

Middle Power in Action: The Evolving Nature of Diplomacy in the Age of Multilateralism

**Sook-Jong Lee, Chaesung Chun,
HyeeJung Suh, and Patrick Thomsen**

East Asia Institute

April 2015

Knowledge-Net for a Better World

The East Asia Institute(EAI) is a nonprofit and independent research organization in Korea, founded in May 2002. The EAI strives to transform East Asia into a society of nations based on liberal democracy, market economy, open society, and peace.

The EAI takes no institutional position on policy issues and has no affiliation with the Korean government. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained in its publications are the sole responsibility of the author or authors.

 **EAI** is a registered trademark.

Copyright © 2015 by EAI

This electronic publication of EAI intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes. Unauthorized posting of EAI documents to a non-EAI website is prohibited. EAI documents are protected under copyright law.

“Middle Power in Action: The Evolving Nature of Diplomacy in the Age of Multilateralism”
ISBN 979-11-86226-29-2 95340

The East Asia Institute
#909 Sampoong B/D, Euljiro 158
Jung-gu, Seoul 100-786
Republic of Korea
Tel. 82 2 2277 1683
Fax 82 2 2277 1684



Middle Power in Action: The Evolving Nature of Diplomacy in the Age of Multilateralism

Sook-Jong Lee, Chaesung Chun,
HyeJung Suh, and Patrick Thomsen
East Asia Institute
April 2015

The concept of middle power or *junggyun-guk* rose to prominence in Seoul's policy circles following the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration in 2008, under the banner of a "Global Korea." This approach resulted in the nation playing host to major international events such as the G20 Seoul Summit, the Fourth High-level Forum for Development Effectiveness and the 2012 Nuclear Summit. The current Park administration has also delineated middle power diplomacy as a key foreign policy pillar, linking it with its global contribution diplomacy.

Middle power diplomacy as concept is ambiguous at best. However, its effectiveness can be clearly seen in positional power, in terms of capability, geographical location and also in a normative sense. The importance of Korea's positioning as a middle power comes as the international environment has undergone major changes, where the traditional U.S.-led hierarchical power structure has given way to emerging horizontal transnational networks focused on diverse issues and diffusing power.¹ This change in the global structure of relations has allowed middle power diplomacy to rise in prominence and has meant the middle power diplomacy lens has focused squarely on multilateralism. However, the inevitable rise of China, coupled with an assertive re-balance to Asia by the U.S., has complicated the foreign policy question for Korea and others in the region. Contextual changes may have allowed middle powers to take on greater roles, but uncertainty and complexity in power relations between the world's two major powers has forced middle power nations to examine closely how network power derived from this new environment can be used to advance its own foreign policy goals. As South Korea is a widely accepted ally of the United States, what complicates this picture even further is the fact that Seoul has shown a greater desire to strengthen ties with Washington of late, a phenomenon facilitated by deepening North Korean provocations in recent times. Although South Korea is likely to play a facilitating role in U.S.-China cooperation across a wide range of differing issues, it still remains to be seen how this will play out in the long term and in which contexts specifically. Additionally, on the global front, issue complexity has dramatically increased, as areas that were once separated, have become intertwined and interlocked via complex linkages, calling for fresh thinking in how to



approach these proliferating and delicate issue areas. It is within this backdrop that the rise of middle power diplomacy as a viable foreign policy strategy has attracted much warranted scholarly and practitioner attention.

The first section of this paper homes in specifically on the definition of a middle power. It finds that there are multiple conceptions of how a middle power can be conceived, although there appears to be consensus on certain typical features of a middle power. For instance, the term ‘brokerage diplomacy,’ or acting as a bridge between two great nations, appears often in the findings of the research panel. Another overarching identity of middle powers is “co-architect.” Middle powers help great powers incorporate the voices of middle and small powers in designing the international architecture. However, a bridging or co-architect role itself is not sufficient in being able to define a middle power. Middle powers derive their status from being a part of a network. Therefore, for a nation to claim the identity of a middle power makes no sense outside of this determined networked framework. Exploring this area of network connectedness is emerging as perhaps the most exciting development in middle power diplomacy. A middle power’s role is complex and dynamic. Outside of this bridging role, each middle power needs to determine issues that are pertinent to their interests, and use the positional power that being a part of this network provides them in pursuing that objective.

The following section focuses on the task of facilitating the formation of a middle power network. The first portion outlines the case for a middle power network. It is clear that a need for a middle power network is rooted firmly in the changing nature of the security environment. Increasingly global norms toward collective solutions to regional and localized problems - rising multilateralism, has found itself under increasing pressure in East Asia, as the rise of China and the renewed vigor of the U.S. focus in the Asia-Pacific region is increasing the likelihood of emerging issue cleavages leading to an increased risk of conflict. Therefore a middle power network framed within this multilateral framework is necessary in helping countries in the region to alleviate potential concerns for both of the hegemonic nations focused on the area. The need for a middle power network is not disputed; rather, what is of great concern is what shape or arrangement a middle power network may take. The MPDI research panel looked extensively at loose frameworks such as MIKTA and more formalized groupings like the BRICS and concluded that a network like MIKTA is indeed something that is needed in the Asia-Pacific region.

The third section of this report deals with the task of exploring issues for a middle power network that enhances U.S.-China cooperation. This concern covers a wide array of critical issue areas such as cyber security, the environment, regional trade and security architectural frameworks, and maritime disputes. The ability to synthesize the interests of the world's two great hegemonic nations is also vital in helping to find a collective solution to the nuclear problem with global consequences on the Korean peninsula. Being able to elicit the support of multiple nations in denuclearizing North Korea is a central strategy related to middle power diplomacy that South Korea must seek to exploit further.

The final part of this report pools together a whole host of policy recommendations from all the sources of the MPDI research activities. The policy recommendations will look to specific



ideas and recommendations for policy practitioners that have been arranged thematically into specific issue areas. This section specifically uses the case of South Korea's middle power diplomacy in various issues with possible suggestions to other middle powers in their attempts to project their roles on the international stage. Recommendations are also made at the local, country-specific level, at a wider, regional perspective and finally from an ever larger, global scope, in which key findings will help to shape the discourse around middle power diplomacy on a wide range of complicated global issues that will require greater use of middle power diplomacy as a foreign policy approach.

This paper draws its source material entirely from the work of the MPDI research network, which consists of an extensive working papers series, issue briefings, ambassador roundtables, policy recommendation papers, and the proceedings from the Middle Power Diplomacy Forum held in Seoul in the final quarter of 2014.

Identifying Middle Powers: Conceptualizing Middle Power Diplomacy

Research on 'middle power' took off with the end of the Cold War in 1989. Works by Stokke (Sokke, 1989), Pratt (Pratt, 1990), and Cooper and his colleagues (Higgott and Cooper, 1990; Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, 1993; Cooper, 1997) laid the foundation for the study of middle power diplomacy. Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal's research, in particular, made significant contributions to delineating the concept of 'middle power' through a detailed analysis of the diplomatic behavioral patterns of middle powers. According to them, middle powers tend to engage in 'middlepowermanship.' It is defined as "[the] tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, [the] tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and [the] tendency to embrace notions of "good international citizenship" to guide its diplomacy (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, 1993: p.19)." Middle powers thus engage in unique behavioral patterns that make them catalysts, facilitators, and managers. Catalysts trigger and promote special global issues while facilitators build coalitions based on cooperation, and managers develop and advance international institutions and norms. Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal posit that these three types of middle power behavioral patterns are linked to niche diplomacy, which involves "concentrating resources in specific areas best able to generate returns worth having (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, 1993: pp.25-26).²

The concept of middle power is a notion that cannot necessarily be defined in a narrow sense. Broadly, there are three ways to define a middle power – according to capabilities, function, or behavior. Middle power diplomacy generally involves the adoption of an internationalist perspective and policy, actively participating in multilateral forums, leading in specific niche areas, and acting as a bridge among nations.³ In the world of international relations and diplomacy, the issue of power and capability is still a dominant discourse favored by many observing the field. Within this framework, the MPDI research network identified that first and foremost, a middle power is defined by capability. Chun posits that the capability of a middle power is related to positional



power. So where a middle power sits within the hierarchy of relations between different nations matters more in this case. A middle power, therefore, is not judged in terms of raw power, but where in the network they are positioned; their degree of connectedness is where their power is derived from. Middle powers then in turn gain further influence from engaging other nations by using a normative base of behavior,⁴ in seeking to reinforce international norms.

Also, the term ‘Bridge’ is a keyword in middle power diplomacy. Conceptually, a middle power is at a position between that of a powerful and not-so powerful country. Accordingly, a middle power as a bridge serves as a link between a great power and a small power, playing the role of mediator when the two sides are at odds and of a channel for communication when there is a breakdown in dialogue. As an example, in regards to the issue of climate change, a middle power’s role as a bridge is essential for breaking the deadlock in which the international society currently finds itself in. There sits China and other developing countries on one side, standing in sharp opposition to the U.S. and other developed countries of the Umbrella Group on the other. To resolve this standoff, a middle power sides with neither group and continues to propose ideas that opposing sides can accommodate.⁵

This sense of the “bridging” role or “brokerage diplomacy” for a middle power is the most pertinent definition of what identifies a middle power. This role and opportunity for middle powers has been developed by the emerging changes in the international system. The global trend toward greater interdependence among states and non-state actors, particularly in the international economic system, has created networked structures. In other words, state power is no longer derived solely from material capabilities but from its position in the network. ‘Positional advantage’ grants middle powers a wide range of opportunities to exercise international influence regardless of material resource constraints.⁶

An additional aspect of this positional power is the fact that middle powers by definition function as a collective and as such, an individual nation cannot exercise middle power diplomacy unilaterally. In this sense, there is no use for a country to classify itself as a middle power unless it is able to define itself within a greater collective. It is this dichotomy in definition that allows middle powers to accrue influence as a group and overcome their limitations in affecting and influencing the policy directions of hegemonic nations.⁷ Perhaps the most prominent illustration of this is the G20, where middle power nations are able to contribute to providing a more peaceful international environment at a collective, multinational event.⁸ Also, for middle powers, influence is not a given but needs to be created. The middle ‘power’ concept is misleading in this regard as it could have connotations that becoming a middle power itself automatically brings a certain level of influence.⁹

Moreover, the role of a middle power is fluid and constructivist in the sense that its role is changing, contested, relative, and inter-subjective.¹⁰ This allows middle powers the ability to define what roles it may choose to play and which issues it may choose to actively pursue. Therefore, from an identity formation perspective, the defining aspect of a country’s foreign policy and diplomacy still remains within the bounds of an individual, sovereignty-based criterion. Countries will choose to engage in issues that they see fit, whether they project the image of a middle power



or not.¹¹ The added benefit for a country that defines itself within the bounds of a middle power is that it is able to assume an additional identity, another means it may wish to make use of in the pursuit of its own foreign policy objectives. A significant benefit of middle power diplomacy and the pursuit of a collective identity in this sense is that it aligns great powers and smaller powers together, and as long as a middle power keeps genuine its intentions of contributing to the greater international good, they cannot be accused of harboring hegemonic intentions, which is a reflection of the ‘middle’ in the term middle power. As such, a middle power acts as “norm diffuser.” By conforming to and promoting universal norms and values, a middle power acquires consent from the public and the international community.

Furthermore, the role a middle power plays in any issues is tied inextricably to its very definition in many ways. Assuming the role of a middle power by default generates specific roles for the network as a whole and for any individual nation that chooses to assume this identity. To this end, Chaesung Chun outlined and articulated South Korea’s conception of middle power diplomacy. Showing that Seoul’s conception of middle power is very much derived by its position in relation to the system as a whole, often encompassing and reflecting the bridging and mediating role that its situation in the network of nations affords it. He posits that South Korea’s brand of middle power diplomacy is based on six elements: (1) help great powers lessen strategic mistrust; (2) suggest an issue-specific dispute settlement mechanism; (3) develop multilateral institutions or to actively participate in and further existing institutions; (4) preempt and import globally established norms to the region and set up the principle on which East Asia can solve disputes; (5) create a cooperative network among like-minded middle powers to strengthen their positions vis-à-vis great powers; and (6) become a co-architect in making and reforming regional security architecture.¹²

However, it is important to note that others have argued that this framework of theoretical analysis is still not adequate, and that the role of middle power nations within the international system can be placed within network theories more, beyond just our normative understanding of a bridging role between great and not-so-great nations. Network theories provide international relations theorists with a deeper account of middle power diplomacy; they hold that a particular type of network creates favorable conditions for participating actors and how actors are positioned in the network facilitates their ability to compete or cooperate with others (Goddard, 2009: p.253). In this view, middle power’s actions are dependent upon the structural condition of the network in which a country is tied to others. In other words, depending on how the structure is shaped, middle powers are likely to enjoy a certain number of roles.¹³ These roles are not just limited to what we commonly understand within the realm of multilateral relations.

In many ways, the identity of a middle power can be taken further to encompass another dimension. It is argued that a middle power, depending on what issue it chooses to engage upon, can also assume the following four identities, which further exemplify the distinctive characteristics of middle power diplomacy: (1) early mover, (2) bridge, (3) coalition coordinator, (4) norm diffuser. These identities involve middle powers in the following ways: (1) elevating their respective statures in the international society by adopting the ‘me first’ approach and leading by example, (2) mediating between opposing groups and seeking measures that would satisfy all parties



involved, (3) building coalitions of like-minded states to advance shared interests and address common concerns, and (4) contributing to the global diffusion of norms and standards.¹⁴

Middle power diplomacy is now an issue of critical importance for the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. For South Korea in particular, it is calibrating its middle power diplomacy in the areas of development cooperation and trade. Regional trade networks and multilateral cooperation are also now in focus. However, it is unclear how much autonomy South Korea can enjoy when engaging in middle power diplomacy. Due to its relative capabilities and position within different networks and alliances, South Korea can play many roles: convener, facilitator, mediator, and “balancer.” It can position itself as an agenda-setter, a norm-setter, or a co-architect. Yet, assuming one of these many roles will prove complicated in the context of U.S.-China relations, while South Korea must also compose and engage frameworks with other players when attempting to play these middle power roles.¹⁵

In summation, the key findings of the MPDI research activities in terms of the conception of middle power can be surmised as follows. Despite the relative difficulty in giving a single unified definition of middle power, there are certain elements of what can be used to measure and constitute a nation as having middle power status. Middle power diplomacy and the identity of a middle power are first of all relational in terms of capability. A nation that wishes to exert itself as a middle power needs to possess material capability that places it in a position that is measured as relatively influential enough to attract and establish itself within a wider network or community of like-minded nations. Its influence as a middle power is then defined within the context of a larger network, and the network itself presents opportunities for middle powers to exercise influence and achieve policy goals and or desired intentions.

For South Korea and the wider Asia-Pacific region, the need for middle powers to form a network and to exercise middle power diplomacy has grown in significance as the security architecture in the region is undergoing dramatic change. The U.S. rebalance to Asia, the relative rise of China, and the rising tension that is beginning to stir in the region all present a dilemma for nations that lack the material capability to assert any direct influence. This in itself increases the saliency of middle power analysis and exploration for the Asia-Pacific region and other global players as multilateralism continues to enjoy its time in the foreign policy sun.

The Case for and the Applicability of a Middle Power Network

An important question that needs to be dealt with is whether there is an immediate need for a middle power network in the region. To this end, there were multiple areas in which there were found pressing and urgent concerns for the Korean government as well as the region as a whole. For example, multilateralism may be on the rise worldwide. In Asia, however, the complicated history issues have blocked the spillover effect of greater economic interaction leading to stronger cooperation in security matters. Therefore, middle powers in particular can help to transform the current balance of power style relations to that of collaboration among great powers, which pro-



motes a collective mechanism of dispute settlement and multilateralism.¹⁶ Moreover, the expectation that the end of the Cold War and the tide of mega-trend transformation of globalization would bring about post-Westphalian transition has gradually faded away. Now the phenomenon of a “return of geopolitics” is being witnessed in many regions, and traditional realist great power rivalry seems to dominate the international order.¹⁷

East Asia, reflecting these global changes, still preserves its own characteristics. With the so-called American rebalancing strategy, retrenchment of American power is less felt, while rivalry between the United States and China increasingly defines the nature of the East Asian security order. Unlike other regions, especially Europe, geopolitics has never left the regional scene in security matters, and as previously mentioned, globalization or economic interdependence has not transformed the situation. Military competition has worsened even in the post-Cold War period. The combination of balancing strategy and the power transition defies the expectation that great power politics will make way for multilateral cooperation. But multilateral institutions are being reshaped to reflect great power politics. The rise of nationalism, composed of many different elements, haunts the region, further complicating the security situation. Going through a series of hardships, East Asian countries preserve a high level of suspicion and fear among themselves, which aggravates the security dilemma.¹⁸

These concerns have been heightened by the fact that China’s response to the U.S. rebalance to Asia has been to become largely more assertive. Relations between the United States and China have evolved into a pattern of mutual strategic hedging.¹⁹ With the increased competition between the U.S. and China placing real pressure on South Korean diplomacy, South Korea’s realization of “middle power diplomacy” has become more of an imminent task.²⁰ Moreover, East Asia’s maritime issues have also evolved within a number of contexts including international politics, economics, and law. Specifically, they form a multi-layered structure of issues involving territorial sovereignty, resource development, delimitation of maritime boundaries, and protection of the environment.²¹

The need for middle power diplomacy is clear, however, the following question becomes; what sort of architectural framework should middle power diplomacy follow, if one at all? A particular point of interest is the type of example and assistance that the MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia) alliance presents. As of yet to be institutionalized as a formal organization, MIKTA in its current state provides a strong basis for the possible expansion and development of a middle power network at a global or even regional-specific level. For one thing, MIKTA nations are classic middle powers in terms of capabilities, but they are often world leaders in key sectors (e.g. Australia and energy). MIKTA is not a “middle power grouping” but a group of countries working together on issues of common interest.²² MIKTA’s, weakness though, is that it is not currently a norm-setting group of countries. It is more of a caucus, or a lobby group. If we were to look at BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in contrast, they were able to transition and take the next step towards becoming a rule-setting group.²³ The question will be whether MIKTA will be able to make this step, to which many are skeptical. It is thought that



MIKTA cannot reach this level of organization in the near future; its earliest and greatest influence is most likely to be within the G20.²⁴

That is not to deny the potential of MIKTA and middle power diplomacy as a tool for affecting change in both a positive collective sense and as a means for individual nations to continue to pursue greater influence over world affairs. The power of being part of a greater collective presents avenues of opportunity for middle powers. As an individual country, it makes no sense to define oneself as a middle power; only in a collective sense is it meaningful to align one's self as a middle power. As a group, middle powers can act as swing states.²⁵ At the moment, it is unclear as to whether the role of middle powers as mediators can be effective as there is now increasing pressure to move back into “followership,” considering the return of geopolitical issues. Perhaps more importantly though, what makes middle powers special is that they share a sense of club membership, even though their effectiveness at procuring change and assisting in the transformation of the world system is still yet to be determined.²⁶ This sense of club membership allows for a certain type of influence to build. As can be witnessed by how the development of the TPP, an initiative led by a group of small nations, was able to attract the attention of larger nations, in the end procuring support from the world's biggest economic superpower. Therefore, one cannot discount the potential of MIKTA and an organization or grouping like it in the future.

Certainly, there appears great potential for MIKTA and middle power diplomacy to benefit the Asia-Pacific region in other ways. For instance, historically, MIKTA countries have joined forces previously in collectively promoting actions toward stronger global governance. As such, the idea of establishing groups is not new, and in the past has been common in Asia. There is a track record of change being affected when countries grouped or attempted to group into various partnerships.²⁷ For South Korea specifically, MIKTA can be seen as part of the trust-building process, and even as an expansion of the Korean government's trust diplomacy. Korea has been bringing domestic and regional issues to this new forum recently in order to foster new cooperation.²⁸

In pursuing this, MIKTA should work to strengthen global norms, not challenge them. All these countries benefited from the global system and should resist deteriorating the state of human rights, intellectual property rights, technical standards, and the rule of law. Therefore, it is important that global norms are enhanced by MIKTA countries. Participating countries should also look for issues where MIKTA can take a bridging role, such as trade and climate change issues for which multilateralism has broken down because there is no one playing the bridging role between poorer and richer countries. They should also target areas where the combined voices of these countries would have credibility and be a ‘force for good’, highlighting issues and giving them credibility.²⁹

There always exists a multitude of interests which can mean that there are slightly diverging perspectives toward middle power diplomacy as a whole. Australia envisions a group that can tackle a broad range of issues – one that is not prescriptive in issue selection. However, Australia has identified several initial areas in which it hopes middle powers can advocate for a greater global good. Australia would like to explore the ability for middle powers to promote multilateralism by helping to embed the G20 more concretely into the existing international architecture.



While Australia views the G20 as positive and worthwhile, it feels that the G20 has yet to prove that it is capable of becoming a critical and durable addition to the international order. The network should also seek to support regional stability and prosperity. Finally, it should work with other nations to address non-traditional security problems, such as transnational crimes, energy security, cyber security, and access to food.³⁰

Of immediate concern for South Korea is of course the situation on the Korean peninsula. Middle power diplomacy can be useful in helping to find a solution to the deadlock that Pyongyang and the wider regional and international community of nations find themselves in. The situation in North Korea can be defined as a narrow inter-Korean issue. Yet, there exists a pathway in framing it as a global subject matter, for example by focusing on the non-proliferation aspect. Engaging North Korea at the level of global norms makes it relevant from a middle power diplomacy perspective. South Korea can play a role in designing a multilateral framework to impact North Korea's strategic decisions, particularly on giving up nuclear weapons. The most important item for North Korea, however, is the survival of its regime. Progress can only be made if North Korea can be provided with security and identity within the regional order. South Korea can play a middle power role in proposing a regional security architecture that would encompass North Korea.³¹

As a possibility, President Park Geun-hye's Northeast Asian Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) could serve as a useful platform. The NAPCI is an extension and application of her *trustpolitik* policy to the Northeast Asian region by pursuing accumulation of dialogue and cooperation to build trust and lay the foundation for sustainable peace and prosperity. It is aimed at overcoming the "Asia Paradox" of deepening distrust and conflict despite the increasing economic interdependence in the region, focused primarily on maritime disputes. The initiative still lacks detailed action plans and might potentially misalign with America's pivot to Asia because the success of NAPCI depends on how South Korea effectively accommodates China. However, the initiative still offers South Korea an important trust-building mechanism through agenda-setting in maritime disputes.³² This mechanism has the potential to also be extended to encompass other issue areas and could perhaps offer a way forward in the search for a solution to the deadlocked denuclearization of North Korea talks.

Enhancing U.S.-China Cooperation through Middle Power Diplomacy

The MPDI, from its inception, has had its gaze fixated very much on the value of a middle power network within the context of enhanced U.S.-China relations. All of the MPDI research activities have sought to view issue areas through this unique and highly salient lens. This section of the report will first look to ways South Korea can exercise its own middle power diplomacy strategy in enhancing U.S.-China cooperation, then move on to regional implications and explore multilateral and multilateralism as a way of mediating possible disagreements.



Within this context, it is rather clear that due to its positioning in terms of geography, material capability - economically, militarily, strategically, South Korea's role naturally gravitates toward that of becoming a bridge between the two great powers. What type of bridge and between which areas are highly dependent on a range of complex factors. South Korea occupies a space which places it on favorable terms with both the U.S. and China, having enjoyed strengthened relations with both, but this provides both opportunity and danger. As its long-standing relationship with the U.S. continues to develop, it must be careful to not let this interfere with the developing relations it has managed to craft in more recent times with its closer, larger neighbor, China.³³

Regarding South Korea's role as a middle power, China has more concern than expectation. The background reason for China's focus on the emergence of middle powers is related to its diplomatic goal of actualizing China's rise and creating an international environment conducive to it. Firstly, as for China which is currently preparing for its rise as an emergent major power, the emergence of middle powers is a positive turn of events in that they can contribute to affecting change in the existing international system and norms being led by established powers. However, because in China's perspective South Korea supports the U.S.-led order within the framework of its alliance with the U.S. and the two countries carry out close policy cooperation, China's view of South Korea's role and prestige as an independent middle power is limited. Even in terms of economics, South Korea is too limited to take a leading role in the region as a middle power because it directly faces competition with the region's economic major powers such as China and Japan.³⁴

This position is fraught with difficulties. To overcome this, South Korea must still look toward middle power diplomacy to help advance and protect its own national interests. One such area of great importance in which this applies for South Korea is that of trade and finance. As the U.S. and China are both seeking to expand their influence in the region through the development of region-wide trade agreements, South Korea will need to tread carefully. In response, South Korea should lead a middle power network to propagate against the view that sees the regional free-trade agenda reduced to a Sino-American relationship. Many see that China or the U.S. may end up having veto power over any regional agreement that could develop. This situation is not conducive for all countries in the region, so where opportunities exist for middle power countries to make a deal to their mutual benefit, they should grasp those opportunities and do so by convening mechanisms where middle powers come together in sharing common interests.³⁵

Moreover, it is now clear that China is looking to establish Asia's infrastructure in cooperation with other nations and network in different areas. For instance, it plans to expand various forms of investment projects with neighboring countries via high-speed railroad construction, fiber-optical cables installation, and river development. China has been active in not only bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs), but also multilateral economic cooperation mechanisms such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). China plans to integrate capital markets with South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan through internalization of the Renminbi,³⁶ a prospect that may not sit well with Washington, posing further problems for countries in the region.



In response to this changing environment, middle powers need to reinforce and follow international norms. As China's initiatives in the region begin to gain momentum, the South Korean role is not only taking the initiative in elaborating the RCEP's objectives that support and contribute to regional economic integration, and equitable economic development, but also strengthening economic cooperation between advanced industrial and developing countries as well as arresting any U.S. fears. With successful brokerage, a harmonious regional economic architecture can emerge, and ultimately, help to establish complex regional networks that can assuage potential conflicts in the making of a regional security arrangement rivaled by two superpowers.³⁷

Moreover, one of the greatest fears that the international community harbors over the rise of China is that it is trying to re-write the rules of the global game and could potentially choose to override or deliberately violate accepted global norms. Therefore, another important role that South Korea and other middle power nations in the region should play is that of "socializer." South Korea should work together with other regional countries to socialize China into regional norms and acceptable behavior. While alliances can be useful in deterring an actor, it is an ineffective means to socialize an actor into acceptable norms and behavior. Sole or excessive reliance on deterrence as a means of maintaining regional security and stability is unlikely to result in a genuine and lasting peace. It could even lead to the worst scenario for all regional countries, namely, a potential China-U.S. military conflict. That is the scenario that middle powers should work together to avoid.³⁸ For South Korea, it is of critical importance considering its position geographically and strategically in the regional and global hierarchy of nations.

Additionally, avoiding the potentially calamitous situation of a U.S.-China conflict escalating over a vast kaleidoscope of possible issues is a primary concern for South Korea and the international community at large. The lessening of strategic mistrust between the U.S. and China is a cornerstone of South Korea's middle power diplomacy, and this is an area where a mini-lateral approach can help. Mini-lateral mechanisms are effective in that relevant participants focus on impending issues with a higher level of priority, flexible in that the scope of participants is adaptable depending on specific issues, and constructive in that a web of multiple mini-lateral mechanisms may ultimately end up as a solid multilateral mechanism. In all these processes, middle powers do not pursue hegemonic dominance. They try to lessen strategic distrust among great powers because hegemonic strife endangers their interests; anchor the regional order on non-zero-sum game and normative politics; establish stable middle power cooperation to have stronger impact on architectural issues; and evade the pitfall of degenerating mini-lateral venues for institutional balancing among major powers.³⁹

Another area where lessening strategic mistrust is becoming more important is that of cyber security. Cyber security is beginning to establish an ever larger presence in U.S.-China relations and is seriously affecting threat perceptions on both sides. Indeed, despite it being such a new issue, the cyber realm is proving to be as challenging as the more traditional issues that have long dominated the U.S.-China agenda. South Korea, which has a reputation as a "Strong Internet Nation," is expected to play a contributive role in the cyber security sector. It is urgent and crucial for South Korea to build up enough capabilities to fend off any attacks through cyberspace. How-



ever, securing cyberspace is not solely based on fostering material capabilities, but also figuring out diplomatic solutions among committed actors.⁴⁰

To achieve these tasks of middle power diplomacy in the sector, it is essential that South Korea properly identify the structural conditions in which it currently operates, and determine adoptable options for the future to aid in its success. In other words, a major task here is to comprehend the overall configuration of the technological and political structures, and define the coordinating or conflicting interests of the actors who are engaging the game. Under these circumstances, it is critical for South Korea as a middle power to understand the structure and dynamics of the cyber security sector, and to figure out what kinds of specific roles are expected of its middle power diplomacy. Here, it is most important for South Korea to have the ability of contextual and positional intelligence, which reads constantly evolving contexts and identifies its moving positions in cyber security.⁴¹

As a possible lesson, South Korea could look to the experiences of other nations. The MPDI research team was able to seek opinions from other nations who have had to tread the tight rope that separates the U.S. and China in other contexts. In its relations with either the U.S. or China, Brazil walks a thin line between cooperation and conflict. In order to resolve conflicts existing among countries, institutions built upon international agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) are established. Brazil has always brought a troubling issue or conflict to the international community and tried to resolve it within that institutional framework. For Brazil, settlement of conflicts through international institutions has been deemed successful and effective. In the era of globalization, resolving problems in the realm of international institutions is more effective than focusing on bilateral relations or regionalism.⁴²

Policy Recommendations for Middle Power Diplomacy

After analyzing the definition of middle powers, the role of middle power networks, and specific issue areas for middle power network collaboration in the context of U.S.-China relations, this report suggests the following policy recommendations with specific examples of South Korea's middle power diplomacy which in-turn can be applied in many ways to other middle powers.

Prioritize Multilateral Linkages of Regional and Global Levels

The foremost strategic direction for middle power diplomacy should be multilateral in nature. A middle power's role and status can be increased via a multilateral mechanism in which the middle power can act as a broker or bridge in bringing together multiple stakeholders and possibly ease tension and disagreements.

In the maritime security arena, no comprehensive, multilateral maritime regime has been initiated in East Asia. As a result, there is much room for middle powers such as South Korea to exercise middle power diplomacy in order to build a new regional maritime order. In order to estab-



lish a mutually agreeable regime, all involved parties must decide how their new institutional efforts will be nested within the already existing global system. Such deliberations should be tackled multilaterally. Middle powers can play a mediating role between broadly defined global regimes and narrowly implemented national responses by building a regional maritime regime that is complementary to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).⁴³

As for middle power diplomacy in the economic arena, the multilateral mechanism is equally significant. In finance, since middle powers are far more limited in projecting their policy preferences in the international arena than great powers, middle powers should not only employ multilateralism as a policy tool, but pursue it as a goal in itself. By developing a mixed strategy of regional and global linkages, middle powers should take a two-step approach and attempt to exercise global clout that derives from solidifying regional multilateralism.⁴⁴ Similarly, middle powers should be aware of the critical importance of multilateral diplomacy in trade. Given the undeniable geopolitical competition between the U.S. and Japan on one side and China on the other, South Korea, as a middle power, needs a trade policy that requires a critical understanding of the complex nature of trade issues and a balanced approach in a turbulent region. Middle powers should be prepared to respond strategically to the increasing need of middle power diplomacy in multilateral settings.⁴⁵

In emerging issue areas, multilateralism remains the key to middle power diplomacy. In efforts to stem climate change, for example, middle powers should look towards building multidimensional coalitions. Persuading undecided countries and allying with as many like-minded partners as possible are important actions for South Korea to engage in creating multidimensional negotiating coalitions to exercise international Green Growth leadership. The five-nation Environmental Integrity Group (EIG) founded by South Korea is limited in that the member nations take neutral positions in world affairs. Therefore, South Korea should actively join forces with other like-minded nations to create new negotiating groups. Forming a coalition with like-minded countries for the balanced promotion of environment and growth under the Green Growth banner would allow South Korea to disseminate its beliefs on a global scale.⁴⁶ Likewise, middle powers should turn towards building multilateral coalitions to legitimize and promote their policy ideas and beliefs internationally.

Pursue Mini-lateralism as a Complementary Venue to Multilateralism

Middle powers need to actively participate in mini-lateral networks led by the U.S. and China, while trying to evaluate the compatibility of these networks and reconcile the purposes of diverse mini-lateral mechanisms. Mini-lateral mechanisms are effective in areas where multilateralism is particularly weak. In East Asia where multilateralism is not function properly, mini-lateralism may act as a complementary mechanism. A web of multiple mini-lateral mechanisms may pave the way for multilateralism to become fully-fledged.⁴⁷

In the context of East Asian security, mini-lateral security cooperation among South Korea, Japan, and the U.S. works as a complementary mechanism. In response to U.S.-centered mini-



lateralism, China tries to strengthen its ties with neighboring countries through such economic and non-traditional security networks such as ASEAN Plus Three (APT) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Regional middle powers need to participate in both U.S. and China-centered networks, and by doing so, they can alleviate China's concern and wariness generated from their alliance with the U.S. forming trust with both the U.S. and China by alleviating China's concern is crucial in securing middle power prestige and roles.⁴⁸

In trade, a middle power can act as a broker in mini-lateral free trade agreements (FTAs). For example, South Korea can help shape the FTA between South Korea, China, and Japan (CJK) as a three-way standard for future rules in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). In this mini-lateral trade mechanism, South Korea can focus less on tariff concessions and more on trade rule-making as the main point of the CJK FTA. The role of a middle power, in this sense, would be to lead the two rivals, namely China and Japan, by keeping the focus on negotiating trade rules, including Rules of Origin (ROO), Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), competition policy, and regulatory rules.⁴⁹

Build Influence through the Pursuance and Enhancement of International Norms

A middle power should aim to be a “value state” rather than a “hegemonic state.” For middle powers that have less military capabilities and economic resources, norm- or value-oriented diplomacy is crucial and effective since diplomatic strategies that are closely aligned with the international norms are likely to be supported by other countries.

As far as resolving maritime disputes goes, middle powers should focus on their roles and capacity as a “bearer of the regime,” laying legal foundations acceptable to all parties involved instead of competing against others in the arms race.⁵⁰ In other words, middle powers must go beyond pursuing simple national egoism. They need to invent an effective mechanism for dispute settlement appropriate for specific issue areas.

In climate change, norm-setting is important for middle power diplomacy since it elevates a middle power's reputation and status. In the specific case of South Korea, in order for it to become a leading middle power in global climate change politics, it must focus on effectively internalizing Green Growth leadership before engaging in related diplomatic rhetoric, and in so doing, elevate its international reputation. The green diplomacy pursued by the previous Lee Myung-bak administration, which contributed to boosting South Korea's stature in the climate change arena, needs to be advanced by the current administration despite the obvious political burden.⁵¹

Norm-setting is equally important for middle powers to pursue in development cooperation. In order to establish its status as a broker, a middle power must move past the narrow pursuit of national interests and instead promote universal norms and values. Specifically, in order to expand its middle power stature in the development cooperation arena, South Korea must develop and export an inclusive and dynamic model of economic development, which incorporates South Korea's past, present, and future. While based on South Korea's past experience, this model should display the dynamic trajectory of how South Korea initially developed its policies to fit its



institutions. It should also demonstrate how South Korea has transformed itself in the face of external and domestic pressures such as globalization and democratization and how it will face future challenges and opportunities.⁵²

In the area of cyber security, understanding of the structural conditions of the cyber security sector and compliance with the existing system and norms are important for middle powers. Indeed, the world powers' simplistic approach, based on the traditional conception of "power politics," does not fit into the nature of cyberspace, which is strongly predicated upon complexity. In this context, middle powers can use normative diplomacy for a demilitarized peace discourse, linking cyber threats from the perspective of militarization in cyberspace; post-international discourse, dealing with inter-network dynamics of cyber security issues and an international legal framework that defines the use of force in cyber space; and cyber ethics.⁵³

Disentangle and Prioritize Issues in a Sequential Process

Middle powers should decompose multiple issues separately and tackle them in a sequential order. After disaggregating issues, they in turn should be able to propose a roadmap for a new regional order to deal with emerging issues in the region.

For middle power diplomacy in maritime disputes, various issues such as territorial sovereignty, delimitation of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and the continental shelf, resource development, and protection of the maritime environment should be approached separately. Because each issue has symbolic and material values with varying degrees, these issues can be arranged into a sequential level of difficulty. For example, countries can first work together on a joint development zone for oil and gas exploration, while shelving the sovereignty disputes, which is one of the most complex issues to be resolved. Therefore, issue decomposition in a sequential level of difficulty is suggested in order for a middle power to play a significant role in maritime disputes.⁵⁴

More specifically, middle powers should propose a roadmap that first includes a declaration of "standstill" in current maritime disputes. The standstill declaration will not solve the sovereignty issue or the maritime delimitation issue, but it can certainly dampen tensions in the disputed areas. Reduced political tensions and accumulated experiences of cooperation could eventually provide a cornerstone for resolving broader issues. Secondly, middle powers should utilize multilateralism in the delimitation of EEZs and the continental shelf. In addressing East Asian maritime disputes, signing a multilateral agreement similar to the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) concluded between China and the ASEAN states can be a first step toward enhancing multilateral understanding while maintaining the status quo at the same time. Third, the roadmap should allow middle powers to work out an agreement on the principles regarding the base points and the baselines through multilateral negotiations. Then, the parties can work on the delimitation principles. Fourth, middle powers must proceed to fixing the tentative boundaries and zones beginning with relatively less contentious areas. The tentative



boundaries and zones can be adjusted and revised in consideration of ‘historic title or other special circumstances’ through additional negotiations.⁵⁵

In finance, middle powers should tackle three micro strategies in sequential order: (1) Principled Minimalism and Host Regulation; (2) Decomposition and Issue Linkage; and (3) Informal Intermediaries. First, middle powers should work out the most agreeable principles, regulations, or rules, and domestically apply the agreed upon principles without external imposition. Second, they must break down the complicated bargaining and negotiation processes of institutional cooperation into multiple stages. After the issue decomposition, middle powers should link relevant issues to minimize distributional conflicts of negotiation parties. Lastly, middle powers should contribute to agenda setting, co-development of policy ideas, and construction of robust policy networks by revitalizing both Track 1.5 and 2 Diplomacy.⁵⁶

Reconfigure Alliances with Great Powers, in Reflection of the Changing Global Architecture

Middle power diplomacy needs to reflect the changes in the global architecture marked by resilient behavior of power-balancing, strengthening of power-transition, and power competition. Against this backdrop, middle powers need to reconfigure their strategic positions in the alliance with the great powers to cope with changing situations in their surrounding region and an uncertain global future.

In the East Asia security environment, for example, the security interests of the regional middle powers with a predetermined concept of threats are closely linked to their alliance with the United States. For example, South Korea’s alliance with the U.S. is based on the rationale of deterring North Korea’s security threat. Nevertheless, the South Korea-U.S. alliance needs to expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation to reduce tensions arising from the power shift in East Asia. At the same time, in order to alleviate China’s concerns over a strengthened South Korea-U.S. alliance, Seoul, should manifest its strategic purpose and principle in clear terms and make explicit its vision for a more peaceful and unified Korea.⁵⁷

Taking into further consideration the “rising” great power in East Asia, namely China, as has been mentioned earlier, a regional middle power such as South Korea needs to expand its independent diplomatic space and status that is compatible with its existing identity as an American ally. China’s perception of regional middle powers is limited in that it acknowledges the strategic value of middle powers that are allied with the U.S. based not on its respect for their middle power status, but on its perception of the regional middle powers as the U.S.’s junior partners. In order to maintain the status and role of middle power diplomacy, regional middle powers need to reshape their identity and roles as U.S. allies in the context of the U.S.-China rivalry.⁵⁸

Make Full Use of Institutional Strength to Maximize Commitment

Active participation in major international institutions and middle power initiatives will enhance the ability of middle powers to respond to great power politics. It is important for a middle power



to foster the reputation as a global normative power that complies with collective interests and earn respect in order to achieve middle power status and a role among great powers, and also to persuade great powers to cooperate with the middle power agenda.

In security, middle powers should actively take part in global security affairs, utilizing a well-trained military, long-preserved experience in real combat and peacekeeping operations, and a good reputation as a democratized and economically developed middle power,⁵⁹ in order to contribute to the collective security of their region and the wider international community.

In the case of development cooperation, middle powers should make the best use of its institutional platforms to expand and deepen cooperation with international organizations and foreign governments. South Korea, for example, should build on its successes in hosting various international bodies such as Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), Green Climate Fund (GCF), or Green Technology Center Korea (GTCK) to sequentially broaden cooperation with international organizations like the World Bank, UN, and OECD. Utilizing the institutional strength to “bridge” with already-existing institutions and international organizations is likely to improve its middle power status and reputation.⁶⁰

With respect to the role of middle powers in climate change, middle powers should leverage an already-existing international body to disseminate its diplomacy. For example, South Korea should pursue Green Growth and technology assistance projects for developing countries through GGGI and GTCK, international organizations founded under South Korea’s leadership. Through this process, South Korea can disseminate its Green Growth vision, and by devising and implementing climate change strategies for developing countries, South Korea can develop its growing reputation and maintain its track record on success in climate change.⁶¹

Build Multidimensional Policy Network through Knowledge-sharing and Skill-building

In order for middle powers, which are comparatively weak in military, economic, and material basis in relation to other major powers, to effectively carry out multilateralism on the international stage, it is necessary to increase the ability of a middle power grouping to creatively formulate problem-solving policy ideas in nurturing a policy network. This policy network will eventually lead to a local, as well as regional, epistemic community. Multilateralism operates on a long-term time horizon; therefore, it is conducive to creating a policy network among like-minded representatives from member countries that share policy visions beyond territorial borders. This policy network will work on policy ideas and long-term visions rather than calculation of short-term gains and losses. Therefore, middle powers can offset “power shortage” problems in the region and stand at the center of institutional cooperation by portraying itself as a “policy entrepreneur.”⁶²

Building a policy network is particularly pertinent in the finance arena where a high level of expertise and professional experience is required for policy development. It is of particular importance to develop the skills of government officials who are involved in financial and monetary diplomacy. Selecting and nurturing these officials academically and professionally not only fulfills the greater level of expertise demanded by financial and monetary diplomacy, but also ensures the



development of veteran leadership in building and expanding policy networks. A veteran policy-maker, who builds his or her professional career in multilateral diplomacy in a particular area, would be able to command his or her personal relationships as well as institutional networks to shape a regional financial policy with their experience and reputation.⁶³

In development cooperation, middle powers need to pursue the growth of knowledge power. Middle powers lacking hard power should develop knowledge power that can guide stakeholders to explore the same issues from a different angle. Although there is a growing perception that growth, environment, human rights, governance, social integration, and peace are inseparable issues, it is still being debated how they can be integrated in the context of individual countries. Taking into consideration its comparative advantage in individual issue areas, South Korea should develop its knowledge power to take an integrated approach to the post-2015 era that can combine these individual issues onto a path toward sustainable development.⁶⁴

In order for middle powers to develop policy networks, the government should first and foremost create a policy team through which government officials in relevant ministries regularly exchange views and share information with researchers, professors, and professionals. In the case of finance, government officials can provide information on other governments' policy preferences that they have collected from intergovernmental negotiations; researchers can develop and spread new policy ideas through various academic exchanges, including informal and formal Track 2 meetings at the regional and global levels; and business professionals can communicate with government officials on market evaluation of and responses to government policies that would affect financial and monetary markets. Furthermore, governments should collaborate with regional, epistemic communities, to build regional expert networks.⁶⁵

Multiple Identities: Mixing Roles of Bridge, Builder, Designer, Leader in Appropriate Contexts

The roles of middle power diplomacy should vary according to different issue areas and middle powers must adjust accordingly. In our selected issue areas, four roles have been identified: bridge, builder, designer, and leader. Being a bridge refers to the ability of a middle power to assuage mutual distrust between different nations and major powers over existing issue areas. As a builder, using established norms, a middle power may help to facilitate the manifestation of the designs of other parties who have established an accepted international norm in real world settings. Additionally, at times, a middle power can also identify areas in which it may function as a designer, shaping the institutional design of a potential multilateral framework, be it partial or in patching existing frameworks. A middle power may also identify issues in which it may be able to take the lead, effectively driving the development of an international norm and/or architectural framework meant to move an issue forward on to the international stage. Depending on the specific issue area in which a middle power is involved and their level of complexity, a middle power should show that it is dynamic in being able to engage in the interplay of these multiple identities where it is most appropriate.



In areas of complexity such as security, which require more subtlety and deliberated efforts, the role of a middle power is limited to that of a broker or bridge. In security, middle powers need to establish a middle power initiative by strengthening security cooperation among like-minded partners. The role of middle powers in security is to lessen strategic distrust among great powers, anchor the regional order by stressing a non-zero-sum game and normative politics, establish stable middle power cooperation to have a stronger impact on architectural issues, and evade the pitfall of degenerating mini-lateral venues for institutional balancing among major powers. South Korea, for example, has exemplified this by pursuing the leadership of forming a middle power initiative at the global level in issue areas such as global green growth, the MIKTA cooperative network, and nuclear security. By building such an initiative, middle powers can consult each other in creating a new agenda for security cooperation.⁶⁶

For development cooperation, middle powers can manage conflicting interests between stakeholders and in so doing, serve as a bridge between traditional and emerging donors. Middle powers can work towards bringing together and forming a like-minded group of countries that share goals and principles conducive to development cooperation. Collaboration with international organizations and foreign governments is a good strategy to enhance the status and role of middle powers. For example, South Korea can work with MIKTA members to facilitate cooperation among members in the area of development. However, middle powers should be aware that strategic collaboration based primarily on shared interests is an alliance of convenience which runs the risk of disintegrating when interests diverge. Middle powers should instead seek to form a like-minded group in the long term in the event that interest-based cooperation may collapse.⁶⁷

In maritime disputes, middle powers should assume the position of a safety mechanism or broker among their neighbors. This is particularly relevant for South Korea because it must assume the role of a safety mechanism among Japan, China, and the U.S. It is not wise for South Korea to depend excessively on the U.S. in the face of China's rapid expansion of power so as to keep the balance between the two superpowers. Neither should South Korea be absorbed into China's sphere of influence.⁶⁸ Therefore it has to occupy a delicate position in this issue area and actively maintain to preserve its position.

In cyber security, a middle power can be an architect or builder; that is to say not a whole system designer but a complementary programmer who can provide useful patch programs for the entire system operated by world powers. While middle powers need to engage in building a world order in the cyber security sector, their diplomatic strategies should be complementary to the existing system.⁶⁹ A middle power possesses neither the capability nor influence to be a full system designer in this case, therefore, functioning as a complementary programmer and volunteering its expertise in bringing the system into fruition will allow it to fulfill a greater role in balancing diverging interests between the great powers.

A middle power's role in the economic area is that of designer. In trade, specifically, middle powers should work towards designing new regional trade architecture. In between the U.S.-led Trans-pacific Partnership (TPP) and China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), again, using its ability to design patchwork systems, middle powers should design a re-



gional framework where these two trade networks can coexist. The role of middle powers such as South Korea is to take the initiative in elaborating the RCEP's objective that supports and contributes to regional economic integration, equitable economic development, and strengthened economic cooperation between advanced industrial countries and developing countries.⁷⁰

In the area of finance, middle powers should lead an effort to consolidate the patterns of cooperation among regional powers in developing and designing regional financial and monetary arrangements. A regional middle power can do much more in shaping the global financial and monetary order than what its middle power position may allow it to do by choosing to focus on the region. A strategy of regional and global linkage opens up more possibilities for middle powers to implement and reflect its policy preferences in comparison to other strategies.⁷¹

As for the function of middle power diplomacy in climate change, a middle power's role should be that of a leader. Especially in climate change, middle powers must transition from indistinct bridge to active leader. Many middle powers have the status of developing nation in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and therefore do not have binding commitments. To avoid being regarded as an indistinct bridge that does not take on any meaningful responsibilities and merely stresses its developing nation status and the accompanying commitment exemption, a middle power must take sincere and meaningful action while also assuming active leadership responsibilities. The leadership role of middle powers entails finding areas of specialized focus and proposing them to the international community. For example, South Korea has developed unique mechanisms such as a unilateral Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) registry and proposed them to the international community.⁷²

Conclusion

The research activities of the Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative have produced a set of concrete policy recommendations for the South Korean government to consider in developing its future foreign policy. The collection of research projects have covered a wide array of issue areas, ranging from climate change, trade, finance, cyber security, regional security architecture, maritime security policy, the U.S. rebalance, changing brands in soft power diplomacy, U.S. and Chinese views of middle power diplomacy to name just a few of the pertinent discussion points raised by MPDI research team. The project was able to successfully achieve its aims of firstly identifying middle power in conceptualizing different approaches and definitions of middle power diplomacy. It seems that the term middle power has many shades to its formulation, and functions beyond mere 'bridging' as is often assumed. The second task of establishing a need and proposing a possible future architecture for a middle power diplomacy network was also extensively investigated. To which the findings were that existing models currently exist, however, it would be an area that South Korea would have to make a conscious decision to pursue as part of its own foreign policy options and preferences. Finally, defining the usage of middle power diplomacy in the context of



the U.S.-China relationship was also successfully examined by the MPDI research team. The common consensus being that South Korea enjoys a unique position being allied to the U.S. and is also riding a positively blossoming wave of growth in its relationship with China and this provides both difficulties and delightful opportunities. And middle power diplomacy should become an important tool in achieving foreign policy goals. The MPDI project concluded with a set of policy recommendation papers that have been combined with other aspects of the MPDI research team's activities that have been formulated and informed by the theoretical and practical implications outlined in this report.

Middle power diplomacy has arrived, and for nations in the Asia-Pacific region, it is up to their policy practitioners to put it into action and help to move the region forward into a prosperous, more peaceful future. ■



Endnotes

¹ Lee, Sook-Jong. “South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy.” EAI Asia Security Initiative Working Paper, 09/12/2012.

² Kim, Sungjin. “South Korea’s Climate Change Diplomacy: Analysis Based on the Perspective of ‘Middle Power Diplomacy.’” EAI MPDI Working Paper No.5, 10/16/2014.

³ Tan, See Seng. “Facilitating China-U.S. Relations in the Age of Rebalancing: ASEAN’s ‘Middle Power’ Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 1, 10/18/2013.

⁴ Chun, Chaesung. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

⁵ Kim, Sungjin. “South Korea’s Climate Change Diplomacy: Analysis Based on the Perspective of ‘Middle Power Diplomacy.’” EAI MPDI Working Paper No.5, 10/16/2014.

⁶ Sohn, Yul. “The Role of South Korea in the Making of a Regional Trade Architecture, Convening, Bridging and Designing FTA Networks.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 8, 11/28/2014.

⁷ Flake, Gordon. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

⁸ Jemadu, Aleksius. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

⁹ Chatterson, David. Roundtable Discussions for Middle Power Diplomacy 1: Middle Power Diplomacy of Canada and Its Implications for South Korea’s Foreign Policy. 05/03/2013, Seoul, Korea.

¹⁰ Chun, Chaesung. “East Asian Security and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 9, 12/03/2014.

¹¹ Cooper, Andrew. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

¹² Chun, Chaesung. “East Asian Security and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 9, 12/03/2014.

¹³ Kim, Sangbae. “The Inter-network Politics of Cyber Security and Middle Power Diplomacy: A Korean Perspective.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 4, 10/02/2014.

¹⁴ Kim, Sungjin. “South Korea’s Climate Change Diplomacy: Analysis Based on the Perspective of ‘Middle Power Diplomacy.’” EAI MPDI Working Paper No.5, 10/16/2014.

¹⁵ Lee, Sook-Jong. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

¹⁶ Chun, Chaesung. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

¹⁷ Chun, Chaesung. “East Asian Security and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 9, 12/03/2014.



¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Tan, See Seng. “Facilitating China-U.S. Relations in the Age of Rebalancing: ASEAN’s ‘Middle Power’ Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 1, 10/18/2013.

²⁰ Lee, Dong Ryul. “China’s Perception of and Strategy for the Middle Powers.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 10, 12/08/2014.

²¹ Koo, Min Gyo. “East Asian Maritime Disputes and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 7, 11/27/2014.

²² Flake, Gordon. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

²³ Cooper, Andrew. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

²⁴ Flake, Gordon. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Cooper, Andrew. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

²⁷ H.E. Jose Luis Bernal Rodriguez, Ambassador of Mexico to the Republic of Korea. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

²⁸ Park, Ihn-Hwi. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

²⁹ Flake, Gordon . Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/17/2014, Seoul, Korea.

³⁰ Paterson, William. Roundtable Discussions for Middle Power Diplomacy 4: Middle Power Diplomatic Strategy of Australia and Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power. 10/01/2013, Seoul, Korea.

³¹ Sohn, Yul. Middle Power Diplomacy Forum. 10/18/2014, Seoul, Korea.

³² Koo, Min Gyo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.

³³ Lee, Dong Ryul. “Policy Recommendation for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: South Korea-China Relations.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 02/27/2015.

³⁴ Lee, Dong Ryul. “China’s Perception of and Strategy for the Middle Powers.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No.10, 12/08/2014.



³⁵ Sohn, Yul. “Policy Recommendation for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Trade.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 6, 03/10/2015.

³⁶ Lee, Dong Ryul. “Policy Recommendation for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: South Korea-China Relations.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 02/27/2015.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ryu, Yongwook. “ASEAN’s Middle Power Diplomacy toward China.” Issue Briefing MPDI 2013-2, 10/10/2013.

³⁹ Chun, Chaesung. “East Asian Security and South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy.” EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 9, 12/03/2014.

⁴⁰ Kim, Sangbae. “Policy Recommendation for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Cyber Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 7, 03/12/2015.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Fujita, Edmundo Sussumu. “Roundtable Discussions for Middle Power Diplomacy 3: Middle Power Diplomatic Strategy of Brazil and Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power.” 08/29/2013, Seoul, Korea.

⁴³ Koo, Min Gyo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.

⁴⁴ Lee, Yong Wook. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Finance.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 2, 02/27/2015.

⁴⁵ Sohn, Yul. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Trade.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 6, 03/10/2015.

⁴⁶ Kim, Sungjin. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Climate Change.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 4, 02/27/2015.

⁴⁷ Chun, Chaesung. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: East Asian Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 04/10/2015.

⁴⁸ Lee, Dong Ryul. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: South Korea-China Relations.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 1, 02/27/2015.

⁴⁹ Sohn, Yul. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Trade.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 6, 03/10/2015.



- ⁵⁰ Koo, Min Gyo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.
- ⁵¹ Kim, Sungjin. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Climate Change.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 4, 02/27/2015.
- ⁵² Lee, Seungjoo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Development Cooperation.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 3, 02/27/2015.
- ⁵³ Kim, Sangbae. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Cyber Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 7, 03/12/2015.
- ⁵⁴ Koo, Min Gyo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.
- ⁵⁵ Koo, Min Gyo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.
- ⁵⁶ Lee, Yong Wook. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Finance.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 2, 02/27/2015.
- ⁵⁷ Chun, Chaesung. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: East Asian Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 04/10/2015.
- ⁵⁸ Lee, Dong Ryul. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: South Korea-China Relations.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 1, 02/27/2015.
- ⁵⁹ Chun, Chaesung. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: East Asian Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 04/10/2015.
- ⁶⁰ Lee, Seungjoo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Development Cooperation.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 3, 02/27/2015.
- ⁶¹ Kim, Sungjin. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Climate Change.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 4, 02/27/2015.
- ⁶² Lee, Yong Wook. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Finance.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 2, 02/27/2015.
- ⁶³ Ibid.



⁶⁴ Lee, Seungjoo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Development Cooperation.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 3, 02/27/2015.

⁶⁵ Lee, Yong Wook. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Finance.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 2, 02/27/2015.

⁶⁶ Chun, Chaesung. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: East Asian Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 04/10/2015.

⁶⁷ Lee, Seungjoo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Development Cooperation.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 3, 02/27/2015.

⁶⁸ Koo, Min Gyo. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.

⁶⁹ Kim, Sangbae. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Cyber Security.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 7, 03/12/2015.

⁷⁰ Sohn, Yul. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Trade.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 6, 03/10/2015.

⁷¹ Lee, Yong Wook. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Finance.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 2, 02/27/2015.

⁷² Kim, Sungjin. “Policy Recommendations for South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Climate Change.” EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 4, 02/27/2015.



References

- Chun, Chaesung. "East Asian Security and South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy." EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 9, 12/03/2014.
- _____. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: East Asian Security." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 8, 04/10/2015.
- Cooper, Andrew F., Richard Higgott and Kim Nossal, ed. 1993. *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press/University of Melbourne Press.
- Kim, Sangbae. "The Inter-network Politics of Cyber Security and Middle Power Diplomacy: A Korean Perspective." EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 4, 10/02/2014.
- _____. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Cyber Security." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 7, 03/12/2015.
- Kim, Sungjin. "South Korea's Climate Change Diplomacy: Analysis Based on the Perspective of 'Middle Power Diplomacy.'" EAI MPDI Working Paper No.5, 10/16/2014.
- _____. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Climate Change." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 4, 02/27/2015.
- Koo, Min Gyo. "East Asian Maritime Disputes and South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy." EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 7, 11/27/2014.
- _____. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Maritime Security Policy." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 5, 03/06/2015.
- Lee, Dong Ryul. "China's Perception of and Strategy for the Middle Powers." EAI MPDI Working Paper No.10, 12/08/2014.
- _____. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: South Korea-China Relations." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 1, 02/27/2015.
- Lee, Sook-Jong. "South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy." EAI Asia Security Initiative Working Paper, 09/12/2012.
- Lee, Seungjoo. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Development Cooperation." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 3, 02/27/2015.
- Lee, Yong Wook. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Finance." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 2, 02/27/2015.
- Ryu, Yongwook. "ASEAN's Middle Power Diplomacy toward China." Issue Briefing MPDI 2013-2, 10/10/2013.
- Sohn, Yul. "The Role of South Korea in the Making of a Regional Trade Architecture, Convening, Bridging and Designing FTA Networks." EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 8, 11/28/2014.
- _____. "Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Trade." EAI Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative Policy Recommendation 6, 03/10/2015.
- Tan, See Seng. "Facilitating China-U.S. Relations in the Age of Rebalancing: ASEAN's 'Middle Power' Diplomacy." EAI MPDI Working Paper No. 1, 10/18/2013.



Authors' Biographies

**Sook-Jong Lee, Chaesung Chun,
HyeeJung Suh, and Patrick Thomsen**

East Asia Institute

Sook-Jong Lee

East Asia Institute & Sungkyunkwan University

Sook-Jong Lee is the President of the East Asia Institute, an independent, non-profit think tank based in Seoul. She is also a professor of public administration at Sungkyunkwan University. Currently, Dr. Lee holds a number of advisory positions in the South Korean government, including the Presidential National Security Advisory Group, Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation and councils for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Unification, and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). Dr. Lee also participates as member of the Trilateral Commission, Council of Councils, and many other transnational networks on research and policy studies. Her research interests include multilateralism, democracy, and civil societies, focusing on South Korea, Japan, and other East Asian countries. Previously, Dr. Lee was a research fellow at the Sejong Institute, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, a professorial lecturer at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University, and a visiting fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies. Her recent publications include *Keys to Successful Presidency in South Korea* (ed. 2013), "South Korea as New Middle Power Seeking Complex Diplomacy" (2012), *Korea's Role in Global Governance for Development Cooperation* (ed 2012), *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia* (eds. 2011), *Japan and East Asia: Regional Cooperation and Community Building* (eds. 2011), and *Toward Managed Globalization: The Korean Experience* (eds. 2010). Dr. Lee received her B.A. from Yonsei University, and M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from Harvard University.

Chaesung Chun

East Asia Institute & Seoul National University

Chaesung Chun is the Chair of the Asia Security Initiative Research Center at East Asia Institute. He is a professor of the department of political science and international relations at Seoul National University and director of Center for International Studies at Seoul National University. Dr. Chun is also serving as an advisory committee member for the Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Unification. He received his B.A. and M.A. from Seoul National University, and Ph.D. in international relations from Northwestern University. His research interests include international relations, security studies, South Korean foreign policy, and East Asian security relations. His recent publications include *Theory of East Asian International Relations* (2011), *Is Politics Moral? Reinhold Niebuhr's Transcendental Realism* (2010), and "The Rise of New Powers and the Responding Strategies of Other Countries" (2008).



HyeeJung Suh

East Asia Institute

HyeeJung Suh is the research fellow in the Peace and Security Research Unit at East Asia Institute. Ms. Suh previously worked as a research analyst at Samsung Economic Research Institute. She received her B.S. in International Politics from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and M.A. in International Economic Policy from Columbia University.

Patrick Thomsen

East Asia Institute

Patrick Thomsen is a research fellow in the Peace and Security Unit at the East Asia Institute. He completed his Master's in International Studies at Seoul National University's Graduate School of International Studies majoring in international cooperation, and his Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of Auckland in his country of origin, New Zealand. He has recently been awarded and accepted a top scholar fellowship to begin his doctoral studies in international relations at the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle, beginning in the fall of 2015.

Knowledge-Net for a Better World

- This article is the result of East Asia Institute's research activity of the Asia Security Initiative Research Center.
- Any citation or quotation is prohibited without prior permission of the author.
- The contents of this article do not necessarily reflect the views of EAI.
- East Asia Institute acknowledges the MacArthur Foundation for its support to the Middle Power Diplomacy Initiative.

