ASEAN. Since Jakarta is home to the ASEAN Secretariat, this diplomatic move allows further cooperation between Indonesia and South Korea.

Again, it was not surprising when in November 2017, the 'New Southern Policy' (NSP) was first introduced by President Moon Jae-in, during his first visit to Indonesia, an ASEAN member country. This remarkable event reflects the importance of Indonesia in ROK's foreign policy. As the largest country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia as a strategic partner is a key player in advancing the ROK's NSP. The post-Cold War international order is in a state of flux. Therefore, local regional powers are now playing a crucial role in sustaining regional peace and stability. The ROK and Indonesia are viewed as East Asian countries that can play a crucial role in post-Cold War East Asia.⁵¹ Although both countries recognize the US - China competition, ROK and Indonesia are not leaning towards either US or China but instead, strive to engage both countries in advancing and protecting their national interests. Since, Indonesia has had a troubled history with China, its primary foreign policy goal is to assist a regional order that prevents a Cold War outbreak between the US and China that is most likely to squeeze smaller players like ASEAN member countries.⁵² The NSP provides an opportunity for both the ROK and Indonesia as well as other ASEAN states who can be considered as middle powers to carve out a stable regional order without offending China or the US.

One of ROK's attempts in constructing closer with ASEAN is through its official development assistance program (ODA) which is a useful instrument for fostering a new sort of relationship. The ROK used to be one of the poorest states in the world in the aftermath of the Korean War. However, it is now in a strong position to assist other developing states. In fact, ASEAN was the largest recipient of ROK's

⁴⁸ Robert S. Ross, *East Asia in Transition: Toward a New Regional Order*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1995. P. 250.

⁴⁹ Darren Whiteside, 'South Korea's Moon unveils new focus on Southeast Asia,' *Reuters*, 9 November 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-southkorea/south-koreas-moon-unveils-new-focus-on-southeast-asia-idUSKBN1D90OC>.

⁵⁰ 'Republic of Korea Opens its Mission to ASEAN,' *ASEAN*, Retrieved from <https://asean.org/republic-of-korea-opens-its-mission-to-asean/>.

⁵¹ 'Indonesia, South Korea Aim to Double Bilateral Trade by 2022,' *Jakarta Globe*, 10 September 2018.

⁵² Rizal Sukma, 'Indonesia's Response to the Rise of China: Growing Comfort amidst Uncertainties,' *The Indonesian Quarterly*, 2009, p. 145.

ODA (1.13 billion USD) between 1987 and 2006.⁵³ As a donor, ROK is interested in assisting in capacity-building and human resource development areas, through education and vocational training. Due to ROK's own socio-economic development experiences, it has become an invaluable asset and source of assistance for some ASEAN member states' socio-economic development. In fact, in recent years, Vietnam and Indonesia have become top recipients of Korean ODA.⁵⁴

Indonesia and the New Southern Policy

The systemic change in Asia in the post - Cold War era, has paved the way for the ROK to play a proactive role in constructing the post-Cold War order by engaging itself with the emerging multilateral forums, especially those led by ASEAN. ROK has always been regarded as “a shrimp among the whale” located in between China and Japan.⁵⁵ At the regional level, Asia is witnessing China and Japan's resurgence as major powers, and the unpredictable tendencies of American commitments to Asia due to budget constraints and President Donald Trump's unclear policies. Given ROK's geopolitical situation in East Asia, specifically Northeast Asia, Seoul is increasingly looking South by concluding strategic partnerships with numerous states in the South, particularly with Australia, India and ASEAN (bilaterally and multilaterally). This is partly because Seoul's balancing act against bigger powers likes China and Japan and the US. More significantly, Seoul is concerned about the US' long-term commitment in defending the Korean peninsula under the Trump administration.

Since Moon Jae-in was inaugurated in May 2017 as the Korean president, he has embarked on four national security strategies; western diplomacy dealing with China, eastern diplomacy dealing with Japan, northern diplomacy focusing on the Russian Far East and China's three northeastern provinces, Central Asia and Mongolia, and southern diplomacy focusing on Southeast Asia and India.⁵⁶ The NSP is designed to realize economic revitalization, maritime security, and expansion of the sphere of Korean influence.⁵⁷ In all of these areas, ROK sees Indonesia as a strategic partner that shares common interest.

At the Indonesian Business Roundtable on 9 November 2018, Moon remarked that ROK views its relationship with ASEAN as equivalent to that of ROK's relations with the four great powers.⁵⁸ But the reality is that ASEAN's influence is not comparable to that of the four great powers. For example, ASEAN is far behind in involving itself in dealing with the North Korea's denuclearization process and is weaker economically compared to China, Japan, Russia and the US. However,

⁵³ Kwon Yul 'Korea's ODA to Southeast Asia,' *KIEP*, 1 June 2015.

⁵⁴ 'Overview of Korea's development Experience,' *K-Developedia*, date unavailable.
https://www.kdevelopedia.org/Development-Overview/official-aid/history-korea-s-odkoica--201412110000389.do?fldRoot=TP_ODA&subCategory=TP_ODA_GE#.XB9oclUzblU

⁵⁵ 'A Shrimp among Whales,' *The Economist*, 12 October 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/asia/2016/10/27/a-shrimp-among-whales>.

⁵⁶ Park Sang-seek, 'President Moon's Four-Directional Foreign Policy,' *Korea Herald*, 10 December 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20171210000029>.

⁵⁷ Darren Whiteside, 'South Korea's Moon unveils new focus on Southeast Asia,' *Reuters*, 9 November 2017. Retrieved from <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-indonesia-southkorea/south-koreas-moon-unveils-new-focus-on-southeast-asia-idUKKBN1D90Q1>.

⁵⁸ Harris Zainul, 'ASEAN-South Korea ties – Cooperation Peace, Prosperity,' *New Straits Times*, 20 November 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2018/11/432886/asean-south-korea-ties-cooperation-peace-prosperity>.

multilaterally, ASEAN has succeeded in bringing the ROK, China and Japan in its multilateral forums.

In terms of individual interactions, the ROK and Indonesia have also effectively coordinated in a number of international forums as well as regional mechanisms such as the East Asian Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN and the China, Japan, and ROK Summit (ASEAN+3). Moreover, ROK and Indonesia share many common partners in the Asia-Pacific region, suggesting that there are chances for Seoul and Jakarta to cooperate beyond their bilateral framework. Reports indicate that Moon Jae in is of the opinion that,

...strengthening ROK's relationship with Indonesia is a matter of high priority in our government's foreign policy. We admire Indonesia's phenomenal economic achievements and emergence as one of the emerging powers in Asia, which have turned her into a major factor of political and economic stability in Southeast Asia. Close cooperation between ROK and Indonesia stands to be an important factor of stability in the politically and culturally diverse and rapidly transforming Asia.⁵⁹

ROK in Indonesia's 'Free and Active' Foreign Policy

Presently, Indonesia and the ROK are working together to bring stability to the East Asian region in the face of the Democratic Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear weapons program. Although the year 2018 has brought about much improvements in inter-Korean relations, the DPRK denuclearization process remains a dream. Indirectly Indonesia has been trying to reintegrate the DPRK into the region with many of its policies. Unlike most western countries, ASEAN and Indonesia in particular have not isolated the regime in Pyongyang. The reason for this can be explained by Indonesia's open foreign policy concept.

Indonesian policymakers, since 1948, have adhered to a 'free and active' foreign policy doctrine, so that the country can "strike an independent path in the face of the bipolar rivalry."⁶⁰ In terms of Indonesia's relations with the Korean peninsula, after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the government in Jakarta took a stand that it will not take part on the war. As an independent state, Indonesia chose not to be involved in the Cold war rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. The government banned all foreign warships taking part in United Nations (UN) operations in Korea from calling at Indonesian ports for refueling, loading or repairing.⁶¹ The Ministry of Information remarked since Indonesia was not then a member of the UN, it was not obligated to observe the Security Council's order to aid the ROK.⁶² This did not mean that Indonesia was against the US or the UN but it merely showcased its independent foreign policy. In so doing, Indonesia informed the world that the US actions on the

⁵⁹ '45 years of Indonesia-S.Korea ties, Jokowi meets Moon Jae-in,' *Tempo*, 10 September 2018, Retrieved from <http://en.tempo.co/read/921515/45-years-of-indonesia-s-korea-ties-jokowi-meets-moon-jae-in>.

⁶⁰ Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'Indonesia's Foreign Relations: Policy Shaped by the Ideal of 'Dynamic Equilibrium,' *East Asia Forum*, 4 February 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/02/04/indonesias-foreign-relations-policy-shaped-by-the-ideal-of-dynamic-equilibrium/>.

⁶¹ Richard Mason, 'The United States, the Cold War and Indonesia-People's Republic of China Relations 1950-1955,' *Kemanusiaan*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2016, pp.1-20.

⁶² Ibid.

Korean peninsula was incompatible with its country's national philosophy and identity. Years later, the independent streak was characterized by the former President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as,

...no country perceives Indonesia as an enemy and there is no country which Indonesia considers an enemy. Thus Indonesia can exercise its foreign policy freely in all directions, having a million friends and zero enemies.⁶³

Because national interests drive Indonesian foreign policy, Jakarta established relations with the DPRK first before the ROK. Indonesia and the DPRK's relations are rooted in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which was established in 1961.⁶⁴ The President Soekarno promoted the "Jakarta-Phnom Penh-Beijing-Pyongyang Axis" and established relations with the DPRK in 1966.⁶⁵ At that time, Indonesia wanted to liberate West Irian from the Dutch and embarked on *Confrontation (Konfrontasi)*, an armed conflict against Malaysia and its allies, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Major powers like the US and the Soviet Union refused to support Indonesia.⁶⁶ As a result, Soekarno decided to strengthen relations with China, which supported Indonesia's position in all the aforementioned conflicts. Since China supported the Indonesian struggle against western imperialism and the DPRK was close to Beijing, it was natural for Jakarta to establish relations with the DPRK. Indirectly, the close relations between Indonesia and the DPRK affected Jakarta's relations with the ROK, especially in the 1960s. As a result, Indonesia and the ROK only officially established diplomatic relations on 17 September 1973.⁶⁷

Options for the ROK – Indonesia Middle Powers Cooperation

Characteristics of middle powers

In a region that has major leadership power rivalry between Japan and China, cooperation between middle powers plays an important role in ensuring and managing regional peace and stability. Since one country alone is unable to solve regional concerns, middle powers can be facilitators together with major powers to address any arising concerns. Memberships in multilateral regional institutions can serve as a platform for middle power cooperation, especially in the East Asian regional context. Contributions can be in the form of agenda setting, bridge-building, and building critical masses.⁶⁸

⁶³ Ted Piccone and Bimo Yusman, Indonesian Foreign Policy: 'A Million Friends and Zero Enemies,' *The Diplomat*, 14 February 2014. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/indonesian-foreign-policy-a-million-friends-and-zero-enemies/>.

⁶⁴ Erin Cook, 'Why Indonesia Loves North Korea,' *Asia Times*, 2 September 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.atimes.com/article/why-indonesia-loves-north-korea/>.

⁶⁵ Rizal Sukma, 'The Evolution of Indonesia's Foreign Policy: An Indonesian View,' *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35 No. 3, 1995, pp 304-315.

⁶⁶ A. Dahana, 'China's Role in Indonesia's 'Crush Malaysia,' Campaign, *Makara, Sosial Humaniora*, Vol. 6, No.2, December 2002. Retrieved from <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/4295-EN-chinas-role-in-indonesias-crush-malaysia-campaign.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Nicholas T. Dammen, 'Indonesia-Korea Relations for the Better Future,' 15 May 2009, Embassy of Korea in Indonesia. Retrieved from <https://www.kemlu.go.id/seoul/en/arsip/pidato/Pages/Indonesia-Korea-Relation-For-The-Better-Future-By-H.E.-MR.-Nicholas-T.-Dammen.aspx>.

⁶⁸ Jordaan, 2003, p. 15.

Agenda setting means bringing new ideas in a context where major players are too stuck in their old ways. In this sense the North Korean denuclearization process can bring in Indonesia which has good relations with both Koreas to mediate. Similarly, in terms of bridge-building, middle powers can facilitate between developed and developing countries through international assistance, regional multilateral institutions, or regional groupings. In this case, the ROK which has been providing ODA has been a boon for ASEAN countries like Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia in bridging the developmental gap that exists between old and new members. The last element is building critical masses of support for rule-based international order or a global policy change. These elements can be pursued by both the ROK and Indonesia through the ASEAN-centered multilateral mechanisms. Against this background, the ROK and Indonesia can socialize the DPRK into the ASEAN regional mechanisms like the East Asian Summit or the ASEAN Plus Three. It has to be noted that the dream of an East Asian Community will not materialize in the long term without bringing in the DPRK. In terms of contributing to regional peace and stability in the East Asian regional context, the next section discusses the extent to which both the ROK and Indonesia can work hand in hand in socializing North Korea into ASEAN led mechanisms and finding ways and means of mitigating the rise of China.

The ROK and Indonesia in ASEAN led multilateral mechanisms

As middle powers with similar emphasis on peace and stability, the ROK – Indonesia can contribute through ASEAN-centered multilateral mechanisms. ASEAN is the only regional institution in East Asia that has become a platform for both East and Southeast Asian countries to discuss mutual concerns in relations to international and regional issues. Initially, ASEAN was established in 1967 as an organization for Southeast Asian countries. However, along with the systemic change in the international system, ASEAN's foreign policy has been diversified and is now advancing ties between the Southeast Asian and East Asian countries. China, Japan and the ROK are involved in various ASEAN-centered multilateral institutions because these countries are divided by historical and Cold War animosities. Hence, ASEAN has gradually transformed itself as a central actor in shaping East Asian regionalism by generating critical regional frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asian Summit and the ASEAN Plus Three (APT).

One of the major issues that both ROK and Indonesia can tackle through ASEAN is North Korea's isolation. Both countries can devise strategies using various ASEAN multilateral forums in extending an invitation to North Korea to be part and parcel of the ASEAN family. Thus far, the ASEAN Regional Forum is the only platform where both Koreas are members of an ASEAN led multilateral institution. Over the years, Indonesia has clearly asserted itself as a middle power in trying to engage North Korea.

It is reported that Indonesia strongly supported Pyongyang's inclusion in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).⁶⁹ Furthermore, between 3 and 7 April 2018, former Deputy Foreign Minister and Indonesian ambassador to the US, Dino Patti Djalal, led a group of scholars, and experts from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and New Zealand to Pyongyang at a time when the US and North Korea were threatening each other. They shared their respective country's experiences

⁶⁹Zachary Keck, 'Why is Indonesia Courting North Korea?' *The Diplomat*, 2 November 2013. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2013/11/why-is-indonesia-courting-north-korea/>.

with representatives from the North Korean government and organizations, at the Kim Il-Sung University in Pyongyang.⁷⁰ Apart from that, The Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI) awarded the Courage for Peace Award to North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in on October 2018. The award was received by North Korean and South Korean ambassadors to Indonesia, An Kwan-il and Kim Chang-beom, respectively.⁷¹ The award was in recognition for both Koreas' work in improving bilateral relations and essentially starting the discussions on denuclearization. In a meeting in Seoul in September 2018, Moon asked for Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's to support his actions in achieving peace and denuclearization on the Korean peninsula.⁷² At the same meeting, Moon thanked the Indonesian President for allowing the two Koreas to march together in the opening and closing ceremonies and supporting joint teams for certain events at the Asian Games held in Indonesia in July 2018. Though the President invited Moon and Kim Jong Un to the games, only top ranking officials attended.⁷³ These events indicate that Indonesia, as a middle power, does have the capability to be a mediator in inter-Korean affairs.

Managing the Rise of China

Both the ROK and Indonesia have experienced troubled relations with China. The ROK is still caught in a complicated relationship with China due to security due to the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) on the Korean peninsula.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the ROK still remembers the Korean War, during which Chinese soldiers fought against the South to go against American influence. In the early 1990s, relations were normalized due to economic reasons. Since the normalization, China and the ROK have benefited tremendously from their rapprochement, at least until the THAAD was deployed. The ROK consciously has taken a stance not to neglect China despite being one of the US' closest allies.

The rise of China constitutes an issue that has captured the attention of foreign policy elites and academics. Like other countries, Indonesia is also faced with the challenge of formulation an appropriate response to the rise of China. Though normal relations between the two countries were restored in August 1990, Indonesia's response to the rise of China is still unclear. However, like the ROK, Indonesia has not neglected China in response to its rise. As middle powers in East Asian region, this safe approach is a short term solution. One particular issue that concerns both the ROK and Indonesia is China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea dispute. The dispute is a geopolitical flashpoint which can erupt anytime. Though the ROK and Indonesia are not claimant

⁷⁰ Richard Javad Heydarian, 'North Korea is Changing,' *Aljazeera News*, 18 April 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/north-korea-changing-180418063201529.html>.

⁷¹ Agnes Anya, Moon, 'Kim get Peace Award from Indonesian Community,' *Jakarta Post*, 21 October 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/10/21/moon-kim-get-peace-award-from-indonesian-community.html>.

⁷² 'South Korea's Moon asks Indonesia's Help for Inter-Korea Peace,' *Associated Press*, 10 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/940933eaa04f4741a2f456d0d7f442bd>.

⁷³ 'South Korea's Moon asks Indonesia's Help for Inter-Korea Peace,' *Associated Press*, 10 September 2018.

⁷⁴ Ethan Meick and Nargiza Salidjanova, 'China's Response to the US – South Korean missile Defense System Deployment and its implications,' US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 26 July 2017. Retrieved from https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Report_China's%20Response%20to%20THAAD%20Deployment%20and%20its%20Implications.pdf.

states, as middle powers they have an obligation to promote regional stability. Any conflict in the disputed area will have a severe energy impact on the ROK's economy and Indonesian security. Indonesia has been involved in confidence building measures. Jakarta has been trying to mediate in the South China Sea dispute by hosting negotiations over how to formulate a code of conduct for the claimant states as well as facilitating workshops on technical issues.⁷⁵

If South Korea truly wants to be a middle power, it has to be cooperative with its neighbours in regional issues. Thus far, Seoul's involvement in the dispute has been indirect. The ROK has donated a 1,200 ton corvette warship to the Philippines and has expanded defense cooperation with Manila.⁷⁶ According to a scholar by the name of Van Jackson, South Korea can undertake several initiatives.⁷⁷ First it can join or host naval exercises that help improve the coastal defense capacity of ASEAN member countries. Second, Seoul can coordinate the sale, transfer, or lease of military capabilities with other middle powers to improve maritime situational awareness in terms of surface patrol vessels, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, and radar systems in Southeast Asia. Third, South Korea should be more vocal in condemning Chinese aggression in the South China Sea. He asserts that this could be done in ASEAN led multilateral meetings. What is interesting is that these initiatives can also be adopted by Indonesia. In fact, middle power coalitions like that of South Korea and Indonesia can stress to the claimants the importance of resolving the dispute peacefully in accordance to recognized international law or an agreed framework like the Code of Conduct by ASEAN without resorting to threat or use of force. By working together, in the long run, South Korea and Indonesia have the potential of affecting the regional balance of power in the Asia Pacific region. Together with ASEAN, Seoul and Jakarta can cooperate in security dialogues, military capacity building, maritime surveillance regime and coordinated diplomatic initiatives to influence China's behavior in the South China Sea.

Conclusion

Indonesia and South Korea are vastly different in their development. Indonesia, is the largest country in Southeast Asia with an independent and active foreign policy that wants to assert its leadership while maintaining relations with major powers. Comparatively, the ROK is struck between Japan and China and is perpetually saddled with a North Korean problem. So, it is not surprising that the Korean government is consciously promoting the ROK as a middle power that has the ability to play the role of a mediator. What is interesting is that Indonesia wants to be more assertive but has not publicly declared itself as a middle power, though it acts like one. Therefore growing assertiveness of middle powers in East Asia is an emerging process. Seoul and Jakarta have strong bilateral relations and are connected by their positions in ASEAN. As middle powers, both Seoul and Jakarta seek to further their interests in a multipolar East Asia. There is a lot of potential for the ROK and Indonesia to form a middle power

⁷⁵ Aaron Connelly, 'Indonesia must Lead for sake of its Interests in South China Sea,' *Myanmar Times*, 6 April 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.mmmtimes.com/opinion/25608-indonesia-must-lead-for-sake-of-its-interests-in-south-china-sea.html>.

⁷⁶ Ann Song, 'Where does South Korea Stand on the South China Sea Dispute?', *International Policy Digest*, 2 July 2014. Retrieved from <http://intpolicydigest.org/2014/07/02/south-korea-stand-south-china-sea-dispute/>.

⁷⁷ Van Jackson, 'The South China Sea Needs South Korea,' *The Diplomat*, 24 June 2015. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-south-china-sea-needs-south-korea/>.

coalition to tackle various regional issues. In so doing, both countries who are stakeholders in the region will be able to contribute to peace and stability in East Asia.

More importantly, Indonesia is a gateway to ASEAN for the ROK's economic and political interests. Moon's 'New Southern Policy' and Indonesia's 'Free and Active' policy complement each other in middle power activism. For the ROK, Indonesia is valuable in dealing with the DPRK. Indonesia has been crucial in bringing the DPRK into the ARF. Moreover, Indonesia has been actively engaging North Korea in various capacity. Hence, the importance of Indonesia to ROK's DPRK policy cannot be denied. At the same time, middle power coalitions like Indonesia and South Korea have the capacity to change the agenda in Southeast Asia. The South China Sea dispute offers an excellent opportunity for these middle powers to shape regional developments. Their proclivity for seeking multilateral solutions, mostly through ASEAN led mechanisms has the capacity to bring about a strategic compromise to the dispute. In sum, the ROK- Indonesian middle power cooperation is feasible as both share similar wants and interests in bringing about peace to the East Asian region.

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