

## Middle Power Diplomacy and North Korea Revisited

Jeffrey Robertson\*

The categorization of South Korea as a middle power has become normalized. A flood of academic papers, think-tank reports, workshops and seminars support the claim. Yet, despite widespread agreement that South Korea is a middle power, and a plethora of research supporting the claim, South Korea has *never* demonstrated characteristic middle power diplomatic behavior in addressing its most significant challenge - North Korea. This paper addresses the question of middle power diplomacy and North Korea. It first distinguishes the academic, political, and policy rationale in the use of the middle power concept before tracing its use in the context of North Korea. From middle power literature, the study extracts factors necessary for middle powers to secure diplomatic objectives before presenting an exemplary middle power diplomatic initiative. To conclude, the study explores potential reasons why South Korea has not demonstrated characteristic middle power diplomatic behavior in addressing North Korea.

**Keywords:** Middle power, South Korea, North Korea, diplomacy, diplomatic practice

---

\* Dr. Robertson is an Associate Professor of Diplomatic Studies at Yonsei University, and a Visiting Fellow at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne. He can be reached at [jsrobertson@junotane.com](mailto:jsrobertson@junotane.com).

## 1. Middle power diplomacy and North Korea revisited

The first article to directly address the role of middle powers and North Korea in the *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* (IJKUS) appeared some fifteen years ago.<sup>1</sup>

Since that time, the term has appeared as a policy label with little or no explanation,<sup>2</sup> in the context of bilateral relationships,<sup>3</sup> and in a passing reference to South Korea's status.<sup>4</sup>

No articles have directly addressed the role of middle powers and North Korea. Indeed, in a journal that focuses on South Korea and the Korean Peninsula, the term "middle east" appears just as often as the term "middle power." This is surprising given the volume of academic literature focusing on South Korea as a middle power.

Over the past fifteen years, the categorization of South Korea as a middle power became normalized. A flood of academic papers, think-tank reports, workshops and seminars support the claim. A Google Scholar search provides a crude volumetric assessment of online scholarly research (including think-tank and academic website) references. In the

- 
- 1 Jeffrey Robertson, "South Korea as a Middle Power: Capacity, Behavior and Now Opportunity," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16, no. 1 (2006): 151–75
  - 2 Ihn-hwi Park, "Northeast Asia and the Trust-Building Process: Neighboring States' Policy Coordination," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 1–27.
  - 3 Jin Park, "Korea and Australia in the New Asian Century," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 22, no. 1 (2013): 139–58; Jittendra Uttam, "Making of the 'Korean Question': A Reassessment of India's Position at the United Nations," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020): 107–42.
  - 4 Peter Lewis, "US Foreign Policy toward the Korean Peninsula: An Anti-Unification Policy or Just Too Many Uncertainties to Account For?," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 79–108; Antoine Bondaz, "Facing and Loosening the Grip of Sino-US Rivalry: Similarities in Approaches and Potential for Cooperation between Europe and South Korea," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 30, no. 1 (2021): 57–96.

period 2007 to 2022, the terms 'South Korea' and 'middle power' return 7,700 hits, compared to 'middle power' and Mexico (3,380), Turkey (3,390), and Indonesia (5,270); and significantly, just ahead of Canada (7,320) and just behind Australia (7,820).<sup>5</sup> The country's economic green growth initiatives; hosting of major conferences; and role in global governance provided evidence for high-level scholars, leading academic and policy institutes, politicians and governments to fortify the claim. To imagine South Korea to be anything but a middle power today attracts disbelief, ridicule, and even outright scorn. Yet, despite widespread agreement that South Korea is a middle power and the plethora of research supporting the claim, South Korea has *never* consistently demonstrated characteristic middle power diplomatic behavior in addressing its most significant diplomatic challenge - North Korea.

This paper again addresses the question of middle power diplomacy and North Korea. The article addresses three questions: (1) How have middle powers been involved in South Korea's North Korea policy? (2) What would middle power diplomacy on North Korea look like? And (3) why has South Korea failed to demonstrate middle power diplomacy on North Korea? To address each question, the paper draws on the literature of middle power diplomacy. It does so in a practical, policy-oriented approach in the diplomat-scholar tradition. The paper then concludes with the implications for the scholarly field, an agenda for future research, and potential policy questions arising from the findings.

## **2. How have middle powers been involved in South Korea's North Korea policy?**

This section traces the emergence of the modern middle power concept. It distinguishes the academic, political, and practitioner rationale

---

5 Google, Google Scholar Advanced Search for 'Middle Power' and Australia; Canada; Indonesia; Korea Mexico; and Turkey; between 2007-2022, Google Scholar Advanced Search, April 18, 2022, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>.

for using the concept while at the same time tracing where the middle power concept intersects with North Korea. The section thus presents a brief review of middle power literature and positions the paper within the broader field.

Today, there is no agreement on what constitutes a middle power. For many junior scholars, the term is already viewed as a contested term, much like "power," "narrative," or "democracy" - any attempt to define it will attract senior scholar correction, rejection and/or derision. As noted in one paper focusing on the definition itself: "Middle-power definitions suffer from clearly identifiable weaknesses and thus have never been fully accepted in the conceptual scheme of political science and international relations".<sup>6</sup> Middle power definitions are contested between academic schools of thought, between politicians for the control of foreign policy narratives, and between states for the demonstration of status and influence.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, there remains substantial confusion as to what scholars, politicians and practitioners mean when they use the term.

The modern term "middle power" emerged in the mid-1940s during a period of intense interaction between scholars, politicians and practitioners as the Second World War drew to a close.<sup>8</sup> It first came to public attention as Canadian and Australian politicians and practitioners used the term to distinguish their states from the broader swathe of lesser states beneath them during negotiations towards the formation of the United Nations. The term entered media usage and soon afterward attracted broader academic attention.<sup>9</sup>

---

6 Jeffrey Robertson, "Middle-Power Definitions: Confusion Reigns Supreme," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (March 2017): 8.

7 Robertson, 9–12.

8 See Lionel Gelber, "A Greater Canada among Nations," *Behind the Headlines* 4, no. 2 (1944): 10; Lionel Gelber, "Canada's New Stature," *Foreign Affairs* 24, no. 2 (January 1946): 277–89.

9 Wireless, "Australia's Role: 'Middle Power' in World Scheme," *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 7, 1945; Wireless, "Australia to Seek Mid-Council Role," *New York Times*, April 3, 1945; Lilian Hornstein, "Some Words of War and Peace from 1945," *American Speech* 21, no. 1 (February 1946): 73–75.

Reflecting the genealogy of its discourse, the middle power term is contested not only in its semiotic sense but also in its usage. Reflecting this, the middle power term is as much about *who* is defining as *what* is being defined. It is thus important then to turn our attention to who is defining the term. Academics, politicians, and practitioners each have their own rationale for the use or non-use of the middle power concept—and this sets in place the utility of the concept in their respective domains.

### **3. The academic middle power**

The rationale for academic use or non-use of the middle power concept is social categorization and explanation. Academics categorize states with the aim of simplifying perception and cognition and imposing structure on an otherwise chaotic heterogeneity.<sup>10</sup>

Academics thus routinely seek to define the term within the context of disciplinary conventions.<sup>11</sup>

There are three broad overlapping approaches. The first approach derives from the early inter-war functionalist school. It posits that middle powers are a distinct category of states, which, based on their roles in the war, hold distinct functional roles for the maintenance of peace and security and the maintenance of international order. The second approach derives from the post-war realist school. It posits that middle powers are a distinct category of states, which, based on their military, economic and political capacity, are situated between major powers and lesser powers in a hierarchical order of states. The third approach derives from post-Cold War liberalist/constructivist schools. It posits that middle powers are a distinct category of states, which, based on their capacity constraints demonstrate characteristic diplomatic behavior that sets them apart from major powers and lesser powers. These characteristic diplomatic

---

10 J. Krueger, "Social Categorization, Psychology of," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (NY: Elsevier, 2001), 14219–23.

11 Robertson, "Middle-Power Definitions: Confusion Reigns Supreme," 9–10.

behaviors include activist diplomacy, niche diplomacy, coalition building, and the demonstration of 'good international citizenship.' In addition to these three broad overlapping categories, there are also multiple attempts to either refine and improve the three categories; combine them into a developmental path; or offer completely novel interpretations of the definition. Academic definitions are understandably contested between schools of thought and between individual academics themselves.

Academics have rarely sought to explicitly explore the nexus between the middle power concept and North Korea. The vast majority of studies focus on South Korea's status as a middle power with only passing reference to North Korea,<sup>12</sup> South Korea's status as a middle power in the context of its bilateral relationships, again with passing reference to North Korea,<sup>13</sup> or with a focus on North Korea with only a passing reference to South Korea's status as a middle power.<sup>14</sup>

---

12 Andrew O'Neil, "South Korea As a Middle Power: Global Ambitions and Looming Challenges," in *Middle-Power Korea: Contributions to the Global Agenda* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2015), 75–89; Sook-Jong Lee, "South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy," EAI Asia Security Initiative Working Paper (Seoul: East Asia Institute, September 2012); Young-jong Choi, "South Korea's Regional Strategy and Middle Power Activism," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2009): 47–67.

13 Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions: The Cases of Indonesia and South Korea," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72, no. 4 (July 2018): 343–63; Peter K. Lee, "Middle Power Strategic Choices and Horizontal Security Cooperation: The 2009 Australia-South Korea Security Cooperation Agreement," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 5 (September 2019): 449–65; William Tow and Ajin Choi, "Facing the Crucible: Australia, the ROK, and Cooperation in Asia," *Korea Observer* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–19.

14 Dong-min Shin, "The Concept of Middle Power and the Case of the ROK: A Review," in *Korea 2012: Politics, Economy and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 131–51; Sung-mi Kim, "South Korea's Middle-Power Diplomacy: Changes and Challenges," Research Paper, Asia Program Research Paper (London: Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, June 2016); Choi, "South Korea's Regional Strategy and Middle Power Activism"; Euikon Kim, "Korea's Middle-Power Diplomacy in the 21st Century," *Pacific Focus* 30, no. 1 (April 2015): 1–9.

There are only a small number of studies that focus on South Korea's middle power status with more detailed reference to North Korea issues. Kim uses South Korea's middle power status to explain South Korea's reaction to North Korea's missile development.<sup>15</sup> Easley and Park provide an assessment of South Korea's interpretation of its middle power status in the context of unification,<sup>16</sup> and Watson uses South Korea's middle power status in its approach to North Korea to explore a shift in contemporary understanding of what constitutes a middle power.<sup>17</sup> When academics look at the nexus between the middle power concept and North Korea, they do so (as required by most academic journals) in the context of making a contribution to scholarly learning.

#### **4. The political middle power**

The rationale for political use or non-use of the middle power concept is to control discourse regarding the status of the state to international and/or domestic stakeholders. It thus plays a role in state identity formation and development. Australian and Canadian politicians identified their states as middle powers to international stakeholders in order to distinguish them from lesser powers and to claim a larger role in postwar global governance.<sup>18</sup>

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Australian and Canadian politicians again identified their states as middle powers to international stakeholders to highlight what they claimed were less "self-interested" ambitions in the

---

15 Tae-hyung Kim, "North Korea's Missile Development and Its Impact on South Korea's Missile Development and the ROK-U.S. Alliance," *Korea Observer* 39, no. 4 (2008): 571–602.

16 Leif-Eric Easley and Kyuri Park, "South Korea's Mismatched Diplomacy in Asia: Middle Power Identity, Interests, and Foreign Policy," *International Politics* 55, no. 2 (March 2018): 242–63.

17 Iain Watson, "South Korea's Changing Middle Power Identities as Response to North Korea," *The Pacific Review* 33, no. 1 (January 2020): 1–31.

18 Adam Chapnick, *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 139–48.

pursuit of national diplomatic objectives. In the early 2000s, the same two states then rejected the identification of their states as middle powers to both claim a more significant role in global governance and to communicate their distinct achievements to domestic stakeholders.<sup>19</sup> In the same way, South Korea has identified as a middle power to communicate to international and/or domestic stakeholders that it deserves a level of political influence commensurate to its economic ranking.<sup>20</sup>

Politicians also use or reduce the use of the middle power concept to communicate to domestic audiences to influence foreign policy discourse and/or demonstrate differentiation from previous administrations.<sup>21</sup> In the same way, South Korean politicians have utilized the middle power term (Park Geun-hye) and shunned the term (Moon Jae-in) in domestic discourse.

Politicians have in the past seen the nexus between the middle power concept and North Korea as useful to communicate the position of the state to international and/or domestic stakeholders. "The Korea question" was an early challenge in postwar global governance, and middle powers sought to demonstrate their capacity to address issues both at the United Nations and as military observers on the ground with the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNCTOK) and later, the United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK). With the Korean War (1950-53), middle powers again sought to demonstrate the capacity to play a role commensurate to their claimed status. Postwar diplomatic efforts at the 1954 Geneva Conference again provided middle powers the ability to demonstrate the capacity to play a role commensurate to their claimed status. However, with the Cold War and South Korea's industrial and political development, middle power participation in issues on the Korean Peninsula decreased. "The Korea question" came to be seen as the US and

---

19 Robertson, "Middle-Power Definitions: Confusion Reigns Supreme," 8.

20 Kadir Ayhan, "Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy as a Nation Branding Project," *Korea Observer* 50, no. 1 (2019): 16-20.

21 John Ravenhill, "Cycles of Middle Power Activism: Constraint and Choice in Australian and Canadian Foreign Policies," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 3 (November 1998): 320-24.



later increasingly South Korean responsibility. This continued despite Australian, Canadian, New Zealand (1995), Argentinian, Chilean, and Indonesian (1996) participation in the Korea Energy Development Organization (KEDO), established under the 1994 Agreed Framework. However, the demonstration of political support for South Korea's initiatives and the often more vocal support for US initiatives came to be viewed within the framework of bilateral relations with the US and South Korea rather than as a demonstration of the capacity to play an independent and needed role in global governance for both South Korea and third party countries. Reflecting this, over the last twenty years, there has been no attempt to link policy action on North Korea to a state's claim to hold a middle power status.

## **5. The diplomatic middle power**

The rationale for practitioner use or non-use of the middle power concept is influence and/or persuasion. Diplomatic practitioners use the term to engender similarity, empathy, and shared purpose. It provides the means to liaise and work with partner states and thus acts as either a crutch to build new relationships or build and strengthen relationships. The 2013 creation of the informal middle power grouping of Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA) serves as an example. It allowed South Korea to build relationships with more distant bilateral partners through consistent diplomatic, government-to-government, parliamentary, track-1.5 and track-2 interaction. This, in turn, serves as a basis for future persuasion/influence to secure support coalition building, acts as a space for the demonstration of niche capacities, and the demonstration of goodwill or good international citizenship. Ultimately, it strengthens the capacity to secure diplomatic objectives.

South Korea's diplomats have only, on very rare occasions, sought to use the middle power concept as a means to influence and/or persuade partners to participate in issues related to North Korea. With Kim Dae-jung's Berlin Declaration in the late 1990s, South Korea sought to encourage

European states to assist in bringing North Korea into the international society by establishing diplomatic relations.<sup>22</sup>

In continuing this effort, the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008) highlighted its role as a middle power in efforts to persuade other middle power states to establish diplomatic links with North Korea. The Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-2013) similarly highlighted its role as a middle power in efforts to persuade other middle power states to condemn North Korea's actions in the bombing of Yeonpyeong-do and the sinking of the South Korean navy corvette *Cheonan*, including securing the participation of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Sweden in the South Korean-led investigation. The Park Geun-hye administration (2013-2017) highlighted its role as a middle power in establishing MIKTA, which released joint statements on North Korean nuclear tests (2016 and 2017). Finally, the Moon-Jae-in administration largely ignored its middle power credentials, except for securing a MIKTA joint statement in support of inter-Korean summits (2018).

The vagaries of the middle power concept make it tempting to label a broader array of initiatives as middle power diplomacy. It could be argued that initiatives, such as the Kim administration's establishment and facilitation of the Four-Party Talks involving South Korea, the United States, North Korea and China; and later the Roh administration's securing of third-country support of the enlarged Six-Party Talks, are middle power diplomacy. Equally, it could be claimed that South Korea's facilitation of summit meetings between the United States and North Korea in Vietnam and Singapore was middle power diplomacy. However, notably, these and all of the above examples were structured more in the context of traditional bilateral relations rather than as a middle power diplomatic initiative. Indeed, as detailed below, it is pushing the limits of credibility to label them as middle power diplomacy.

---

22 Aidan Foster-Carter, "North Korea and the World: New Millennium, New North Korea?," *Comparative Connections* 2, no. 4 (January 2001): 115-16.

The use of the middle power concept has distinct academic, political, and diplomatic rationales. Understandably, the academic, political, and diplomatic rationale for the use or non-use of the middle power concept do not always coincide, resulting in considerable confusion. It is to this fact that we can apportion much of the blame for the long-term and ongoing confusion regarding the middle power concept.

The last case brings the current section of the article to a close. Academics have rarely sought to demonstrate a nexus between the middle power concept and North Korea. Politicians have decreasingly seen the nexus between the middle power concept and North Korea as useful to communicate the position of state to international and/or domestic stakeholders. Finally, despite its position as a middle power, South Korea's diplomats have only very rarely sought to influence or persuade other states to play a role in Korean Peninsula issues – and never in the context of a structured diplomatic initiative.

Indeed, as South Korea has developed further as a middle power, it has further neglected the diplomatic influence and/or persuasion that could accrue from its status as a middle power. This leads to the next section—how would or rather how *should* a middle power influence or persuade other states to play a role in its efforts to address issues relating to North Korea?

## **6. What would middle power diplomacy on North Korea look like?**

This section draws upon middle power literature to create a guide for policymakers in the context of the Korean Peninsula. It first presents the factors necessary for middle powers to secure international objectives and then presents a middle power diplomatic initiative in the context of the Korean peninsula.

The section is based on two broad assumptions. First, it assumes that by the nature of their status in an international hierarchy, middle powers must overcome major power opposition to secure their objectives in the international environment. Thus, regardless of its specific aim (conflict

resolution, arms reduction, disarmament, or political integration), the ultimate aim of a middle power is to influence and persuade partner states in order to build momentum to overcome major power opposition. Second, it assumes that middle powers have a 'Goldilocks' level of policy capacity—more policy resources than lesser powers but significantly less than major powers. In recognition that all diplomacy, including multilateral diplomacy, is ultimately pursued bilaterally, middle power states must sustain an adequate capacity to secure the support of bilateral partners. It is therefore incumbent upon them to utilize innovative, activist diplomatic methods to secure immediate support, build momentum, and ultimately overcome major power resistance. In the context of South Korea, this means the use of innovative diplomatic methods to overcome Chinese, Russian, Japanese and US opposition to initiatives.

There are multiple examples of successful middle power diplomatic initiatives. Classic examples include the APEC, the Cairns Group, the Canberra Group, the Ottawa Treaty, the campaign to end nuclear testing in the Pacific, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, and the Cambodian Peace Settlement.<sup>23</sup> These examples of middle power diplomacy share a number of factors in common:

- **Specialization.** Middle powers build diplomatic a reputation through dedicated and consistent focus on specific areas of international affairs.<sup>24</sup> This gives a middle power the capacity to match a major power's capacity in a specific field. It engenders credibility, such that lesser powers and other middle powers view the state as capable of acting on their behalf vis-à-vis a major power.
- **Creativity.** Middle powers develop innovative approaches to address intractable issues both within and external to the diplomatic

---

23 For further reading, see Gareth J. Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s* vol. 2<sup>nd</sup> (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1995); Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley, *Making Australian Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

24 See Andrew F. Cooper (ed.), *Niche Diplomacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1997).

system.<sup>25</sup> Middle powers have smaller, often less polarized and less entrenched, foreign ministries and epistemic communities. This allows greater openness to innovation and change, which in turn gives a middle power the capacity to provide alternatives to otherwise intractable diplomatic issues.

- Internationalization. Middle powers purposefully remove issues from the bilateral agenda with major powers and place them on the regional or international agenda in order to remove the imbalance in negotiating leverage. Reflecting this, middle powers have an inherent interest in strengthening both formal and informal international norms and institutions.
- Partnering. Middle powers develop partnerships with state, intergovernmental, and non-state actors in order to increase leverage vis-à-vis major powers. This includes working with lesser powers on an issue-specific basis; non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral bodies or inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), and trans-national corporations (TNCs) to broaden the negotiation environment; other middle powers to increase negotiation resources; and major powers to build negotiation momentum.<sup>26</sup> Partnering can be thought of as the keystone in the middle power diplomatic edifice.
- Public diplomacy. Middle powers utilize public diplomacy to build support for measures, relying on both international public opinion and partner/target state public opinion to increase pressure for resolution. Reflecting this, middle powers have an inherent interest in strengthening their position as credible, reliable and independent.

---

25 Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgott, and Nossal Kim Richard, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 71.

26 See Matthew Bolton and Thomas Nash, "The Role of Middle Power-NGO Coalitions in Global Policy: The Case of the Cluster Munitions Ban: Middle Power-NGO Coalitions," *Global Policy* 1, no. 2 (May 2010): 172–84.

Understandably, the success of middle power diplomacy also relies on conditions that determine the realization of any diplomatic initiative, including domestic political support and leadership, an amenable international environment, and timing that balances the need for focused effort and sustained momentum. Reflecting these factors, middle power diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula would look very different from past initiatives.

Initiatives pursued by South Korea to date could actually be seen as the opposite of middle power diplomacy. They are routinely pursued in response to an emerging or current crisis. Crisis diplomacy is not conducive to strategic diplomacy.<sup>27</sup> As a result, they emphasize traditional high-level summitry rather than creativity and innovation in diplomatic approaches; direct bilateral mediation rather than internationalization; close cooperation with a single major power rather than partnering with middle powers to strengthen negotiating leverage before approaching major powers; and no use of international public opinion and partner/target state public opinion. The end results are routinely devoid of characteristic middle power ideals, such as creativity or internationalization.

The below presents an exemplary middle power diplomatic initiative – an International Commission on Korean Peninsula Division. International commissions are ad hoc transnational investigative mechanisms, which can be constituted as either a temporary intergovernmental organization (IGO) or a non-governmental organization (NGO). Their significance lies in their ability to transform the assumptions and staid thinking that plague long-standing problems in international relations – such as the question of Korean peninsula peace and security.

Classic examples of international commissions include the Brandt (1980), Palme (1982), Brundtland (1984), Global Governance (1992), Canberra (1995), and Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) commissions,

---

27 Jeffrey Robertson, "The Limits of Crisis Diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula," *The Strategist* (blog), November 23, 2018, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-limits-of-crisis-diplomacy-on-the-korean-peninsula>.

which overcame and transformed outdated thinking on international development, disarmament, environmental protection, global governance, nuclear non-proliferation and humanitarian intervention.<sup>28</sup> These international commission reports are still guiding documents for academics and policymakers in the search for viable solutions to complex problems.

Their success lies in allowing and even encouraging creativity within the confines of international relations practice. They have specific terms of reference which allow the receipt of submissions, interviewing of witnesses, engagement with experts (including commissioned research, modeling, analysis and advice), and, in certain cases, holding of public forums.

This includes engaging experts in multilateral processes; policy-making; socio-economic, political, military and strategic affairs; legal jurisprudence; and subject specialists relevant to the topic at hand. Facilitators and sponsors can also decide to seek ideas outside the domain of international relations "expertise" and engage civil society actors who have on-the-ground, practical knowledge of the subject. International commissions thus encourage creativity in addressing problems where political leadership and more traditional diplomatic processes have failed.

At the same time, international commissions adhere to the standards of international diplomacy. They are routinely led by influential and persuasive senior, often retired, politicians or leaders, and include a range of similarly respected commissioners, including senior government, military, academic and NGO representatives. They are well-resourced, with the support of a single or several middle power foreign ministries, multilateral agencies, and/or philanthropic foundations.

---

28 See Edward C. Luck, "Blue Ribbon Power: Independent Commissions and UN Reform," *International Studies Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (April 2000): 89–104; Ramesh Chandra Thakur, Andrew Fenton Cooper, and John English (eds.), *International Commissions and the Power of Ideas* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2005); Daisuke Madokoro, "International Commissions as Norm Entrepreneurs: Creating the Normative Idea of the Responsibility to Protect," *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2019): 100–119.

An International Commission on Korean Peninsula Division would satisfy the criteria for a middle power diplomatic initiative. South Korea evidently holds specialization in the field. While its credibility as an independent actor would be questioned, partnering with a state such as Turkey or Indonesia would add credibility to the endeavor. The approach would be distinct from previous efforts and distinctly creative. In the process of partnering with other middle powers such as Australia, Canada, or Sweden, and thereby internationalizing the problem, South Korea would be stepping away from more staid, traditional approaches marked by bilateral interaction. An international commission would have further specific advantages in the context of the Korean peninsula.

First, an international commission would avoid the descent into crisis diplomacy, which often occurs in interactions with North Korea. Crisis diplomacy forces parties to accept short-term compromises to avoid a descent into expanded, unmanageable conflict. Crisis diplomacy provides tools to manage and avoid conflict (or, for the aggressor, achieve limited gains) but doesn't provide tools to transform the root causes of tension.

In stepping outside the confines of crisis diplomacy, an international commission would establish a stable platform for the exploration of underlying problems.

Second, international commissions allow more space for policy-agile middle powers to mediate and facilitate change. Major powers are inherently constrained by domestic politics and international competition. Encouraging states such as South Korea, Denmark, Sweden, Australia and/or other middle powers to play a leading role in the establishment and coordination of an international commission would allow the US to "lead at a distance" through guided multilateralism – the facilitation and support of mutual interests through a commitment to international norms, the rule of law and global governance. An international commission would build broader global support from the international community.

Of course, North Korea's historical recalcitrance and unpredictability mean its participation could not be assured. An international commission



would expose underlying issues, including perceptions of insecurity, lack of trust, adherence to international norms and commitment to resolution. But there would also be a strong rationale for North Korea to participate. Participation would give North Korea a global audience to highlight its position on sanctions, perceived threats and other areas of concern. North Korea may see an international commission as an opportunity to secure short-term gain, in much the same way it has viewed other diplomatic processes since the 1990s. In this case, early flamboyant participation followed by an equally flamboyant staged walkout would not be surprising.

Participation would also hold interest for North Korea's leadership and elites. In a comprehensive investigation, an international commission could look at issues such as prosecutions and amnesties, unification governance structures, property rights, marketization, and time frames – areas of personal and familial interest to elite stakeholders in the maintenance of division and the progress towards unification. In this case, North Korea would seek to maintain at least an observer status within the commission.

Finally, not participating would leave North Korea more alienated, more vulnerable to punitive measures, and potentially at risk of abandonment by remaining supporters. The comprehensive and authoritative nature of a commission report would build consensus and be a direct influence on global policy on Korean peninsula affairs for the next five to ten years – perhaps longer, if scheduled reviews are recommended. It would ultimately be against North Korea's interest to remain outside the process.

An International Commission on the Korean Peninsula division has been explored in detail in previous policy studies.<sup>29</sup> While the specific format holds distinct advantages, there are multiple other similar middle power initiatives, such as the establishment of a regional disaster preparedness network; the establishment of an advisory council on

---

29 Jeffrey Robertson, "While the Diplomatic Fruit Is Ripe: An International Commission on the Korean Peninsula," *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (January 2020): 131–40.

Korean Peninsula affairs composed of specialists in diplomatic practice, the rule of law, de-escalation, non-traditional security, negotiation, and arms control; or the reconvening of the 1954 Geneva Conference on its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. Such ideas are built around specialization, creativity, internationalization, partnering, and public diplomacy, which strengthen middle power positions rather than expose them to the whims and vested interests of major powers. Yet, to date, South Korea has failed to use middle power diplomacy on North Korea issues.

## **7. Why has South Korea failed to demonstrate middle power diplomacy on North Korea?**

This section looks at possible explanations as to why South Korea has so far failed to demonstrate middle power diplomacy on North Korea. It first presents an account of the failure to utilize middle power diplomacy in the aftermath of the 2017-18 crisis and then looks at four possible explanations as to why South Korea failed to demonstrate middle power diplomacy. The section concludes with the preferred explanation for South Korea's failure to demonstrate middle power diplomacy on North Korea.

In 2017–18, South Korea understandably pursued crisis diplomacy as the threat of immediate conflict increased with the inflammatory US and North Korean rhetoric. In diplomacy, crises are initiated to attract attention, register and underscore the urgency of the issue, and place pressure on efforts to resolve it.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, the situation required high-level decision-making, close coordination between partners and allies, clear initial signaling, limited and achievable goals, and a willingness to compromise. South Korea's crisis diplomacy was highly successful and managed to rein in the US and North Korean excesses and reduce the risk of miscalculation and conflict.<sup>31</sup>

---

30 Costas M. Constantinou, "In Pursuit of Crisis Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 10, no. 1 (January 27, 2015): 32.

Assuming South Korea were a middle power, crisis diplomacy would have immediately been followed by characteristic middle power diplomacy. As soon as security tensions reduced, a middle power initiative would have been launched.

South Korea could have actively increased its negotiating leverage by partnering with other middle powers and pursued innovative, creative diplomatic instruments to secure South Korean objectives. It could have also utilized tools that provide middle powers with comparative advantage and promoted its efforts as 'the right thing to do' for a responsible member of the international community. It did not.

Without middle power diplomacy, South Korea effectively allowed its foreign policy to be steered by the vagaries of North Korea and the United States — one apparently incompetent and unpredictable, the other impenetrable and incorrigible (in fact, these criticisms were at the time interchangeable).<sup>32</sup> South Korea secured no negotiating leverage vis-a-vis the two actors and no capacity to constrain their actions. It allowed its agency to be subsumed. Western media coverage of the Singapore and Hanoi summits highlighted this fact.<sup>33</sup> For most viewers, the entire issue concerned the United States, North Korea, and host Vietnam. South Korea hardly rated a mention.

South Korea lost control over the structure of future agreements, institutions, or instruments to be used. All of its diplomatic endeavors based on high-level summitry left it little room for flexibility. By losing control of the process, it allowed any success to be threatened by successive changes in government. It allowed North Korea to secure its medium-term

---

31 Robertson, "The Limits of Crisis Diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula."

32 Stephen Costello, "Who Controls US Policy on the Korean Peninsula?," *East Asia Forum* (blog), October 5, 2018, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/10/05/who-controls-us-policy-on-the-korean-peninsula>.

33 Shawn Lim, "Trump-Kim Summit 2018: A Look at the Media Coverage around the Historic Event," *The Drum* (blog), June 12, 2018, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2018/06/12/trump-kim-summit-2018-look-the-media-coverage-around-the-historic-event>.

aims to reduce tacit constraints on its economic activity without any impact on its long-term aim to maintain a credible deterrent to external intervention. It allowed North Korea to blame failures on changed policies in partner states and set the entire game to be replayed at a later date.

There are several reasons that could explain why South Korea was unable to use middle power diplomacy to address issues relating to North Korea in the aftermath of the 2017–18 crisis. The same reasons can explain South Korea's historical failure to demonstrate middle power diplomacy on North Korea.

The first explanation suggests that middle power diplomacy does not work on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean Peninsula is a core national security interest to major powers. As a strategic pivot, it acts as a landing bridge for maritime states to the continent and as a launching platform for continental states to the maritime region. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and the Korean War (1950-1953) were struggles to secure control over the Korean Peninsula between the same major powers that today comprise core parties to diplomatic engagement on Korean Peninsula issues: China, Japan, Russia and the United States. Understandably, these major powers do not permit lesser states to dictate their positions on core national security issues.

One of the primary determinants of the success or failure of a middle power diplomatic initiative is securing the support or at least benign acquiescence of major powers. Middle power diplomatic initiatives that impinge on the core national interests of major powers face a near-impossible task. From this perspective, middle power diplomacy initiatives on Korean Peninsula security issues simply do not work.

This also explains the relative success of South Korea's pursuit of middle power diplomacy in other areas. South Korea has arguably achieved a degree of success with initiatives such as the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), hosting of the UN Green Climate Fund, and the Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, Australia (MIKTA) dialogue. Following this line of argument, South Korea's "middle power diplomacy" should be

distinguished from its "middle power *unification* diplomacy" – the latter being distinct and separate in the context of policy creation, development, implementation and administration.

The second explanation suggests that South Korea is, in fact, *not* a middle power – at least in the traditional sense. There remain nagging questions on the categorization of South Korea as a middle power, with a number of scholars pointing to characteristics that continue to distinguish it from other middle powers.<sup>34</sup> It is fundamentally different from other middle powers. South Korea continues to balance between China and the United States, whereas Australia, Canada, Sweden and other middle powers have sought to strengthen ties with the latter as geostrategic uncertainty increases. South Korea continued to deprioritize human rights (Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet), the rule of law (South China Sea, Taiwan Strait), and global governance (UN reform and strengthening) while other middle powers have increased their criticisms and increasingly drawn attention to violations in international norms.

The third explanation suggests that South Korea is a different type of middle power. Academic concepts travel across linguistic divides in the first instance as a singular definition, devoid of context. Over time, they are contextualized and integrated into the recipient language and culture.<sup>35</sup> Thus, source-language redefinitions may also enter the recipient language, leading to concepts becoming divided or fragmented.<sup>36</sup> Korean-language

---

<sup>34</sup> Kadir Ayhan, "Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy as a Nation Branding Project," *Korea Observer* 50, no. 1 (2019); Easley and Park, "South Korea's Mismatched Diplomacy in Asia"; Jeffrey Robertson, "Is South Korea Really a Middle Power?," *East Asia Forum* (blog), May 2, 2018, accessed June 8, 2022, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/05/02/is-south-korea-really-a-middle-power>; Brendan Howe and Min Joung Park, "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy toward ASEAN," *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 15, no. 2 (July 2019): 117–42.

<sup>35</sup> Einar Wigen, *State of Translation: Turkey in Interlingual Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 35.

<sup>36</sup> Einar Wigen, "Two-Level Language Games: International Relations as Inter-Lingual Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 2 (June 2015): 428.

papers referencing middle powers during the 1990s were based on definitions quite similar to counterparts in Australia and Canada. During the presidency of Roh Moo-hyun (2003–08), a more literal translation of middle power as a state between two extremes was used. Under Lee Myung-bak (2008–13), it again matched definitions being used in Australia and Canada. Under Park Geun-hye, it was nuanced to "balancer" between China and the US, and under Moon Jae-in, it was understood as a "bridge nation" between China and the US. As expressed by Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha during a New Year's address, South Korea needed to put into practice the vision of being a "bridge nation" amongst the four major powers of Northeast Asia.<sup>37</sup>

The fourth explanation for why South Korea is unable to use middle power diplomacy to address issues relating to North Korea suggests that middle powers are actually no longer relevant. The changing international environment has ended the middle power moment – if it ever existed.<sup>38</sup>

Middle-power states are increasingly less inclined to promote policies that strengthen the public good of multilateral institutions, global governance and 'good international citizenship'. Instead, their policies aim to secure gain vis-a-vis rival states. Rather than trade liberalization, non-proliferation or humanitarian development, modern middle powers are more self-interested, marked by efforts towards trade sector dominance, one-upmanship in regional rivalries and exerting influence. This suggests that a state like South Korea is inherently not a status-quo state. Like other countries more recently labelled middle powers — including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia — South Korea has claims on the existing international system and is not wed to existing structures. Controversially, and contrary to most expectations, it may also not

---

37 So-youn Kim, "Kang Kyung-Wha Identifies 2020 as a Year for Inter-Korean Peace," *Hankyoreh*, January 3, 2020, accessed June 8, 2022, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/923116.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/923116.html).

38 Andrew Carr, "The Illusion of a Middle Power Moment," *East Asia Forum*, May 12, 2020, accessed June 8, 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/05/12/the-illusion-of-a-middle-power-moment>.

necessarily be wed to US dominance like Australia or Canada. South Korea may one day accept a more China-centered region, and has demonstrated a willingness to overlook and work around sensitive issues once thought fundamental to middle powers, such as the South China Sea (rule of law), Xinjiang and Hong Kong (human rights), Huawei, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Indo-Pacific terminology (alliance maintenance).

The above explanations inevitably bring a sense of doom to the hope that South Korea can act as a middle power on North Korea issues. A more positive, and indeed, the simplest explanation may be that the middle power concept has simply yet to permeate the conservative institutions of foreign policy influence in Seoul.

Foreign policy formulation in South Korea is strictly hierarchical. Ideas and initiatives start with presidential advisors and pass downwards to be implemented by the foreign ministry. Rarely are core initiatives formed within the ministry. This means that if the small coterie of presidential foreign policy advisors is cognizant of middle power diplomacy, then ideas will flow. If their interests lie in other areas, middle power diplomacy will be absent.

The organizational culture within the foreign ministry is also highly conservative, hierarchical, and risk-averse — new, creative and innovative ideas are less readily accepted. There is less willingness to open up and interact with non-traditional foreign policy actors. Realism remains the most dominant paradigm for understanding international relations, and major power competition remains the most popular subject. Rarely do schools of international studies include course content on middle powers or Australian or Canadian foreign policy.

While the term 'middle power' has risen dramatically and is used in numerous academic papers, a deeper understanding of what the concept means is yet to spread widely. The concept and understanding of how middle power diplomacy works are still relatively new in South Korea despite the popularity of the term. There is yet hope that South Korea can act as a middle power on North Korea issues.

## **8. Still awaiting South Korea's middle power moment on North Korea?**

For the casual external observer, it is difficult to understand why South Korea, a leading middle power, has not pursued middle power diplomacy to secure its objectives on the Korean Peninsula. In answering its three core questions, this paper highlights and explains this anomaly.

First, the paper demonstrates the limited involvement of middle powers in South Korea's North Korea policy. It demonstrates that academics, politicians, and practitioners have distinct rationales for the use or non-use of the middle power concept – and each neglects it in the context of North Korea. In the large body of literature on middle powers, there are but a handful that focuses on North Korea, and even less that focus on the practical, policy-focused implementation of middle power diplomacy to Korean peninsula issues. This understandably sets limits on policymaker and practitioner contemplation of middle power diplomacy in the context of North Korea.

Second, the paper demonstrates what middle power diplomacy on North Korea should look like. It highlights the role of specialization, creativity, internationalization, partnering, and public diplomacy in the context of an exemplary middle power diplomatic initiative– an International Commission on the Korean Peninsula. It further demonstrates how such an initiative would contribute to South Korea's negotiating leverage vis-à-vis major powers and allow it to steer discourse from the short to medium term.

Third, the paper demonstrates that there are multiple explanations as to why South Korea has failed to demonstrate middle power diplomacy on North Korea. As a core national security issue to major regional powers, middle power diplomacy may simply not work on the Korean Peninsula. South Korea may, in fact, not be a middle power, or at least be distinct from other middle powers – essentially meaning that much of the previous scholarship on middle powers is irrelevant to the case of North Korea. Or perhaps, middle power diplomacy itself is no longer relevant. It is a



phenomenon of a bygone age, irrelevant in the emerging geopolitical system. On a more positive note, the final explanation may be that South Korea's capacity as a middle power is still developing. As a deeper understanding of what the concept means filters through the epistemic community and bureaucratic structures, middle power diplomacy may pass from explicit to tacit knowledge and potentially become part of the standard toolkit of policymakers and practitioners.

The above, in turn, suggests areas for further research. The Google Scholar search which opened the paper demonstrated that there would soon be more research on South Korea as a middle power than any other state. This brings into focus the anomaly that South Korea has to date failed to actually use middle power diplomacy to address its most significant diplomatic challenge—North Korea. Future research should further explore the gap between academic and practitioner use and explore how the concept filters through the epistemic community and bureaucratic structures, and passes from explicit to tacit knowledge. This leads to the paper's singular policy recommendation—a call for funding to support the exploration of practical, policy-oriented middle power diplomatic initiatives on North Korea. We are still awaiting South Korea's middle power moment on North Korea.

## Bibliography

### Books

- Chapnick, Adam. *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005.
- Cooper, Andrew F. (ed.). *Niche Diplomacy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1997.
- Cooper, Andrew F., Richard A. Higgott, and Richard Nossal Kim. *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.
- Evans, Gareth J. and Bruce Grant. *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s*. Vol. 2nd. Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1995.
- Gyngell, Allan, and Michael Wesley. *Making Australian Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Thakur, Ramesh Chandra, Andrew Fenton Cooper, and John English (eds.). *International Commissions and the Power of Ideas*. New York: United Nations University Press, 2005.
- Wigen, Einar. *State of Translation: Turkey in Interlingual Relations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018.

### Book Chapters

- Krueger, J. "Social Categorization, Psychology of." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. NY: Elsevier, 2001.
- O'Neil, Andrew. "South Korea as a Middle Power: Global Ambitions and Looming Challenges." In *Middle-Power Korea: Contributions to the Global Agenda*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2015.
- Shin, Dong-min. "The Concept of Middle Power and the Case of the ROK: A Review." In *Korea 2012: Politics, Economy and Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

### Periodicals

- Ayhan, Kadir. "Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy as a Nation Branding Project." *Korea Observer* 50, no. 1 (2019): 1–24.

- Bolton, Matthew and Thomas Nash. "The Role of Middle Power-NGO Coalitions in Global Policy: The Case of the Cluster Munitions Ban: Middle Power-NGO Coalitions." *Global Policy* 1, no. 2 (May 2010): 172–84.
- Bondaz, Antoine. "Facing and Loosening the Grip of Sino-US Rivalry: Similarities in Approaches and Potential for Cooperation between Europe and South Korea." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 30, no. 1 (2021): 57–96.
- Choi, Young-jong. "South Korea's Regional Strategy and Middle Power Activism." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2009): 47–67.
- Constantinou, Costas M. "In Pursuit of Crisis Diplomacy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 10, no. 1 (January 27, 2015): 29–34.
- Easley, Leif-Eric and Kyuri Park. "South Korea's Mismatched Diplomacy in Asia: Middle Power Identity, Interests, and Foreign Policy." *International Politics* 55, no. 2 (March 2018): 242–63.
- Foster-Carter, Aidan. "North Korea and the World: New Millennium, New North Korea?." *Comparative Connections* 2, no. 4 (January 2001): 109–20.
- Gelber, Lionel. "A Greater Canada among Nations." *Behind the Headlines* 4, no. 2 (1944): 10.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Canada's New Stature." *Foreign Affairs* 24, no. 2 (January 1946): 277–89.
- Hornstein, Lilian. "Some Words of War and Peace from 1945." *American Speech* 21, no. 1 (February 1946): 73–75.
- Howe, Brendan and Min Joung Park. "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy toward ASEAN." *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 15, no. 2 (July 2019): 117–42.
- Karim, Moch Faisal. "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions: The Cases of Indonesia and South Korea." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72, no. 4 (July 2018): 343–63.
- Kim, Euikon. "Korea's Middle-Power Diplomacy in the 21st Century." *Pacific Focus* 30, no. 1 (April 2015): 1–9.
- Kim, Tae-hyung. "North Korea's Missile Development and Its Impact on South Korea's Missile Development and the ROK-U.S. Alliance." *Korea Observer* 39, no. 4 (2008): 571–602.
- Lee, Peter K. "Middle Power Strategic Choices and Horizontal Security Cooperation: The 2009 Australia-South Korea Security Cooperation Agreement." *Australian*

- Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 5 (September 2019): 449–65.
- Lewis, Peter. "US Foreign Policy toward the Korean Peninsula: An Anti-Unification Policy or Just Too Many Uncertainties to Account For?." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 79–108.
- Luck, Edward C. "Blue Ribbon Power: Independent Commissions and UN Reform." *International Studies Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (April 2000): 89–104.
- Madokoro, Daisuke. "International Commissions as Norm Entrepreneurs: Creating the Normative Idea of the Responsibility to Protect." *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2019): 100–119.
- Park, Ihn-hwi. "Northeast Asia and the Trust-Building Process: Neighboring States' Policy Coordination." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 1–27.
- Park, Jin. "Korea and Australia in the New Asian Century." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 22, no. 1 (2013): 139–58.
- Ravenhill, John. "Cycles of Middle Power Activism: Constraint and Choice in Australian and Canadian Foreign Policies." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 3 (November 1998): 309–27.
- Robertson, Jeffrey. "Middle-Power Definitions: Confusion Reigns Supreme." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (March 2017): 1–16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "South Korea as a Middle Power: Capacity, Behavior and New Opportunity." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16, no. 1 (2006): 151–75.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "While the Diplomatic Fruit Is Ripe: An International Commission on the Korean Peninsula." *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (January 2020): 131–40.
- Tow, William and Ajin Choi. "Facing the Crucible: Australia, the ROK, and Cooperation in Asia." *Korea Observer* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–19.
- Uttam, Jittendra. "Making of the 'Korean Question': A Reassessment of India's Position at the United Nations." *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020): 107–42.
- Watson, Iain. "South Korea's Changing Middle Power Identities as Response to North Korea." *The Pacific Review* 33, no. 1 (January 2020): 1–31.
- Wigen, Einar. "Two-Level Language Games: International Relations as Inter-Lingual Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 2 (June 2015): 427–50.

## Other Materials

- Carr, Andrew. "The Illusion of a Middle Power Moment." May 12, 2020.  
<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/05/12/the-illusion-of-a-middle-power-moment/>.
- Costello, Stephen. "Who Controls US Policy on the Korean Peninsula?." *East Asia Forum* (blog), October 5, 2018.  
<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/10/05/who-controls-us-policy-on-the-korean-peninsula/>.
- Google. Google Scholar Advanced Search for 'Middle Power' and Australia; Canada; Indonesia; Korea; Mexico; and Turkey; between 2007-2022. *Google Scholar Advanced Search*, April 18, 2022. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>.
- Kim, Sung-mi. *South Korea's Middle-Power Diplomacy: Changes and Challenges*. London: Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, June 2016.
- Kim, So-youn. "Kang Kyung-Wha Identifies 2020 as a Year for Inter-Korean Peace." *Hankyoreh*. January 3, 2020.  
[http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/923116.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/923116.html).
- Lee, Sook-Jong. *South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy*. Seoul: East Asia Institute, September 2012.
- Lim, Shawn. "Trump-Kim Summit 2018: A Look at the Media Coverage around the Historic Event." *The Drum* (blog), June 12, 2018. Accessed June 8, 2022.  
<https://www.thedrum.com/news/2018/06/12/trump-kim-summit-2018-look-the-media-coverage-around-the-historic-event>.
- Robertson, Jeffrey. "Is South Korea Really a Middle Power?" *East Asia Forum* (blog), May 2, 2018.  
<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/05/02/is-south-korea-really-a-middle-power/>.
- 
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Limits of Crisis Diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula." *The Strategist* (blog), November 23, 2018.  
<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-limits-of-crisis-diplomacy-on-the-korean-peninsula/>.
- Wireless. "Australia to Seek Mid-Council Role." *New York Times*, April 3, 1945.
- 
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Australia's Role: 'Middle Power' in World Scheme." *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 7, 1945.

