

(JUNE 2022)

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY  
JOURNAL OF  
POLITICS,  
SOCIETY, AND  
ECONOMICS

**No 2**

**IMPOSSIBLE  
TRIANGULATION**

**Hatice Çelik** on *Understanding  
ROK-Middle East Relations*

**Brendan Howe** on *South  
Korean Niche Diplomacy*

**Ratih Indraswari** on *South  
Korea's ASEAN Policy*

**Ewa Motylińska** on  
*Environmental Cooperation  
on the Korean Peninsula*

**KOREA EUROPE REVIEW**

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Whither South Korean Niche Diplomacy in an Era of Competing Triangulation?

**Brendan M. Howe**

Graduate School of International Studies  
Ewha Womans University

**Keywords**

South Korea, middle power, niche diplomacy, foreign policy, East Asian triangle, peacebuilding, geopolynomic

**Article history**

Submitted: 18 Jan 2022

Accepted: 04 Apr 2022

Published: 20 June 2022

**Abstract**

*South Korea is a self-identified middle power impacted by three geo-polynomic triangulations. First, the geostrategic US-China-Japan triangle, wherein the smaller power finds itself surrounded by regional and global behemoths. Second, the South Korea-North Korea-Southeast Asia geoeconomic peace and development triangle, with Seoul at the apex. Third, the South Korea-Japan-ASEAN geopolitical triangle. Preoccupation with survival in a hostile operating environment has meant the first triangle has most impacted South Korea's foreign policymaking. The Moon Jae-in administration, with its New Northern Policy and New Southern Policy, partially shifted emphasis to the second triangle where, not only is there more bang for South Korea's niche diplomatic buck, but also a chance to spill over into the third triangle of potential non-traditional security cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo. With the incoming conservative Yoon Suk-yeol administration, these considerations demand even greater attention. This article weighs the competing triangulated demands to offer foreign policy prescription.*

**Introduction**

Despite its ambiguity, the concept of 'middle power' has been prominent in South Korea's<sup>1</sup> diplomatic narrative, used by successive governments as a framework for their foreign policy vision and strategy.<sup>2</sup> In seeking to present itself as a newly advanced country among the neighbouring strong powers in the region, South Korea needed to develop new concepts to articulate its foreign policy posture and legitimise a more proactive diplomatic role. In this vein successive administrations in the Republic of Korea (ROK) have variously described its diplomatic character as that of a 'balancer', a 'hub', or indeed a 'middle power'.

There are three 'middle power' conceptualisations related to three possible East Asian<sup>3</sup> geo-polynomic triangulations holding significance for South Korean foreign policy. First, the external impact upon the ROK, of the geostrategic US-China-Japan triangle, wherein the smaller power finds itself surrounded by regional and global behemoths and their proxies. A hierarchical measurement of "middlepowerism". Second, the South Korea-North Korea<sup>4</sup>-Southeast Asia humanitarian geoeconomic peace and development triangle, with Seoul at the apex pursuing policies appropriate to "middlepowermanship" in its near abroad. Third, the South Korea-Japan-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) geopolitical triangle, wherein South Korea has the potential to promote its 'mid-

1. South Korea and Republic of Korea (ROK) are used interchangeably in this article.

2. Jeffrey Robertson, "South Korea as a Middle Power – Capacity, Behaviour, and Now Opportunity" *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16 (1) (2007): 151-174.

3. East Asia is defined herein as including the subregions of Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia.

4. North Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) are used interchangeably in this article.

**Corresponding author**

Brendan M. Howe  
Graduate School of International Studies  
Ewha Womans University  
52 Ewhayeodae-gil  
Seodaemun-gu  
Seoul 03760  
South Korea  
Email: howeb[at]ewha.ac.kr

5. Geopolynomic is a term used to aggregate geostrategic, geopolitical, geoeconomic, geohistorical, and geocultural considerations of the distribution of power and influence. Brendan Howe, "Three Futures: Geopolynomic Transition and the Implications for Regional Security in Northeast Asia" *Modern Asian Studies* 39 (4) (2005): 761-792.

6. Brendan Howe, "Korea's Role for Peace-Building and Development in Asia" *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 5 (2) (2017): 243-266.

7. Joseph S. Nye "The East Asian Triangle" *Taipei Times*, October 16, 2006. <https://www.belfer-center.org/publication/east-asian-triangle>

8. Carl Holbraad, "The Role of Middle Powers" *Cooperation and Conflict* 6 (1) (1971): 77-90.

9. Ibid.

10. Laura Neack, "Empirical Observations on 'Middle State' Behavior at the Start of a New International System" *Pacific Focus* 7 (1) (1992): 5-21.

11. Matthias Vom Hau, James Scott, and David Hulme, "Beyond the BRICs: Alternative Strategies of Influence in the Global Politics of Development" *European Journal of Development Research* 24 (2) (2012): 187-204, 187-188.

dle power' internationalist credentials in partnership with like-minded political entities. Given South Korea's relatively consistent 'middle power' niche diplomatic aspirations, this article questions whether the continued (albeit understandable) pre-occupation with traditional strategic and security concerns in Northeast Asia is the best way forward.

The article assesses the historic operating environmental challenges to and limitations of Northeast Asian policy prioritisation, noting that, despite decades of massive expenditure and effort, Seoul has been unable, significantly, to improve its relative position in the power hierarchy of the region. It then turns to the strategic opportunities which can be afforded Seoul through focusing its niche diplomacy upon humanitarian and development initiatives within the region. Finally, it considers whether an approach to the region which is less focused on state-centric national interest and traditional security may offer a greater opportunity for construction of an East Asian regional community of peace and development. The central question is, which policy platform, in conjunction with which triangulation, and within which sub-region, is likely to get the most niche geopolynomic bang for the diplomatic buck?<sup>5</sup>

### Geostrategic Triangulation in Northeast Asia

The extent to which South Korea's power is indeed "middling", and the power dynamics within the middle of which the country finds itself, is reflected in a power hierarchy interpretation of middlepowerism, wherein South Korea as a smaller power surrounded by regional and global behemoths is conceptualised and often internalised among Koreans as a "shrimp among whales". This self-perception has persisted even though South Korea, by many measurements, ranks among the top dozen powers in the world.<sup>6</sup> The relevant East Asian triangle here is the geostrategic one between the superpowers of the US and China, and the (debatably) great power, Japan.<sup>7</sup>

Carl Holbraad introduced the significance of a hierarchical conceptualisation of middle powers in the 1970s, criticising the then dominant realist discourse in international relations, of a simple dichotomy between the great powers who do what they want, and the rest who suffer what they must.<sup>8</sup> He evaluated the function of certain states situated between great powers and weak states in accordance with physical capacities related to economy, military, and population.<sup>9</sup> Laura Neack has also relied upon such "resource power" measurements in further expanding a hierarchical model of middlepowerhood.<sup>10</sup> According to such conceptualisations, middle powers lack "compulsory power", the military resources to dominate other countries or the economic resources to bribe countries into adopting policies that they would not otherwise pursue. Yet they differ from the small or "system ineffectual" states which have little or no influence. They are, potentially, "system affecting states" which can have a significant impact within a narrower policy area, or in conjunction with others.<sup>11</sup>

There is a strategic imperative, therefore, for South Korea to find a geographical and policy "niche" in which it can get more bang for its buck (or Won), and punch above its relative diplomatic weight in the regional power hierarchy. Successive administrations have, perhaps understandably, been preoccupied with security and survival in the hostile Northeast Asian regional operating environment. But given the power differentials vis-à-vis South Korea and its local rivals, compared with the tremendous costs involved in trying to compete and remain relevant, it is important that Seoul does not lose sight of alternative avenues for niche diplomacy, especially under conditions of great power antagonism and abdi-

12. Inkyo Cheong, “The Progress of Korea’s FTA Policy in the Context of Northeast Asian Economic Cooperation” in Jeehoon Park, T.J. Pempel, and Gerard Roland (eds.) *Political Economy of Northeast Asian Regionalism: Political Conflict and Economic Integration*, 56–66, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008).

13. Sarah Teo, “Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea: Comparing the Kevin Rudd/Julia Gillard and Lee Myung-bak Administration” *The Pacific Review* 31 (2) (2018): 221–239.

14. Michael Green, “Korean Middle Power Diplomacy and Asia’s Emerging Multilateral Architecture” In: Victor Cha and Marie DuMond (eds.) *The Korean Pivot: The Study of South Korea as a Global Power*, 17–34 (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017).

15. Brendan Howe and Min Joung Park, “South Korea’s (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy Toward ASEAN” *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 15 (2) (2019): 117–142, 123.

16. Shin-hwa Lee and Chun Young Park, “Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy for Human Security” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 24 (1) (2017): 21–44.

17. Ellen Kim and Victor Cha, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: South Korea’s Strategic Dilemmas with China and the United States” *Asia Policy* 21 (2016): 101–121. [http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia\\_policy/free/120516/AsiaPolicy21\\_Kim\\_Cha\\_January2016.pdf](http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/free/120516/AsiaPolicy21_Kim_Cha_January2016.pdf)

cation of leadership.

South Korea has consistently striven for a geostrategic niche role amid the great power East Asian triangle. The Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008) government’s middle-power aspiration was expressed in the Northeast Asian Initiative, which projected South Korea’s pivotal role as a “balancer” or “hub” in the region to facilitate regional cooperation in the realms of economy and security.<sup>12</sup> During the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008–2013), South Korea’s self-identification as a middle power took a more explicit form.<sup>13</sup> Under the overarching slogan of “Global Korea”, the concept of ‘middle power’ was used to support the aspiration to increase the country’s international influence by enhancing its networking capacity and convening power.<sup>14</sup> The government emphasised the functional aspect of middle-power diplomacy to legitimise South Korea’s role as a convener, conciliator and proactive agenda-setter in international negotiations and multilateral platforms such as the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit, the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 and the Nuclear Security Summit in 2012.<sup>15</sup>

The Park Geun-hye administration (2014–2016) was more reluctant to apply the middle-power nomenclature to its diplomatic posture due to fear of provoking apprehension and/or misunderstanding in the US and China. Yet, even though the use of middle-power language started to diminish early in Park’s term, related geostrategic policies were still pursued, such as the establishment of MIKTA, and the promotion of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative.<sup>16</sup> Among the public and academics in South Korea and abroad, the terminology has also been used to describe South Korea’s increasing “middle” position between China and the US. Examples included South Korea’s accession to the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in March 2015, and President Park’s attendance at the 70th anniversary of the end of Second World War in Beijing in September of the same year, both of which raised concerns about the future direction of the US–ROK alliance.<sup>17</sup>

These attempts at securing niche diplomatic relevance within the East Asian geostrategic triangle have met with, at best, limited success. If we consider the current state of play, South Korea’s ‘middle power’ influence on the three sides of the triangle can even be seen as having entered a period of sustained decline, as developed in more detail below.

The legacy of a colonial history, and territorial disputes, overshadow shared interests between South Korea and Japan. Indeed, despite the contemporary Japan–ROK dyad sharing democratic constitutions, free market economies, and alliances with the US, in recent years tensions have escalated gravely between the two countries. Court cases in South Korea wherein Japanese conglomerates were held liable for reparations for their use of slave labour during World War II have formed the most recent conflictual catalyst. The Moon Jae-in administration (2017–2022) in Seoul did nothing to block these rulings, despite them apparently contradicting previous settlements with Japan. The cause of forced labour in Japanese factories and “comfort women” who were forced to work in military brothels during the Japanese occupation and WWII has been embraced by younger generations in South Korea. Hence, President Moon made these causes a central plank of his successful election campaign in 2017.

Meanwhile, many in Japan, feel that either the historic abuses were not as bad as the Koreans make out, that Japan should cease being so apologetic, or that they have already apologised, atoned, and compensated for their crimes. This includes an agreement in 1965 in terms of forced labour, and another, in 2015, which was supposed to draw a line under the comfort women issue. Crucially, however, the

18. Kanako Takahara, "Signing of 1965 Normalization Treaty Sparked Sharp Contrast in Reactions" *The Japan Times* June 21, 2015. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/21/national/history/signing-of-1965-normalization-treaty-sparked-sharp-contrast-in-reactions/#.Xg1-xC-2Q3ow>

19. Ankit Panda, "The 'Final and Irreversible' 2015 Japan-South Korea Comfort Women Deal Unravels" *The Diplomat* January 09, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/the-final-and-irreversible-2015-japan-south-korea-comfort-women-deal-unravels/>

20. Troy Stangarone, "Korea's Dispute with Japan Spills over into National Security" *The Diplomat* August 27, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/koreas-dispute-with-japan-spills-into-national-security/>

21. Bloomberg, "Japan-South Korea Friction Flares again after GSOMIA Intel Pact Rescue" *Japan Times* November 25, 2019. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/25/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-south-korea-bickering-gsomia/#.Xg2AZy2Q3ow>

22. Christine Kim and Ben Blanchard, "China, South Korea Agree to Mend Ties after THAAD Standoff" *Reuters* October 31, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/china-south-korea-agree-to-mend-ties-after-thaad-standoff-idUSKBN1D003G>

1965 treaty was signed by the South Korean dictator Park Chung-hee and sparked such public outrage at the time that US officials recommended Park introduce martial law in response.<sup>18</sup> The 2015 settlement over comfort women signed by his daughter Park Geun-hye, was overwhelmingly rejected by the South Korean public and it contributed, ultimately, to the fall from power of the conservative administration.<sup>19</sup> Since then, there have been regular anti-Japanese demonstrations, and vigils surrounding statues of comfort women often placed to maximise embarrassment to Japan.

This breakdown of trust between the two sides, whether genuine, or being used for domestic political purposes in Tokyo and Seoul, led to South Korea announcing in August 2019, that it would not be renewing the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). Tokyo retaliated by removing South Korea from the "Whitelist" of trusted export destinations for sensitive technology, and Seoul likewise removed Japan from their own Whitelist shortly thereafter. Both sides have claimed that the removal of the other was not an act of retaliation, but rather based on serious concerns about the trustworthiness and security of the other.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately GSOMIA was renewed in what amounts to a significant climbdown by Seoul. Even then, there was continued sparring between the two sides.<sup>21</sup>

Optimistic assessments regarding the incoming administration of President-Elect (at the time of writing) Yoon Suk-yeol might suggest a thawing of relations between Seoul and Tokyo, as has been the case with previous conservative administrations. Yet, the strategic relationship has been so severely damaged, that de-escalation will probably not come from traditional geostrategic or security foci, but rather cooperation and confidence building in non-traditional security fields or arenas, as dealt with in the third triangulation introduced in this article. Playing political hardball with Japan has not resulted in diplomatic gains for South Korea and may even have damaged the country's international reputation.

China's rise has had the largest impact on the traditional East Asian triangle. Despite rising antagonism between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the US, South Korea's major ally/security sponsor, South Korea and China have endeavoured to nurture a cooperative relationship in the fields of trade, investment, culture, and tourism. Yet, relations significantly deteriorated over the 2016-2017 deployment in South Korea of the American Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defence system with its penetrating radar system, and potential to be used against not only North Korean weapons, but also those of China. The cooperative relationship is predominantly dependent on Seoul not giving offense to its superpower neighbour and can easily founder on geostrategic realities.

During his 2017 electoral campaign, Moon was ambivalent about giving the ultimate go-ahead for the deployment, reflecting concern over offending China. After being deployed shortly before he took office, and not being removed on his watch, the Chinese reacted with bans on tour groups selling packages to the country, boycotts of South Korean products, the closure of Lotte-owned stores, the cancellation of K-pop music concerts, and blocking of the streaming of South Korean shows and movies. The halving of inbound Chinese tourists in the first nine months of the year cost the South Korean economy \$6.5 billion in lost revenue, knocked about 0.4 percentage points off the year's expected economic growth, and had a devastating impact on the Lotte Group which provided the land where the THAAD battery was installed.<sup>22</sup>

23. Thomas Maresca, "South Korean President Moon Jae-in Suspends further THAAD Deployment" *USA Today* June 7, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/06/07/south-korean-president-moon-jae-suspends-thaad-deployment/102582572/>

24. Kim and Blanchard, "China, South Korea Agree to Mend Ties after THAAD Standoff".

25. Sukhee Han, "Resetting the South Korea-China Relationship: The THAAD Controversies and Their Aftermath" *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 31 (4) (2019): 539-557, 541.

26. Marcus Gee, "Something Strange in South Korea" *The Globe and Mail* July 12, 2006. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/something-strange-in-south-korea/article20414851/>

27. Ibid.

28. Kim and Cha, "Between a Rock and a Hard place".

29. Scott Snyder, "South Korean President-Elect Yoon Suk-yeol's Early Foreign Policy Challenges" *Asia Unbound* March 25, 2022. [https://www.cfr.org/blog/south-korean-president-elect-yoon-suk-yeol-s-early-foreign-policy-challenges?utm\\_source=koreupdate&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Korea%20Update:%20April%202022&utm\\_term=KoreaUpdate](https://www.cfr.org/blog/south-korean-president-elect-yoon-suk-yeol-s-early-foreign-policy-challenges?utm_source=koreupdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Korea%20Update:%20April%202022&utm_term=KoreaUpdate)

30. Reuters, "Factbox: U.S. and South Korea's security arrangement, cost of troops" November 13, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-military-factbox/factbox-u-s-and-south-koreas-security-arrangement-cost-of-troops-idUSKBN1XN09I>

31. Ibid.

32. Tom Eck, "Two Years into Moon Jae-in's Presidency, what's been Achieved on North Korea?" *NK News* May 12, 2019. <https://www.nknews.org/2019/05/two-years-into-moon-jae-ins-presidency-whats-been-achieved-on-north-korea/>

33. Jun-yong Ahn, "S. Korea Risks Being Sidelined in Regional Power Play" *The Chosun Ilbo* April 29, 2019. [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2019/04/29/2019042901311.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/04/29/2019042901311.html)

On 7 June 2017 President Moon suspended further THAAD deployment pending a review, after discovering four addition launchers had entered South Korea without the defence ministry informing him.<sup>23</sup> And towards the end of 2017, bridges were re-built, with a surprise joint announcement on October 31 that the spat was over.<sup>24</sup> "THAAD disputes cannot be resolved, but only subdued", however, as they occur within the context of strategic competition between China and the US, with no indication by Seoul of a withdrawal of the system.<sup>25</sup> Despite the desire of progressive administrations in Seoul to build bridges with Beijing, it seems that the latter always maintains a de facto veto on the degree of warmth to be enjoyed in the relationship. Indeed, the relationship between South Korea and China is always destined to be lop-sided. So much so that some commentators have considered whether South Korea is experiencing a degree of "Finlandisation" towards its much larger neighbour.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, the olive branches held out by South Korean progressives towards Beijing have led to charges of them abandoning the true friends of the ROK, the US.<sup>27</sup> But these charges rest on two assumptions. First, that Seoul has much choice in the matter, or diplomatic leverage. Second, that we need to worry about the ROK abandoning the US rather than the reverse scenario. What these geostrategic calculations do reveal is the weakness of the ROK's hand in diplomatic negotiations in Northeast Asia, in relation not only to China, but also to the US. What Ellen Kim and Victor Cha have likened to being between a "rock and a hard place".<sup>28</sup> The incoming conservative Yoon Suk-yeol administration may find dealing with Beijing even more problematic, resulting in even greater reliance upon Washington.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, South Korea may have even less leverage in dealing with its American ally and protector than it does when dealing with Japan or China. The ROK spends enormous sums on its relationship with the US. At the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War, the treaty of mutual defence between the two countries, and the 1966 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), laid down the rules governing and protecting US personnel stationed in South Korea. Article V lays out the responsibility of the ROK to furnish and compensate for "all facilities and areas and rights of way" of the US forces. Special Measures Agreements (SMAs) determine the extent of these costs, and have been signed 10 times since 1991, usually to cover multiple years.<sup>30</sup> Under the most recent previous agreement, South Korea accepted an increase to its contribution of around \$70.3 million to \$927 million. Under Trump, the US asked the ROK to pay a five-fold jump, or "\$5 billion worth of protection."<sup>31</sup> Whether or not this is an accurate depiction of the value of the US defensive contribution, it certainly does not seem to indicate that the ROK has much diplomatic leverage with its ally, and therefore sufficient bang for its bucks. The Biden administration has been more reasonable in its demands, but Seoul's leverage in these talks remains severely limited.

The earnest aspirations of successive administrations in Seoul to be a facilitator of US diplomatic initiatives, a strategic balancer between the US and its adversaries, a conduit of communication between them, or a source of independent policy initiatives, have failed to secure significant leverage over American policymaking in the region. Despite his early role as a mediator between them, President Moon appeared increasingly side-lined by both the US and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) leadership.<sup>32</sup> More broadly, South Korea risks being left out of the regional power play.<sup>33</sup>

The massive dedication of resources that saw South Korea break into the global top 10 for military expenditure at \$36 billion/annum, with the world's seventh

34. Ministry of National Defence, *Defence White Paper 2014*. [http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/mnd/upload/pblicitn/PBLICTNE-BOOK\\_201501060619270840.pdf](http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/mnd/upload/pblicitn/PBLICTNE-BOOK_201501060619270840.pdf)

35. John Holmes, "Is There a Future for Middle-powermanship?" in John Holmes (ed.) *The Better Part of Valour: Essays on Canadian Diplomacy* 18-49. (Toronto: Carleton Library, 1970).

36. Andrew Cooper, Richard Higgott, and Kim Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993).

37. Andrew Cooper, *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

38. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change" *International Organization* 52 (4) (1998): 887-917, 895-898.

39. Howe, "Korea's Role for Peace-Building and Development in Asia".

largest army at 630,000 active personnel with an additional 2,900,000 personnel in the reserves, and the sixth largest air force, with up to date power-projection capabilities, did not see any increase in autonomous leverage as wartime Operational Control Authority (OPCON) was left with the US.<sup>34</sup> South Korea has also fairly consistently followed the lead of the US, with regards to imposing sanctions on the DPRK, even when there are concerns over a diplomatic backlash as well as an increase in the suffering of the most vulnerable in North Korea.

This leads us to consideration of the ROK's relationship with the DPRK, within the East Asian geostrategic triangulation. South Korea has spent huge sums on both carrots and sticks when dealing with the North. This is not limited to formal humanitarian assistance and defence spending, but also manifests in the proliferation of research institutes, support for researchers and their publications in related journals, recruitment of "experts" etc. It is unclear what in concrete terms, if anything, these expenditures have achieved regarding increasing the ROK's diplomatic clout. Nevertheless, Seoul has pursued a degree of autonomous policymaking in terms of assistance to the DPRK.

The unilateral development-led incentivisation projects for engaging Pyongyang, pursued by successive liberal administrations in Seoul, spill over into the second geo-polynomic triangulation, as well as the second 'middle power' conceptualizations. They will therefore be considered in more detail in the following section. Here it will suffice to note that from the geostrategic perspective of the first triangulation, they also failed adequately to change North Korean policymaking or provide significantly increased bang for the niche diplomatic buck.

Hence, although Northeast Asia is always going to rank highest in terms of strategic concerns for Seoul, it is by no means certain that, considering the somewhat limited returns, continuing to focus effort and resources to such an extent on the region is the right move for a geostrategically constrained middle power. Seoul needs to consider whether there are other avenues and 'middle power' policy platforms which could provide better niche diplomatic returns on investment.

### **Humanitarian and Goeconomic Triangulation for Peace and Development**

The second 'middle power' conceptualisation revolves around behaviour appropriate to a normative construction of middlepowerhood, and the pursuit of policy platforms around which such an identity can coalesce. Liberal international relations scholars have emphasised "middlepowermanship", relating to the diplomatic behaviour and intentions of states, as the key factor for (self)identification of 'middle power' polities.<sup>35</sup> Liberal perspectives tend to focus on policy initiation and advocacy, the participatory attributes of middle powers, by highlighting states that participate actively in global issue areas like human rights, human security, non-traditional security (NTS), peace, environment, and development.<sup>36</sup> In addition, according to this conceptualisation, middle powers are willing to take a role of mediator based on their "positional power" from structural power vacuums in international relations. They position themselves strategically as a mediator or a broker and show their normative issue leadership in certain areas where they can fill in the gaps related to the relational configuration of power dynamics.<sup>37</sup> Thus, middle powers can also fulfil the social constructivist role of norm entrepreneurship.<sup>38</sup>

The ROK has a significant history of liberal 'middle power' advocacy in terms of promoting peace, the environment, and development in the Global South. These efforts have been concentrated, primarily, on the Korean Peninsula, and in the six priority partnership countries in Southeast Asia, Cambodia, Myanmar,

40. Kim Dae-jung, *Government of the People - Collected Speeches of President*. (Seoul: Office of the President, the Republic of Korea, 1999): 12 & 64-5.

41. Kyung-suk Chae, "The Future of the Sunshine Policy: Strategies for Survival," *East Asian Review* 14 (4) (2001): 3-17, 7.

42. Chung-in Moon, *Sunshine Policy: In Defence of Engagement as a Path to Peace in Korea*. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2012), 26.

43. Min-hee Park, Kang-moon Yoo, and Je-hun Lee, "Kim Jong-un Makes no Mention of Inter-Korean Relations in 2020 Vision" *The Hankyoreh* November 05, 2019. [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/922943.html?fbclid=IwAR3NOM7EOEo6tTvFTYBRX-SZNR-xzI4Fh0eY2lyp0DQ7Kvqu\\_m8p5GCKev-Q](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/922943.html?fbclid=IwAR3NOM7EOEo6tTvFTYBRX-SZNR-xzI4Fh0eY2lyp0DQ7Kvqu_m8p5GCKev-Q)

44. Ahn, "S. Korea Risks Being Sidelined in Regional Power Play".

45. Howe, "Korea's Role for Peace-Building and Development in Asia".

Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.<sup>39</sup> Thus, a second geo-polynomic East Asian triangulation becomes important, that between South Korea, North Korea, and Southeast Asia. Although Seoul can be seen as sitting at the apex of this geo-polynomic triangulation, significant input and feedback can also be initiated by other actors, with potential contributions to peace on the Korean Peninsula from ASEAN and its constituent members, recipient-led development partnerships, and policymaking from Pyongyang. This triangulation has already borne significant fruit and holds considerable promise for further progress.

In 1998, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung initiated a positive engagement policy towards the DPRK, called the "Sunshine Policy," which emphasised reconciliation and cooperation between the two sides.<sup>40</sup> In pursuit of these goals, the ROK government provided the DPRK hundreds of thousands of tons of maize, flour, and chemical fertiliser with no pre-conditions.<sup>41</sup> Learning from previous experiences, Seoul adopted practical operating principles such as "Easy tasks first, difficult tasks later", "Economy first, politics later", "Non-governmental organisations first, government later", and "Give first, take later."<sup>42</sup> Even with the souring of relations between the DPRK and ROK's patron, the US, the Kim administration never stopped aiding the North.

The Roh Moo-hyun administration's "Peace and Prosperity Policy" largely inherited the main tenets of the Sunshine Policy. But the mounting tension between the US and the DPRK over the nuclear issue, and criticisms from conservative sectors of the South Korean public over sending aid without pre-conditions caused the new government to put greater emphasis on the principle of reciprocity than the previous administration had done. With growing exasperation in the South at the intransigence of Pyongyang and the related discrediting of unconditional assistance, under progressive administrations, President Lee Myung-bak reverted to a more coercive engagement with the North, linking assistance with verifiable progress on certain key issues. Park Geun-hye's administration also effectively abandoned the unilateral benevolence approach to dealing with the crisis of governance in the DPRK. Assistance ground to a virtual stop, with little to show in terms of contributions to Seoul's diplomatic leverage or prestige.

So again, Seoul's diplomatic leverage remains dependent on other actors. Indeed, some observers are concerned that the fact Kim Jong-un made no mention of inter-Korean relations in his 2020 vision for the New Year may reflect Pyongyang's disappointment in Seoul's role in denuclearisation negotiations, as this stood in sharp contrast with Kim's 2019 New Year's address, which referred to inter-Korean relations 10 times.<sup>43</sup> This is not to downplay the importance of understanding, engaging with, and hopefully transforming the conflictual relationship with the only entity which truly poses an existential threat to South Korea. It is also not to abandon the vulnerable individuals and groups in North Korea who stand, potentially, to gain from South Korean normative middlepowerism. Nevertheless, it is time to ask the question whether we have reached peak expenditure, and experience diminishing returns when more is spent, especially if, ultimately, the ROK continues to be side-lined by the geostrategic power-plays of the East Asian triangle.<sup>44</sup>

The second part of the humanitarian and geoeconomic triangulation for peace and development, involving Southeast Asian developing countries, and their citizens, offers perhaps greater scope and returns for an expanded South Korean role. Seoul has always focused a significant portion of its official development assistance (ODA) on the region and has also launched or contributed towards other NTS initiatives. Successful contributions to bilateral development partnerships have not

46. Teo, “Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea”.

47. Cooper, *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*.

48. The Government of the Republic of Korea, “100 Policy Tasks: Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration (Cheong Wa Dae: 2017). <https://english1.president.go.kr/dn/5af107425ff0d>

49. Andrew Salmon, “Moon, BTS, Welcome ASEAN Leaders to South Korea” *Asia Times* November 25, 2019. <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/11/article/moon-bts-welcome-asean-leaders-to-south-korea/>

50. Preparatory Office, *ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit* November 25-27, 2019 Busan.

only benefited vulnerable individuals and groups in Southeast Asia, but have also raised the standing of the ROK, representing significant niche diplomatic gains.<sup>45</sup>

During the Lee administration, South Korea’s middle-power identity relied mainly upon its economic strength as reflective of its unique socioeconomic development experience.<sup>46</sup> In particular, Lee’s “niche diplomacy” focused on issues such as international development cooperation and the environment, known as “green growth promotion”. It sought to associate its ‘middle power’ role as a bridge between developed and developing countries based on South Korea’s development experience, technological advancement and growing economic influence. This strategy matched well with the middle-power diplomatic focus on niche areas related to the normative agendas of low politics (such as human rights, international development, and the environment).<sup>47</sup> The Lee administration’s focus on global, non-security issues, also enabled its middle-power diplomacy to avoid any significant distancing of South Korea from the US.

The Moon administration did not directly identify its diplomatic character as that of a middle power. Nevertheless, the Moon government’s “one-hundred major policy goals” (including foreign policy aspirations) outlined the overarching themes of the administration as “responsibility”, “multilateralism”, and “values”.<sup>48</sup> “Responsibility” in this context means that South Korea aims to fulfil its ‘middle power’ duties to foster peace and prosperity in the region. In this regard, therefore, although the Moon administration did not explicitly brand itself as a middle power, its de facto foreign policy strategy remained deeply wedded to ‘middle power’ normative diplomacy.

Southeast Asian polities and societies are already well disposed to South Korean influence. In part this receptiveness is due to the impact of Hallyu, but it is also because of a preference for partnering with South Korea rather than the US, China, or Japan. Indeed, at least anecdotally, South Korea appears to have replaced Japan as the region’s “front-of-mind trade partner”.<sup>49</sup> South Korea is unique in having no imperial or neo-imperial baggage. As a middle power rather than a great power, with limited military reach, it alone poses no threat to members of the Global South. Indeed, the ROK can be seen as a champion of developing countries, thanks to the double miracle on the Han River a shining city on the hill to act as inspiration, and as a potential bridge between the developed and developing worlds.

The official data presented at the 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit reveal that as of 2018, South Korea’s trade with the regional bloc amounted to \$160 billion (\$100 billion in exports and \$60 billion in imports) making ASEAN the country’s second largest trading partner. South Korea also invested \$8.59 billion in ASEAN, and the regional bloc is the most popular travel destination for South Koreans while also proving a large body of visitors to the ROK (particularly important when Chinese tourist numbers slump). “Visitors between the two regions surpassed the 11 million mark in 2018”,<sup>50</sup> and as the region rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic, these intra-regional people-to-people exchanges are going to assume an even more prevalent position in geoeconomic triangulation for peace and development.

Southeast Asia has been a major focus of South Korean soft power and public diplomacy initiatives. South Korea has consistently concentrated 30% of its total official development assistance (ODA) to countries making up ASEAN. South Korea has 26 priority development partners, of which the largest geographical concentration is in Asia (11 countries), with 6 in Southeast Asia. The six least developed ASEAN countries (which therefore have the greatest human security

51. Jaehyon Lee, “Korea’s New Southern Policy: Motivations of ‘Peace Cooperation’ and Implications for the Korean Peninsula” *Asan Policy Brief* June 21, 2019. <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/korea-as-new-southern-policy-motivations-of-peace-cooperation-and-implications-for-the-korean-peninsula/>

52. Ibid.

53. Kyo-dok Hong, “South Korean Approaches to Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding: Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 23 (1) (2009): 23-46, 24.

54. Salmon, “Moon, BTS, Welcome Asian Leaders to South Korea”.

55. Preparatory Office, *ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit*.

56. Ibid.

57. Cheong Wa Dae, “The Second Mekong-ROK Summit” November 13, 2020. [https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/asean-en/brd/m\\_2565/view.do?seq=761105](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/asean-en/brd/m_2565/view.do?seq=761105)

and development challenges, and the most to gain from partnering with South Korea are the Philippines, Indonesia and the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam) countries. These comprised six out of the top seven destinations for South Korean ODA in 2019.<sup>51</sup>

The outgoing administration in Seoul prioritised humanitarian and geo-economic policymaking in the region. In particular, the “New Southern Policy” announced during President Moon’s tour of three Southeast Asian nations in November 2017, sought to elevate the relationship between South Korea and ASEAN countries, as well as India, to the same level as the one between the ROK and its four strategic neighbours – the US, Russia, China, and Japan.<sup>52</sup> This explicitly linked the geostrategic triangle with the geoeconomics one.

South Korea has a lengthy history of partnering with the Philippines, dating to Philippine assistance during the Korean War, and humanitarian assistance in the reverse direction thus represents a significant example of what has been termed a “paying back syndrome” wherein the ROK pays back to the international community the help it received during its times of hardship.<sup>53</sup> Since 1990, the Philippines has been one of South Korea’s prioritised partner countries for ODA with the focused aims of poverty reduction and economic development. In addition, South Korea provided the largest contingent of forces for relief and reconstruction efforts in the Philippines after the devastation wrought by typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. Furthermore, the ROK forces were committed to the mission for far longer than those of any other contributing nation – two full six-month tours of duty rather than just helping with the emergency relief mission in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

In recent years the ROK has turned its attention to humanitarian or principled diplomatic and development engagement in the CLMV region. Each of these four countries is conflict affected, and given the even higher prevalence of poverty, has perhaps greater need for Korean assistance. South Korea has made Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam priority partners, and already has extensive humanitarian commitments in Cambodia and Vietnam (the latter is not only the largest recipient of Korean ODA but is also the focus of almost 43% of the investment of South Korean companies in the region).<sup>54</sup>

The ROK has, as yet, only a limited partnership with Myanmar and Laos. The 2019 Commemorative Summit in Busan, however, also served as the 1st Mekong-Republic of Korea Summit. According to the official publication on the summit, recognising the growth potential of the region, South Korea has cooperated with Mekong countries in a host of areas related to humanitarian niche diplomacy such as public health, rural development and infrastructure, with (as of 2017) \$3.3 billion in ODA offered to the CLMV countries, accounting to approximately 21% of the ROK’s total bilateral ODA.<sup>55</sup> In September 2019 President Moon announced the “Korea-Mekong Vision” with a pledge to share actively South Korea’s experience so that the “Miracle on the Han River” can lead to the “Miracle on the Mekong River”.<sup>56</sup> At the 2nd Mekong-Republic of Korea Summit in 2020, President Moon noted “Last year, we adopted the Mekong-Han River Declaration to set a new milestone in our journey towards a community that puts people first. This year, as we respond to COVID-19, we are once again assured of our friendship and trust.”<sup>57</sup>

Across the board in this region, therefore, there are many opportunities for South Korea to pursue its niche diplomatic agenda, to the significant benefit of these development partners, but also geopolitical benefit to the ROK. Moving on to the third conceptualisation of middlepowerism, it is in these NTS,

58. Jong-ryn Mo, "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: A Case of Growing Compatibility between Regional and Global Roles" *International Journal* 71 (4) (2016): 587-607.

59. Brendan Howe, "Social Construction of Peacebuilding" in Henry Carey (ed.) *Peacebuilding Paradigms*, 111-125 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

60. Lee and Park, "Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy for Human Security".

61. M.A. Rudderham, "Middle Power Pull: Can Middle Powers use Public Diplomacy to Ameliorate the Image of the West?" *York Centre for International Security Studies Working Paper* 46 (2008): 2 <http://yciss.info.yorku.ca/files/2012/06/WP46-Rudderham.pdf>

62. Sarah Teo, Bhubhindar Singh, and See Seng Tan, "South Korea's Middle-Power Engagement Initiatives: Perspectives from Southeast Asia" *RSIS Working Paper* no. 265 (2013). <https://files.ethz.ch/isn/174582/WP265South%20Korea's%20Power%20Engagement%20Initiatives.pdf>

63. Preparatory Office, *ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit*.

64. Lee, "Korea's New Southern Policy".

humanitarian, and normative policy platforms that South Korea has the greatest opportunity to play not only the role of a norm entrepreneur, but also that of a regional cooperative coordinator. Seoul has also been participating actively in regional multilateralism and is especially committed to ASEAN institution- and community-building efforts.<sup>58</sup> Here, therefore, we need to consider the third geo-polynomic triangulation, that between South Korea, Japan, and ASEAN.

### Geopolitical Multilateral Triangulation in East Asia

Potentially the greatest reward for 'middle power' South Korea could be the extent to which the pursuit of liberal normative niche diplomacy spills over into the third conceptualisation of middlepowerism, and the related third East Asian triangle of South Korea-Japan-ASEAN regional political and NTS cooperation. This further develops the linkage between middlepowerism and social constructivism in international relations theory and practice, and between internal and external actors and constraints.<sup>59</sup>

Middle powers have been seen as countries that have the power to assert their influence in the regional settings and have the intention enthusiastically to advocate multilateral cooperation with the countries that share similar values and purposes.<sup>60</sup> In the East Asian region this means cooperation between the value-sharing polities of South Korea, ASEAN, and Japan. Hence, "middle power states have most recently been defined by their internationalism. States that exhibit certain collaborative foreign policy behaviour are considered middle powers. Qualifying behaviour might include good 'global citizenship,' niche diplomacy, and accepting roles as mediators, followers, or staunch multilateralists."<sup>61</sup>

30 years since acceding to membership of the United Nations (UN), the ROK has grown from being the host of the largest UN enforcement operation to date, to being a major contributor to international peacekeeping operations (PKOs). The South Korean military has contributed substantially to humanitarian operations. South Korea has been part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams since 2003 and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group since 1999. South Korea specialises in search and rescue efforts and has participated in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-administered Asia Pacific Humanitarian Partnership since its establishment in 2004. The ROK has also been at the forefront of East Asian regional international organisation and cooperation, and the trans-regional 'middle power' bloc encompassing Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA). Yet the area of greatest unfulfilled promise remains the South Korea-Japan side of the third triangulation.

The experience of the 1997-8 Asian financial crisis led Kim Dae-jung to launch the East Asian Vision Group (EAVG) in 1998, which led, ultimately, to the inauguration of the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005. Seoul has been involved in all the major ASEAN-led dialogue platforms such as the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), as well as, of course, the EAS itself. Within these multilateral institutions, and in partnership with ASEAN, South Korea has striven to take on a neutral role while keeping a low profile regarding political and security issues.<sup>62</sup> Since establishing a dialogue partnership in 1989, South Korea and ASEAN have "maintained a high level of cooperation."<sup>63</sup>

While steady progress has been made in relations, the level of commitment from Seoul towards Southeast Asia has not been consistently high. Despite the official ties commencing in 1989, the real beginning of cooperation was under

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Valentin Voloshchak, "A Closer Look at South Korea's Plan for Cooperation With Russia: Exploring the Viability of Moon Jae-in's Nine Bridges Plan" *The Diplomat* January 9, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/a-closer-look-at-south-koreas-plan-for-cooperation-with-russia/>

69. Howe and Park, "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy Toward ASEAN", 118.

70. ASEAN, *New Framework for the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) 2017-2020*. (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2017).

President Kim Dae-jung in the late 1990s, through his personal connections to Southeast Asian democratic leaders, and following the regional trauma of the financial crisis.<sup>64</sup> The crisis focused President Kim's policy prioritisation on the country's near abroad, and upon human security rather than state security in the region, clearly reflecting both level two and level three middlepowermanship.

The three administrations after President Kim showed weaker commitment towards ASEAN. President Roh Moo-hyun shifted policy prioritisation back to Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula; Lee Myung-bak focused on maximising economic gain of South Korea from the entire Asian region; and the Park Geun-hye administration switched back to Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula once more.<sup>65</sup> In fact, according to Jaehyon Lee, the net consequence of the ROK's policy toward ASEAN in the 30 years before the Moon government was an overall decrease in South Korea's political and diplomatic presence in the region.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, due to the understandable preoccupation with existential threats in Northeast Asia, the amount of consideration given by Seoul to other geostrategic regions has suffered. Given the desire and opportunity, however, for South Korea to move from a position as a reactive state, to a much more proactive middle power, allocating resources to these regions rather than additionally to a somewhat saturated Northeast Asian environment, may garner greater rewards. This has clearly been recognised by the Moon administration giving equal weighting to the New Northern and New Southern policies.

President Moon's recommitment to Southeast Asia was clear from the early days of the administration. The presidential transition committee on foreign policy and national security had prepared a report on a Northeast Asia Peace Community (NEAPC) which contained three components: a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform (NAPCP), a New Northern Policy (NNP) and a New Southern Policy (NSP).<sup>67</sup> The ambitious aim was to build a sustainable regional system of cooperation with the 10 member states of ASEAN, the 'middle power' grouping of MIKTA, India and Northeast Asian states.<sup>68</sup> In line with Moon's domestic policy of the "people-oriented economy", the basic idea of the New Southern Policy is to form a people-centred peace community that advocates co-prosperity.<sup>69</sup>

While keeping a low profile within the ASEAN networks on political and security issues, South Korea has been one of the most active and dynamic dialogue partners (DPs) of ASEAN in terms of economic and cultural affairs. The ROK's dialogue ties with ASEAN originated in the late-1980s, and it achieved full Dialogue Partnership (DP) in 1991, while still considered a developing country itself. South Korea was able to join the existing states (US, Japan, Australia, Canada, etc.) as an ASEAN DP, through persistent lobbying from the South Korean side, and an agreement with the ASEAN countries to contribute financially on an annual basis. As a result of this condition, the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) was established in 1990, one year before the establishment of full partnership in 1991, with an annual contribution of \$ 1 million. In response to ASEAN's request for an increase in its contribution, Seoul increased the volume of the AKCF to \$ 2 million per year in 1992. As a reflection of South Korea's emphasis on ASEAN, the volume of AKCF was further increased to \$ 3 million per year in 2005, \$ 5 million per year in 2010 and \$ 7 million per year in 2015.<sup>70</sup>

The AKCF has been focused on the field of ASEAN's socio-cultural community (ASCC), such as education, environment, and culture. People-to-people exchanges represent the largest segment, with education the joint-second largest, reflecting the ROK's focus on human capital, education and training, and

71. Ibid.

72. Howe and Park, "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy Toward ASEAN", 130.

73. Ibid.

74. Kyoung-mi Lee and Young-shin Kim, "ASEAN Culture House Opens in Busan" *Korea.net*, September 6, 2017. <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/policies/view?articleId=148983>

75. Howe and Park, "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy Toward ASEAN", 131.

76. Ibid.

77. Werner Pascha, "The Republic of Korea's New Northern Policy and New Southern Policy in the Context of International Connectivity Initiatives: Between Hedging and Alignment" *Korea Europe Review* 1 (1) (December 2021): 1-20.

knowledge transfer in both its own development policymaking, and its niche diplomacy. These are followed by other human-centred areas of the environment and governance. Only then does trade make an appearance, just ahead of agriculture, demonstrating a move away from much criticised mercantilist inspired engagement.<sup>71</sup>

The ASEAN-ROK Environment Cooperation Programme (AKECOP), which aims to restore degraded forest ecosystems around the region, is one of the AKCF's flagship projects. At the first ASEAN-ROK Summit in 1997, both sides identified the environment as one of the priorities of cooperation and promised to implement relevant projects. Since 2000, the AKECOP has been operated for forest restoration and mitigating the disastrous impact of climate-related disasters such as cyclones. AKECOP has become the longest running environmental cooperation project among ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, and the output and outcome of the AKECOP have been well shared with ASEAN through its sponsoring ASEAN body, the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB).<sup>72</sup>

The ASEAN-ROK Film Leaders Incubator Project (FLY) is another flagship project of the AKCF. This project has been implemented by Busan Film Commission, organiser of the Busan International Film Festival since 2012, with the aim of discovering young film talent in ASEAN, nurturing the ASEAN film industry, and establishing a stable filmmaking infrastructure that will contribute to the diversification of Asian film. It is the only ASEAN-DP cooperation program, which has made a significant contribution to the development of fledgeling film industries in ASEAN member states.<sup>73</sup> Given the ubiquitous impact of the Korean Wave or 'Hallyu' in Southeast Asia, this is a natural area of cooperation where the ROK can further establish its middle-power credentials in the region.

In another first for an ASEAN DP, in 2017 South Korea established the ASEAN Culture House in Busan, following up on the agreement made at the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in 2014. Former South Korean Foreign Minister Kang emphasised that the Culture House is expected to serve as a venue to boost two-way people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the ROK and ASEAN.<sup>74</sup> This new institutional effort demonstrates South Korea's activism in utilising its soft power approach with ASEAN.

As seen by these two AKCF flagship projects, and the establishment of the ASEAN Culture House, South Korea has played a 'bridging role', focusing on issue-specific cooperation activities through sharing its own experiences with ASEAN. This role profits from South Korea's positional advantage or "in-betweenness" in the regional hierarchy between the North, ASEAN's major DPs and the South, ASEAN. Unlike other middle powers in the region, (for instance Australia), South Korea has remained neutral, or silent, on politically sensitive issues, such as the South China Sea, but very active in niche diplomacy using soft power tactics.<sup>75</sup> South Korea's middle-power strategy toward ASEAN has been regarded as very successful since it is differentiated from the geostrategic engagement of other DPs and makes South Korea more approachable to ASEAN member states.<sup>76</sup> Here we see the genesis of what Werner Pascha has termed between hedging and alignment in reference to geostrategic autonomy in Seoul's niche diplomacy.<sup>77</sup>

The Moon administration's New Southern Policy further emphasises Seoul's commitment to ASEAN and to a human-centred niche diplomacy in the region. It is important to note here, however, that these achievements in terms of diplomatic bang for the buck are only to be found when non-traditional, human-cen-

78. Salmon, "Moon, BTS, Welcome ASEAN Leaders to South Korea".

79. Ibid.

80. Yoshihide Soeya, "Prospects for Japan as a Middle Power" *East Asia Forum* July 29, 2013. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/29/prospects-for-japan-as-a-middle-power/>

81. Kent Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the Reactive State" *World Politics* 40 (4) (1998): 517-541.

82. Brendan Howe, "Between Normality & Uniqueness: Unwrapping the Enigma of Japanese Security Policy Decision-Making" *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (6) (2010): 1313-1336.

83. Thomas Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism" *International Security* 17 (4) (1993): 119-150.

84. Keizo Obuchi, "Toward the Creation of a Bright Future for Asia" policy speech at the Lecture Program hosted by the Institute for International Relations Lecture Program (Hanoi, Vietnam, December 16, 1998). <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv9812/policyspeech.html>

85. Ibid.

86. Louis Kriesberg, "The Development of the Conflict Resolution Field" In: I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, (eds.), *Peacemaking in International Context: Methods and Techniques*. (Washington, DC: Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 64.

tred avenues and policy platforms are pursued. Doing well in Southeast Asia does not necessarily benefit South Korea's strategic circumstances in Northeast Asia.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, "South Korea is equally invisible in the key ASEAN security issues" although as noted above, this is by choice.<sup>79</sup>

Yet just because a middle power pursues a human-centred niche diplomacy focused expressly away from traditional security and strategic considerations, it does not mean that it has nothing to offer the cause of peace. In fact, with both South Korea and Japan pursuing multilateral NTS agendas within the relevant East Asian geopolitical triangle, there is considerable potential for this normative and institutional cooperation to spill over into confidence building, de-escalation, and ultimately cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo.

While historically it has been seen as more of a great power, Yoshihide Soeya explicitly categorizes Japan as a middle power, due to its unidimensional influence on world affairs.<sup>80</sup> Kent Calder, the originator of the "reactive state" hypothesis, downgrades Japan even further than 'middle power' status, seeing the country as occupying the unique position of having the power potential of a mid-range European state, yet the political leverage of much smaller and weaker reactive states.<sup>81</sup> But, as demonstrated elsewhere, Japan is much more proactive in NTS areas.<sup>82</sup> Given internal and external structural constraints on the use of force, Japan has consistently tried to pursue its foreign policy through economic means, such as ODA, and foreign direct investment and loans, rather than by military means. Indeed, these anti-military, pro-economic norms have become characteristic of Japanese foreign and security policy.<sup>83</sup>

Human security was introduced to the mainstream of Japanese foreign policy by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in 1998, after the Asian financial crisis, in a reaction similar to President Kim's policy initiatives in South Korea. Obuchi committed to help Asian countries overcome crises and to assist socially vulnerable people.<sup>84</sup> He emphasized his perception of human security as being people- rather than state-centric, and that his understanding of human security was analogous to that of the UNDP, comprising "a comprehensive view of all threats to human survival, life and dignity" and as one of the three areas on which Asia should focus for a "century of peace and prosperity".<sup>85</sup>

Hence, Japan's transition to a regional institution-building, normative, geopolitical rather than geostrategically-focused second tier actor significantly parallels that of South Korea. Here, then, we can see the true potential of middlepowerism when represented as multilateral cooperation with the countries that share similar values and purposes.

### Conclusion: Peacebuilding and Development in East Asia

East Asia as a whole, including the sub-regions of both Northeast and Southeast Asia, is a region deeply affected by conflict. Colonial, ideological, and national wars have left their scars and legacies, including disputed borders and divided loyalties. It is also considered a volatile region, with a particularly dangerous and unpredictable nature, and a tradition of mutual hostility between many of the actors. Power-political interpretations focus on coercing peace from the truculent or ensuring that the distribution of authority in the international system reflects the balance of capabilities – in other words merely managing or freezing conflict. Liberal approaches look to fostering the virtuous triangle of democratic peace, international organisation, and economic interdependence in the region, to reach a final "resolution" symbolised by a peace treaty.

Conflict "transformation" implies the further step of transforming conflict-

87. Louise Diamond, "On Developing a Common Vocabulary: The Conflict Continuum" *Peace Builder* 1(4) (1994), 3.

88. Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 21.

89. Seungjoo Lee, "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Multilayered World Order and The Case of Development Cooperation Policy." *EAI MPDI Working Paper* (2014). <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/185179/28.10.2014.pdf>

90. Bill Hayton and Tro Ly Ngheo, "Vietnam's Coronavirus Success Is Built on Repression." *Foreign Policy*, May 12, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/12/vietnam-coronavirus-pandemic-success-repression/>

91. Clayton Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).

92. Lingfei Wu, Dashun Wang, and James A. Evans, "Large Teams Develop and Small Teams Disrupt Science and Technology" *Nature* 566 (2019): 378–382.

ual relationships which undermine trust, thereby making a true ending of the conflict between parties possible.<sup>86</sup> It seeks "to change the conditions that give rise to the underlying root causes of the conflict" which can transpire in the forms of nation-building, reconciliation and healing, change agency, and social transformation.<sup>87</sup> Thus, conflict transformation draws attention to the systematic transforming of "social relationships" potentially leading to a comprehensive and lasting peace.<sup>88</sup> In particular, conflict transformation involves non-statecentric, non-hierarchical, and NTS conceptualizations of multilateral cooperation.

Regional middle powers, including but not limited to South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and in the context of this article, Japan, acting unilaterally or in concert, have a great deal to gain by taking the lead in this new security approach. Indeed, the rapidly shifting nature of peacebuilding and development cooperation in the 21st century presents middle powers in Asia with a "noble opportunity" to do something that is both normatively right and beneficial to others, while also in the national interest.<sup>89</sup> East Asian middle powers operate under different strategic constraints to those of the Western middle powers which have hitherto dominated the global agenda-setting of international commissions. To gain more recognition, therefore, they should look to play a more independent regional leadership role in NTS affairs.

The inadequate responses of the great powers (the US, China, and Russia) to the COVID-19 crisis have thrust the responses of middle powers, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand, Greece, and Israel, into the spotlight. Four of the most successful responses have come from East Asian middle powers and their civil societies, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam. It has been argued that Vietnam, while a middle power that has demonstrated extraordinary success in this field, does not represent a good NTS model as its achievements have been built on repression.<sup>90</sup> Similar charges (albeit to a lesser extent) could be levelled at Singapore. Taiwan is a democracy, and so is well-suited to such a role, but unfortunately, the traditional power leverage of the PRC has so far proven sufficient to keep the Republic of China (ROC) out of global governance institutions regardless of the NTS contributions Taiwan could make.

South Korea, however, is not faced with the same sort of limitations, and therefore has both the opportunity and, it might be argued, the responsibility to provide leadership. As mentioned above, for instance, the ROK has been at the forefront of "green growth" initiatives. This, along with other NTS issues such as peacekeeping, regional conflict resolution, development assistance, emergency relief and reconstruction, disaster risk reduction (DRR), knowledge transfer and training programs, would seem to offer avenues not only for East Asian middle powers to pursue individual niche diplomacy, but also, potentially to work together. Collaboration in the NTS arena could ultimately spill over into at least confidence and trust-building in the traditional security arena. Indeed, Korean 'middle power' activism in this arena even represents an opportunity for rapprochement with Japan.

Rather than lament geostrategic inadequacies and challenges, it would benefit regional second tier actors (including middle powers and Japan) such as South Korea, to divert at least some of their resources to exploring solutions to seemingly intractable challenges through radical NTS thinking. In business theory, the term 'disruptive innovation' was coined to describe an innovation that creates a new market and value network and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network.<sup>91</sup> Lingfei Wu, Dashun Wang, and James A. Evans later generalised this term to identify disruptive science and technological advances.<sup>92</sup>

Here it is proposed that we adopt the term in a more positive way to apply to the radical out of the box thinking and practices needed to address traditional security and NTS challenges in East Asia. These would include but would not be limited to regional international commissions on such varied issues as nuclear proliferation (North Korea), governance failure (Myanmar), water security, the South China Sea dispute, pandemic response, transnational pollution (yellow dust in Northeast Asia and haze in Southeast Asia), DRR, and the promotion and protection of human security. Thus, South Korea can be seen as having a responsibility to disrupt.

### Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this article was presented as a conference paper “Wither South Korean Foreign Policy in the Age of Anti-Diplomacy?” at the International Political Science Association annual conference July 10-15, 2021. Some of the contents also previously appeared as “New Northern or New Southern Policy Prioritization” *Diplomacy* “외교” Vol.132 (January 2020): 91-133, and are reproduced here by permission.

### Disclosure statement

The author declares to have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

### Funding

This article has been produced as part of the Korea Foundation project on “Peace and Security in Asia: Toward a Meaningful Japan-Korea Partnership”.

### References

- Ahn, Jun-yong. “S. Korea Risks Being Sidelined in Regional Power Play” *The Chosun Ilbo* April 29, 2019. [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2019/04/29/2019042901311.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/04/29/2019042901311.html)
- ASEAN. *New Framework for the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) 2017-2020*. (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2017).
- Berger, Thomas. “From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan’s Culture of Anti-Militarism” *International Security* 17 (4) (1993): 119-150.
- Bloomberg. “Japan-South Korea Friction Flares again after GSOMIA Intel Pact Rescue” *Japan Times* November 25, 2019. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/25/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-south-korea-bickering-gsomia/#.Xg2AZy2Q3ow>
- Calder, Kent. “Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the Reactive State” *World Politics* 40 (4) (1998): 517-541.
- Chae, Kyung-suk. “The Future of the Sunshine Policy: Strategies for Survival” *East Asian Review* 14 (4) (2001): 3-17.
- Cheong, Inkyo. “The Progress of Korea’s FTA Policy in the Context of Northeast Asian Economic Cooperation” in Jeehoon Park, T.J. Pempel, and Gerard Roland (eds.) *Political Economy of Northeast Asian Regionalism: Political Conflict and Economic Integration* 56–66. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008).
- Cheong Wa Dae. “The Second Mekong-ROK Summit” November 13, 2020. [https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/asean-en/brd/m\\_2565/view.do?seq=761105](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/asean-en/brd/m_2565/view.do?seq=761105)
- Christensen, Clayton. *The Innovator’s Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).
- Cooper, Andrew. *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).
- Cooper, Andrew, Richard Higgott, and Kim Nossal. *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993).
- Diamond, Louise. “On Developing a Common Vocabulary: The Conflict Continuum.”

*Peace Builder* 1 (4) (1994): 3. (page numbers of article missing)

- Eck, Tom. "Two Years into Moon Jae-in's Presidency, what's been Achieved on North Korea?" *NK News* May 12, 2019. <https://www.nknews.org/2019/05/two-years-into-moon-jae-ins-presidency-whats-been-achieved-on-north-korea/>
- Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change" *International Organization* 52 (4) (1998): 887-917.
- Gee, Marcus. "Something Strange in South Korea" *The Globe and Mail* July 12, 2006. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/something-strange-in-south-korea/article20414851/>
- Government of the Republic of Korea. "100 Policy Tasks: Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration" (Cheong Wa Dae: 2017). <https://english1.president.go.kr/dn/5af107425ff0d> (link does not work)
- Green, Michael. "Korean Middle Power Diplomacy and Asia's Emerging Multilateral Architecture" In Victor Cha and Marie DuMond (eds.) *The Korean Pivot: The Study of South Korea as a Global Power* 17-34 (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017).
- Han, Sukhee. "Resetting the South Korea-China Relationship: The THAAD Controversies and Their Aftermath" *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 31 (4) (2019): 539-557.
- Hayton, Bill, and Tro Ly Ngheo. "Vietnam's Coronavirus Success Is Built on Repression." *Foreign Policy*, May 12, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/12/vietnam-coronavirus-pandemic-success-repression/>
- Holbraad, Carl. "The Role of Middle Powers" *Cooperation and Conflict* 6 (1) (1971): 77-90.
- Holmes, John. "Is There a Future for Middlepowermanship?" in John Holmes (ed.) *The Better Part of Valour: Essays on Canadian Diplomacy* 18-49 (Toronto: Carleton Library, 1970).
- Hong, Kyo-dok. "South Korean Approaches to Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding: Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead" *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 23 (1) (2009): 23-46.
- Howe, Brendan. "Three Futures: Geopolynomic Transition and the Implications for Regional Security in Northeast Asia" *Modern Asian Studies* 39 (4) (2005): 761-792.
- Howe, Brendan. "Between Normality & Uniqueness: Unwrapping the Enigma of Japanese Security Policy Decision-Making" *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (6) (2010): 1313-1336.
- Howe, Brendan. "Korea's Role for Peace-Building and Development in Asia" *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 5 (2) (2017): 243-266.
- Brendan Howe. "Social Construction of Peacebuilding" in Henry Carey (ed.) *Peacebuilding Paradigms* 111-125. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
- Howe, Brendan, and Min Joung Park. "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy Toward ASEAN" *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 15 (2) (2019): 117-142.
- Kim, Christine, and Ben Blanchard. "China, South Korea Agree to Mend Ties after THAAD Standoff" *Reuters* October 31, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/china-south-korea-agree-to-mend-ties-after-thaad-standoff-idUSKBN1D003G>
- Kim Dae-jung. *Government of the People - Collected Speeches of President*. (Seoul: Office of the President, the Republic of Korea, 1999).
- Kim, Ellen, and Victor Cha. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: South Korea's Strategic Dilemmas with China and the United States" *Asia Policy* 21 (2016): 101-121. [http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia\\_policy/free/120516/AsiaPolicy21\\_Kim\\_Cha\\_January2016.pdf](http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/free/120516/AsiaPolicy21_Kim_Cha_January2016.pdf)
- Kriesberg, Louis. "The Development of the Conflict Resolution Field" In I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, (eds.), *Peacemaking in International Context: Methods and Techniques*. (Washington, DC: Institute of Peace Press, 1997).
- Lee, Kyoung-mi, and Young-shin Kim. "ASEAN Culture House Opens in Busan" *Korea.net* September 6, 2017. <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/policies/view?articleId=148983>
- Lee, Jaehyon. "Korea's New Southern Policy: Motivations of 'Peace Cooperation' and Implications for the Korean Peninsula" *Asan Policy Brief* June 21, 2019. <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/koreas-new-southern-policy-motivations-of-peace-cooperation-and-implications-for-the-korean-peninsula/>

- Lee, Seungjoo. "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Multilayered World Order and The Case of Development Cooperation Policy" *EAI MPDI Working Paper* (2014). <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/185179/28.10.2014.pdf>
- Lee, Shin-hwa, and Chun Young Park. "Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy for Human Security" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 24 (1) (2017): 21-44.
- Maresca, Thomas. "South Korean President Moon Jae-in Suspends further THAAD Deployment" *USA Today* June 7, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/06/07/south-korean-president-moon-jae-suspends-thaad-deployment/102582572/>
- Miall, Hugh, Oliver Ramsbotham, and Tom Woodhouse. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
- Ministry of National Defence. *Defence White Paper 2014*. [http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/mnd/upload/pblictn/PBLICTNEBOOK\\_201501060619270840.pdf](http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/mnd/upload/pblictn/PBLICTNEBOOK_201501060619270840.pdf)
- Mo, Jong-ryn. "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: A Case of Growing Compatibility between Regional and Global Roles" *International Journal* 71 (4) (2016): 587-607.
- Moon, Chung-in. *Sunshine Policy: In Defence of Engagement as a Path to Peace in Korea*. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2012).
- Neack, Laura. "Empirical Observations on 'Middle State' Behavior at the Start of a New International System" *Pacific Focus* 7 (1) (1992): 5-21.
- Nye, Joseph S. "The East Asian Triangle" *Taipei Times* October 16, 2006. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/east-asian-triangle>
- Obuchi, Keizo. "Toward the Creation of a Bright Future for Asia" *Policy Speech at the Lecture Program hosted by the Institute for International Relations Lecture Program*. (Hanoi, Vietnam, December 16, 1998). <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv9812/policyspeech.html>
- Panda, Ankit. "The 'Final and Irreversible' 2015 Japan-South Korea Comfort Women Deal Unravels" *The Diplomat* January 09, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/the-final-and-irreversible-2015-japan-south-korea-comfort-women-deal-unravels/>
- Park, Min-hee, Kang-moon Yoo, and Je-hun Lee. "Kim Jong-un Makes no Mention of Inter-Korean Relations in 2020 Vision" *The Hankyoreh* November 05, 2019. [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/922943.html?fbclid=IwAR3NOM-7EOEo6tTvFTYBRXSZNr-xzI4Fh0eY2lyp0DQ7Kvqu\\_m8p5GCKev-Q](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/922943.html?fbclid=IwAR3NOM-7EOEo6tTvFTYBRXSZNr-xzI4Fh0eY2lyp0DQ7Kvqu_m8p5GCKev-Q)
- Pascha, Werner. "The Republic of Korea's New Northern Policy and New Southern Policy in the Context of International Connectivity Initiatives: Between Hedging and Alignment" *Korea Europe Review* 1 (1) (December 2021): 1-20.
- Preparatory Office. *ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit* November 25-27, 2019 Busan.
- Reuters, "Factbox: U.S. and South Korea's Security Arrangement, Cost of Troops" November 13, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-military-factbox/factbox-u-s-and-south-koreas-security-arrangement-cost-of-troops-idUSKBN1XN09I>
- Robertson, Jeffrey. "South Korea as a Middle Power – Capacity, Behaviour, and Now Opportunity" *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16 (1) (2007): 151-174.
- Rudderham, M.A. "Middle Power Pull: Can Middle Powers use Public Diplomacy to Ameliorate the Image of the West?" *York Centre for International Security Studies Working Paper* 46 (2008). <http://yciss.info.yorku.ca/files/2012/06/WP46-Rudderham.pdf>
- Salmon, Andrew. "Moon, BTS, Welcome ASEAN Leaders to South Korea" *Asia Times* November 25, 2019. <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/11/article/moon-bts-welcome-asean-leaders-to-south-korea/>
- Snyder, Scott A. "South Korean President-Elect Yoon Suk-yeol's Early Foreign Policy Challenges" *Asia Unbound* March 25, 2022. [https://www.cfr.org/blog/south-korean-president-elect-yoon-suk-yeols-early-foreign-policy-challenges?utm\\_source=ko-reupdate&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Korea%20Update:%20April%202022&utm\\_term=KoreaUpdate](https://www.cfr.org/blog/south-korean-president-elect-yoon-suk-yeols-early-foreign-policy-challenges?utm_source=ko-reupdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Korea%20Update:%20April%202022&utm_term=KoreaUpdate)
- Soeya, Yoshihide. "Prospects for Japan as a Middle Power" *East Asia Forum* July 29, 2013. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/29/prospects-for-japan-as-a-middle-power/>
- Stangarone, Troy. "Korea's Dispute with Japan Spills over into National Security" *The Diplomat* August 27, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/koreas-dispute-with-japan-spills-into-national-security/>

- Takahara, Kanako. "Signing of 1965 Normalization Treaty Sparked Sharp Contrast in Reactions" *The Japan Times* June 21, 2015. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/21/national/history/signing-of-1965-normalization-treaty-sparked-sharp-contrast-in-reactions/#.Xg1-xC2Q3ow>
- Teo, Sarah. "Middle Power Identities of Australia and South Korea: Comparing the Kevin Rudd/Julia Gillard and Lee Myung-bak Administration" *The Pacific Review* 31 (2) (2018): 221-239.
- Teo, Sarah, Bhubhinder Singh, and See Seng Tan. "South Korea's Middle-Power Engagement Initiatives: Perspectives from Southeast Asia" *RSIS Working Paper* no. 265 (2013). <https://files.ethz.ch/isn/174582/WP265South%20Korea's%20Power%20Engagement%20Initiatives.pdf> (Link does not work, page not found)
- Voloshchak, Valentin. *The Diplomat* January 9, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/a-closer-look-at-south-koreas-plan-for-cooperation-with-russia/>
- Vom Hau, Matthias, James Scott, and David Hulme. "Beyond the BRICs: Alternative Strategies of Influence in the Global Politics of Development" *European Journal of Development Research* 24 (2) (2012): 187-204.
- Wu, Lingfei, Dashun Wang, and James A. Evans. "Large Teams Develop and Small Teams Disrupt Science and Technology" *Nature* 566 (2019): 378-382.



*Korea Europe Review* journal content is freely available to download, store, reproduce, and transmit for non-commercial, scholarly, and educational purposes.

Reproduction and transmission of KER journal content must credit the author and KER as its original source. Use, reproduction, or distribution of KER journal content for commercial purposes will require express permissions, either from KER (editorial content) or from the respective authors (scholarly content).

Copyright (c) 2022 Brendan Howe for scholarly content



Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License.

Copyright (c) 2021 Christoph M. Michael for cover design



Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) License.

**Korea Europe Review (KER) | ISSN:2750-4832**

**Published by:**

*Korea Europe Center* [a collaborative project of FU Institute of Korean Studies and KDI School of Public Policy and Management]

**Contact:**

[editors@korea-europe-review.org](mailto:editors@korea-europe-review.org)

**Editorial office:**

Otto-von-Simson Straße 11, 2nd floor, Suite 104, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem, Germany.

**Hosted by:**

Center für Digitale Systeme (CeDiS) [www.cedis.fu-berlin.de](http://www.cedis.fu-berlin.de)