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Master's Thesis of International Studies

**South Korea's Middle Power  
Diplomacy by Roh Moo-Hyun and  
Moon Jae-in: The Progressive's Drive  
for Autonomy**

노무현과 문재인 대통령의 대한민국 중견국 외교:  
진보주의자들의 자주성 추구

**August 2022**

**Graduate School of International Studies  
Seoul National University  
International Area Studies Major**

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# **South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy by Roh Moo-Hyun and Moon Jae-in: The Progressive's Drive for Autonomy**

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# Abstract

There is little consensus in middle power literature because of the difficulty in defining them to a degree that would satisfy all requirements. The behavioral model identifies middle powers by their diplomatic behavior. There is even further distinction to be made between traditional middle powers, such as Canada and Australia, and emerging middle powers, such as those found in Asia. These newer middle powers have taken up this status with the intent to gain a level of autonomy in international affairs that were once impossible. Their behavioral tendencies have evolved with the times allowing for variety unique from the older middle powers.

The case of South Korea's unique middle power diplomacy is colored by the need to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue, the ROK-US alliance, and regional instability. Yet, to further complicate South Korea's middle power conceptualization, there is a difference in middle power behavior between conservative and progressive presidents. Conservative presidents tend to rely heavily on the ROK-US alliance, while progressives tend to seek autonomy in the handling of their major issues. Thus, the purpose of this research is to uncover middle power diplomacy as defined by the two most recent progressive South Korean presidents, Roh Moo-hyun and Moon Jae-in. To create an image of a specific South Korean variety of middle power diplomacy, with a focus on the most unique part of middlepowerdom, a state's acquisition of influence without great power status.

**Keywords:** Middle Power; South Korea; Roh Moo-Hyun; Moon Jae-in; Behavioral

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<sup>1</sup> The Author of this thesis is a Global Korea Scholarship scholar sponsored by the Korean Government.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Scholarship on middle powers is plentiful, however, there is a lack of consensus on which basis to categorize a middle power. This leads to confusion in studying the features and characteristics of a middle power. The great powers and rising great powers are easily identified in the United States and China respectively. This is due to the extensive study done on their every characteristic, for identification of any major changes to the international order. Middle powers, although not able to have as big of an impact as great powers, are sources of some influence in the international order. Thus, the study of middle power diplomacy strategies is of some importance.

The varied definitions and lack of consensus create roadblocks in the way of the smooth study of middle powers. The methods for identifying middle powers vary from methods focused on capabilities, to functionality, and behavior among others. The validity of the more popular theories is also called into question.

Middle powers are different from great powers because they are a product of globalization and the need for cooperation in the new international environment. A middle power's relative weakness to a great power is its main source of influence because of a lack of serious threat. Traditional middle powers such as Canada and Australia, focused on specific issue areas to give themselves a role in the international order. Following the Cold War and changes brought to the

international system, newer waves of middle powers emerged.<sup>2</sup> These newer middle powers have to operate under new contexts and have different goals, thus their middle power diplomacy varies. These diplomatic strategies have evolved from or have been incorporated into the traditional strategies. They have revolutionized middle power diplomacy, allowing each country to have its unique kind of middle power diplomacy. This not only adds complications in defining a middle power but also creates an opportunity to study each country's specific middle power concept.

The focus of this research is South Korea's middle power because of its unique situation in the East Asian region. The Korean proverb, "When whales fight a shrimp's back breaks,"<sup>3</sup> very aptly describes the precarious situation in which the ROK has found itself for much of its existence. Surrounded by great powers (the U.S., China, and Japan) and a nuclear North Korea. However, Korea is a shrimp making efforts to involve itself in the international order and will not allow the whales to fight so recklessly. The trend of globalization made economies more interdependent, non-traditional security issues took center placement on the international agenda, and international institutions became more relevant to the international order.<sup>4</sup> Along with the fact that great power involvement would have too many repercussions secondary states like South Korea began to have higher participation in resolving international issues.

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew F. Cooper and Emel Parlar Dal, "Positioning the Third Wave of Middle Power Diplomacy: Institutional Elevation, Practice Limitations," *International Journal* 71, no. 4 (2016): 518.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Niceforo, "Korean Proverbs | CultureReady," September 26, 2018, <https://www.cultureready.org/blog/korean-proverbs-0>.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew F. Cooper, "Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview," in *Niche Diplomacy*, n.d.

These developments along with Korea's growing capabilities have made the middle power diplomacy route an obvious choice in positioning for the Korean government over time. Defining middle powers is complicated and categorizing middle powers between traditional and emerging is also complicated. South Korea's middle power diplomacy faces the same difficulty.

As much as there is confusion and contention in middle power conceptualization in general, there is a lack of consensus in middle power conceptualization for South Korea as well.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to Korea, the state has long been considered a middle power and began calling itself as such during the Lee Myung-bak administration.

## 1.2 Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to use South Korea as a subject of analysis in observing a state's middle power conceptualization, according to the leadership at the time. While observing South Korean politics and interactions with the various greater powers surrounding it, ROK cannot be said to be a weak state. While other states might bend in the face of such a unique situation. Surrounded by an unpredictable nuclear North Korea, allies with the US superpower, very close and economically/diplomatically dependent on a rising China, and another not-so-weak Japan, South Korea has constantly dealt with a very precarious situation while continuing to grow its capabilities. Leadership, as can be found in the cases of Australia and Canada have long determined or declared themselves to be a middle

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<sup>5</sup> Dong-min Shin, "THE CONCEPT OF MIDDLE POWER AND THE CASE OF THE ROK: A REVIEW," *Economy and Society*, 2012, 22.



power, and the importance of leadership should not be discarded when analyzing South Korea's middle power diplomacy.

This research analyzes South Korea's middle power diplomacy under two representatively progressive/liberal presidencies. Not only will this provide an example of a middle power and what may constitute a middle power but can also further advance middle power studies to move beyond definitions and center on behavior by placing South Korean diplomacy on the scale between traditional and emerging middle powers.

The progressive presidents were chosen for this case study because, in comparison to the conservative presidents, they exhibit relatively unique middle power behavior. Under these representatively progressive presidential administrations, there was more interaction with the other powers in the region and more contact/progress on South Korea's biggest security issue, North Korea. Now it is plausible to see how these presidents mold and make use of their middle power status to gain these benefits as compared to the more conservative presidents. This can provide information on how a successful, middle power under the progressive, presidencies can gain a greater degree of influence while faced with their complicated neighbors.

The method for studying this phenomenon is through an analysis of South Korea's middle power conceptualization under Roh Moo-hyun and Moon Jae-in, finding similarities in their statements and behaviors. Their conceptions of a middle power will affect their behavior and in turn, will allow them to be more successful in their approach to various issues and make headway in achieving their interests. A look into how these two presidencies view their capabilities as well as an analysis of their behavior will be necessary.

This paper hypothesizes that the two South Korean progressive presidents of the last twenty years, Roh Moo-hyun and Moon Jae-in, share a common goal of gaining autonomy in international affairs and thus they both utilize South Korea's middle power status to achieve this aim. Towards the purpose of analyzing this case, this paper will start with a literature review that covers the common middle power theoretical models, which are the functional, hierarchical, and behavioral models. Based on the criticisms of these models, other scholars have created a more adaptive middle power concept to include both capabilities and behavior. Along these lines, scholars such as Andrew Cooper and Eduard Jordaan have advanced the behavioral model by finding a distinction between traditional and emerging middle power behavior.

Following the literature review, chapter three will provide some background on the development of Korean middle power diplomacy, where it can be found that progressive Korean presidents have had a greater need for autonomy and thus use the middle power status for that goal. To study this, this paper will use an analytical framework, derived from Cooper and Jordaan, to describe the three main focus areas of each of the two progressive administration's middle power activities.

Chapter four will present statements from each administration that demonstrate their interests and strategies for utilizing middle power status. These documents will be separated into each issue area; international, North Korea, and regional. After an analysis of each administration using the analytical framework, the chapter will conclude with a comparison of the two to find their common middle power concept. Lastly, the paper will conclude with topics for further study.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Defining Middle Powers

Although the literature related to middle powers is extensive, there is a lack of consensus on what constitutes a middle power. This should not come as a surprise when many states see the benefit of such a position in the international arena and there are other states who refuse to be labeled as such.<sup>6</sup> Leading to many difficulties in analyzing their behaviors without a set standard for evaluation and identification. However, this has not stopped many scholars from finding a commonality amongst the traditionally recognized and relatively new middle powers. These provide clues into middle power behaviors and their development following their peak during the post-Cold War era.

Before examining accepted middle power, diplomacy strategies there is the issue of defining what a middle power is. It is almost reflexive to simply define a middle power as a state in the “middle.” However, the difficulty comes with answering the question, “in the middle of what?” At a first glance into international relations, the concept of a middle power would be quite confusing as it is a state that is neither great enough to create the international order nor weak enough to not be able to have any influence. That is also the beauty of middle powers, their weakness in terms of power allows them to have a less threatening image and thus, much more influence than weak powers. Many states wish to be considered middle powers and changes in international relations have added different states to the

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<sup>6</sup> Joshua B. Spero, *Middle Powers and Regional Influence: Critical Foreign Policy Junctures for Poland, South Korea, and Bolivia* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 29, <http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=295dfb8a4d2cf96722ccbc63e64e0213>.

category. The difficulties in even defining what a middle power leaves a vacuum in discovering what can be considered middle power behavior. Jefferey Robertson mentions that the quantity of definitions and the diversity in states which can be considered middle powers complicates the study of the subject.<sup>7</sup>

The three most accepted theories for middle powers are the functional approach, the behavioral approach, and the hierarchical approach. While others advocate for a more classical realist approach to assessing a country's position in the international hierarchy. They prefer more measurable qualifiers for determining a middle power, such as population size, GDP, physical location, etc. While the two avenues for determining a middle power are legitimate and often cited by the leaders of the middle powers themselves, as Matthew Stephen mentions, "If the middle power concept is to be both precise and in accordance with its intuitive meaning, it needs to include both capabilities and behavior."<sup>8</sup>

There is difficulty in determining the criteria under which a middle power can be determined. As Dongmin Shin points out, the three main perspectives have drawbacks that may complicate the objectivity of the study.<sup>9</sup> Adam Chapnick criticizes the functional approach for creating a concept of power that, "fluctuates based on their [the state's] political and economic abilities," which may be relative

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Robertson, "Middle-Power Definitions: Confusion Reigns Supreme," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (July 4, 2017): 355, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2017.1293608>.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Stephen, "The Concept and Role of Middle Powers during Global Rebalancing," 2013, 49–50.

<sup>9</sup> Shin, "THE CONCEPT OF MIDDLE POWER AND THE CASE OF THE ROK: A REVIEW."

to time.<sup>10</sup> Further proving the point for the necessity of looking at both capability and behavior as the two factors work hand in hand to provide a state influence in the international arena.

The behavioral approach of Cooper et. al (1993), focuses on identifying a middle power through diplomatic behavior, such as taking initiative, playing the role of a good international citizen, and coalition-building in issue-specific contexts.<sup>11</sup> Under this approach, a middle power can be identified by behavior that is more willing to seek multilateral means, commitment to international norms, and reliance on diplomatic measures.<sup>12</sup> This approach has also been criticized for being too political or for leaving the definition to be too subjective and determined by the state itself.<sup>13</sup> This is why a more objective qualifier provided by the measure of capabilities could be more of a conventional identification for middle powers.

The hierarchical approach to identifying a middle power is most in line with the realist or neo-realist approach to international relations. It is similar in that it focuses on a state's more immediately identified security capabilities. The hierarchical approach identifies a middle power through a ranking of all states according to their capabilities. Those states who fall in the middle of that ranking, are considered middle powers.<sup>14</sup> Chapnick claims this approach satisfies the requirement of "objectivity" by defining all actors and where middle powers fall in

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<sup>10</sup> Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 7, no. 2 (January 1999): 74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.1999.9673212>.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Fenton Cooper, Richard A. Higgott, and Kim Richard Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*, Canada and International Relations 6 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Shin, "THE CONCEPT OF MIDDLE POWER AND THE CASE OF THE ROK: A REVIEW."

<sup>13</sup> Shin.

<sup>14</sup> Shin.

relation to them.<sup>15</sup> This gives the stipulation that for a middle power definition to be considered legitimate, it must be able to distinguish a middle power from other types of powers. Shin (2012) also points out that the identification of a middle power through the hierarchical approach can be wrought with bias from the researcher in choosing certain capabilities.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, the complication in choosing an approach to define a middle power is in the fact that a specific approach could be subjective to a state's political interests, and biases from researchers in choosing criteria. In this hazy and complicated situation, it seems to be up to the researcher to determine which approach is most suitable for their research purpose. To provide some relief in this complicated situation, Cooper quotes Robert Cox by saying, “‘the middle-power role’ should not be evaluated as ‘a fixed universal’ but as ‘something that has to be rethought continually in the context of the changing state of the international system.’”<sup>17</sup> Unlike, Chapnick's work which is locked in a certain period, it is better to constantly evolve the modes of identification. This is conducive to a system where even middle powers themselves can also be categorized separately as will be expounded upon in the following section.

More modern studies on middle power diplomacy can also provide an additional comprehensive definition that has evolved from the old and is more relevant to the times. Oosterveld and Torossian (2018) identify a middle power definition that may be a synthesis of all the necessary elements provided by the

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<sup>15</sup> Chapnick, “The Middle Power,” 78.

<sup>16</sup> Shin, “THE CONCEPT OF MIDDLE POWER AND THE CASE OF THE ROK: A REVIEW.”

<sup>17</sup> Cooper, “Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview.”

popular definitions. They define middle powers as, “states that are neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity and influence, and demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system.”<sup>18</sup> This definition allows for a more precise identification of a middle power using all of the main perspectives. Walton and Wilkins (2019) also agree that the investigation of middle powers should be as dynamic as the concept itself is in nature.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2 Evolving Middle Power Diplomacy

Just as different types of powers started to emerge in the international system, there are also differences in the type of middle powers over time. Cooper (1999) identifies different waves of middle powers which are separated by their “middle power activism” or public diplomacy.<sup>20</sup> Tacking on new wave middle powers may seem to add complications to the study, however, as Cooper says, “the creativity and skill with which many of these countries have utilized their greater freedom of action for diplomatic activity in the 1990s merits more detailed attention.”<sup>21</sup> This creates another layer to defining a middle power, which has now led to distinguishing between traditional and emerging middle powers and their behavior.

The reason for emerging waves of middle powers can be explained by the benefits that come with holding such a status in the international system. As Eduard Jordaan explains, middle power states’ inability to unilaterally effect

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<sup>18</sup> Willem Oosterveld and Torossian, Bianca, “The Role of Middle Powers in Contemporary Diplomacy,” 2019 2018, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas S. Wilkins and David Walton, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Middle Powers in the Asian Century*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429463846-4>.

<sup>20</sup> Cooper, “Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview.”

<sup>21</sup> Cooper, 15–16.

change is what prompts them to utilize and incorporate themselves into international organizations and rely on the authority gained to maintain the status quo.<sup>22</sup> This provides background for a state's need for middle power status and diplomacy. As restated by Walton and Wilkins, "The realignment of the international system toward a more diffuse, heterogeneous and multipolar structure is catalysing middle power strategies" and this system allows for high middle power agency.<sup>23</sup>

Common ideas on middle power diplomacy strategies include coalition-building, multilateralism, issue-linkage, niche diplomacy with a focus on non-traditional security issues, adherence to international legal norms, good international citizenship, or moral superiority. The reason the traditional middle powers sought such a role was to carve out space for themselves in the international order and it seems the same can be said for the new wave of middle powers. An important part of middlepowerdom is public diplomacy. As Yul Sohn recounts what middle powers need when he says, "For middle powers, in particular, public diplomacy is important because it grants them "ample opportunities to gain influence in world affairs far beyond their limited material capabilities."<sup>24</sup>

Traditional middle powers also sought this role for the reason of gaining some agency in the international system. Jordaan describes traditional middle

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<sup>22</sup> Eduard Jordaan, "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers," *Politikon* 30, no. 1 (May 2003): 169, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0258934032000147282>.

<sup>23</sup> Wilkins and Walton, "Introduction."

<sup>24</sup> Yul Sohn, "'Middle Powers' Like South Korea Can't Do Without Soft Power And Network Power," *Global Asia* 7, no. 3 (September 2012): 30–34.



power states as weak regionally<sup>25</sup> making them look outwards for an activity to separate themselves from the region. South Korea is similarly weak in comparison to its immediate neighbors in Northeast Asia. However, this is not the case in East Asia in general. The regional policy dimension of the traditional vs. emerging middle power dichotomy is the most interesting part for South Korea because it exhibits behaviors in each area. Jordaan says, “Traditional middle powers appear rather ambivalent about regional integration and cooperation, whereas emerging middle powers are keen participants and often initiators of regional integration and cooperation.”<sup>26</sup>

There also seems to be a regional dimension to distinguishing middle powers. Studies based on Canada and Australia have tended to be Western-centric. Scholars have identified differences coming from middle powers in Asia as well. Middle powers in Asia are a bit different from the traditional. As Walton and Wilkins say, “Because of the expansion and reconstitution of the material category of middle power, the ideational or behavioural make-up of such states is altered and thus the roles they play are mutating.”<sup>27</sup> There are also propositions that many prevalent middle power conceptualizations are Western-centered, making them a bit inappropriate for defining non-Western middle powers.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Jordaan, “The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations,” 172.

<sup>26</sup> Jordaan, 172.

<sup>27</sup> Wilkins and Walton, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>28</sup> Tanguy Struye de Swielande, “Middle Powers: A Comprehensive Definition and Typology,” in *Rethinking Middle Powers in the Asian Century*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 19–44, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429463846-4>.

## Chapter 3. South Korean Middlepowerdom

### 3.1 South Korea

The malleable nature of the middle power concept allows for the study of an individual middle power with unique characteristics to further the study of the evolution of middle power diplomacy. This is also the case because each middle power wave is dealing with a new international order. As Walton and Wilkins note South Korea is considered an additional emerging middle powers that came out of the second wave of middle powers in the post-Cold War era.<sup>29</sup> They want to stretch and refine the global order. While middle power diplomacy is constantly evolving, there appear to be some constants in South Korea's middle power behavior following the political orientation of the reigning administration.

#### *Why is South Korean middle power important?*

South Korea is surrounded by great powers and is even still at war with a nuclear North Korea. There are few middle powers in the same situation or are able to handle the situation in the way South Korea has. Fei-Ling Wang (1999) noted that Korea could not effect change in any substantial way in the 1990s.<sup>30</sup> However, Korea's great improvement is to such an extent that such a statement would be incorrect in the present-day discussion. It can be said that the ROK-US alliance has afforded South Korea the luxury of undisturbed growth, however, Korea has worked independently to reach its position now despite the relationship. Starting

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<sup>29</sup> Wilkins and Walton, "Introduction," 3.

<sup>30</sup> Fei-Ling Wang, "Joining the Major Powers for the Status Quo: China's Views and Policy on Korean Reunification," *Pacific Affairs* 72, no. 2 (1999): 167, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2672118>.

with Park Chung-hee, the ROK government has made many arrangements to become more autonomous. The ROK does rely on the US for security but it is not necessary for the diplomacy that may make the state more secure. South Korea's unique situation and development as a middle power make it an interesting case for study.

### *Why progressive presidents?*

Scott Snyder notes that Korea's domestic divide between conservatives and progressives has extended repercussions in foreign policy. He states that conservatives, "who have traditionally been aligned with upper-class elite interests, support for the U.S.-ROK security alliance, and a hard-line position toward North Korea" against progressives, who, "have fought Korean authoritarianism, objected to perceived U.S. support for authoritarian leaders, and sought reconciliation and unification with the North by prioritizing ethnic unity over ideological division."<sup>31</sup>

As noted earlier, middle powers seek such a status in the international system for the reason of gaining some agency and influence. Of course, the desire for autonomy/influence that is a common middle power trait is not present in all Korean presidents. Due to South Korea's political development following its democratization, there has always been a divide between conservative and progressive politicians.<sup>32</sup> One of the claims of this paper is that the reliance on the ROK-US alliance is one point of contention in South Korea's middle power status.

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<sup>31</sup> Scott A. Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers*, A Council on Foreign Relations Book (Columbia University Press, 2018), 13, <http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=7DF4C862126345D5B458F32666AA07E8>.

<sup>32</sup> Sung-Mi Kim, "South Korea's Middle-Power Diplomacy: Changes and Challenges," Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank, June 22, 2016, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2016/06/south-koreas-middle-power-diplomacy-changes-and-challenges>.

However, there is a history of progressive presidents and those in their administrations being a bit more anti-American, or at the very least more driven towards autonomous security.

Roh Moo-hyun's administration, as one of the subjects of this study also came to hold office under such an atmosphere in South Korea; he was elected during a time of growing anti-American sentiment following the killing of two girls by Americans in 2003.<sup>33</sup> Although his administration was split on how reliant they should be on the US, there are instances in descriptions in policy, as will be detailed later that allude to the administration seeking greater autonomy in its security through its foreign policy.

### *What is gained?*

After examining South Korea's middle power diplomacy under these two presidents, there may be a clearer picture of South Korea's middle power strategy when aimed at the true goal of achieving autonomy and influence in the international arena to solve not only local crises but also international crises.

The development of the middle power concept would most likely fall under the categories related to internationalism and autonomy. This is because a greater international role gives Korea a more autonomous role in its national issues, as by definition of middle power and Korea's use of that role. Middle powers promote international cooperation and peace through international institutions, such as the UN. Korea also makes use of the same ideas to promote the agenda of peaceful relations on the Korean peninsula to the international community as a

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<sup>33</sup> Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, 114.

benefit to all. The Korean government can rely on its international reputation, built through the constant support of other global issues, to achieve its national security to some extent.

### 3.2 Korean Foreign Diplomacy Before Roh Moo-hyun

This section will recount Korean foreign diplomacy under a few South Korean presidents before Roh Moo-hyun and how they have added to South Korea's middlepowerdom. The main focus has always been dealing with North Korea and maintaining the ROK-US security alliance. Park Chung-hee's government is interestingly enough the catalyst for the vision of a more self-reliant South Korea to be developed by later administrations. He sought support from the US for his leadership while also deflecting their complete control. He partook in issue-linkage bargaining as seen through the benefits gained from normalization with Japan and the involvement in the Vietnam war. The Nixon Doctrine created an opportunity for him to reach out to North Korea and provided a small spark for the long-running North Korean-centered policy taken by future presidents.<sup>34</sup> Ironically, any of the ideas from the ruthlessly authoritarian regime could even be a source of inspiration for the following liberal administrations.

Next, Chun Doo Hwan abandoned Park's nuclear project and reaffirmed the alliance with the United States, a common tactic of conservative administrations. The Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam administrations experienced a turning point in Korean domestic politics which also marked a shift in foreign diplomacy. The turning point came with the hard-won democratization

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<sup>34</sup> Tae Dong Chung, "KOREA'S NORDPOLITIK: ACHIEVEMENTS & PROSPECTS," 2022, 31.

of the state, the much-improved economic situation, as well as the more relaxed international situation resulting from the end of the Cold War. While there were more opportunities, the democratic domestic situation created more constraints on the administration. Democracy also marked the gradual emergence of the conservative-progressive divide.<sup>35</sup> Unlike Park's administration, liberalization allowed for the public sentiment about the United States to be voiced publicly and resistance to U.S. presence grew after a few incidents.

Kim Dae-jung brought progressive control to the government for the first time in Korea. The international circumstances were less constrained and dealing with North Korea in such an environment was not difficult. Snyder describes Kim Dae-jung's philosophy as focused on "self-reliance, peace and democracy."<sup>36</sup> It is quite interesting that this self-reliance is also similar to Park Chung-hee's need for autonomy from the United States. Although their reasoning is different, their methods are quite similar. The South Korean government has often used middle power-like diplomacy to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Through middle power diplomacy, the South Korean government seeks autonomy to control the situation in addition to heavy assistance from the international community.

Snyder also mentions the Kim Dae-jung administration was especially willing to lead policy with North Korea and "leaving the Clinton administration to play a supporting (if still critical) role."<sup>37</sup> Much like the Kim Dae-jung administration, to which they were once closely attached, Kim's two progressive

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<sup>35</sup> Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Snyder, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Snyder, 95.

successors, Roh Moo-hyun and Moon Jae-in incorporate the same sentiments in their middle power foreign diplomacy strategy as exhibited through some of their speeches, those of their foreign ministers, and the diplomatic white papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Although there are many more contemporary instances of South Korea directly touting itself as a middle power, the foundation for such a status has been traced back to the Park Chung-hee administration. The most accepted predecessor selected as an originator of South Korea's modern foreign policy is Roh Tae-woo's Nordpolitik.<sup>38</sup> However, even that policy was inspired by Park Chung-hee's 6.23 speech which purposely came at a time when the Park administration had less trust in the ROK-US alliance. This is more evidence of the case for the origination of South Korea's middle power conceptualization being the need for autonomy in foreign policy and a need to exert influence in international politics.

The most prominent predecessor of the progressive administration's foreign policy, especially in terms of maintaining national security, is president Roh Tae-woo's Nordpolitik policy. This is followed by Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy, Roh Moo-hyun's Peace and Prosperity policy, and lastly Moon Jae-in's New Northern and Southern policies. These policies are a part of the long line of progression. Despite the origins stemming from the distrust of the United States and the need to control of the Park administration, these are key pieces in developing South Korea's middle power and its subsequent role in the international community.

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<sup>38</sup> Jung-Mi Cha, "Analysis of the Implementation of South Korea's Nordpolitik in 1970s-1990s Focusing on the Interaction between Environment and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *Korea Observer - Institute of Korean Studies* 51, no. 1 (February 28, 2020): 71–97, <https://doi.org/10.29152/KOIKS.2020.51.1.71>.

This study hypothesizes that the two progressive administrations, exert their middle power status in a way that would gain more autonomy in a number of its pressing issues. The most pressing issue for South Korea has often been North Korea, and thus this research will emphasize the two administration's North Korea policy. To study this, the paper will examine speeches and documents related to foreign policy which may reveal not only their idea of middle power but also their intent in the international arena. This will give a picture of South Korea's unique middle power conceptualization under its progressive presidencies.

Their main issue area is North Korea, however, there are ways in which they utilize their status as a middle power in other areas to garner support for their policies.

### 3.3 Methodology

#### *Expectations*

The central question of this thesis is: how does South Korea's foreign diplomacy change with the shifts in conception provided by the speeches and statements of the Roh and Moon administrations? A combination of the identity theory and behavioral analysis of South Korea's middle power diplomacy will be the focus of this paper because, as mentioned earlier, middle powers must self-identify and that identification will then color their behavior.

The theoretical framework for this thesis is a combination of tenets of the behavioral approach. The data sources are transcribed speeches of Roh, Moon, and their foreign ministers. As well as other government documents and diplomatic white papers provided by Cheong Wa Dae and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is expected that there will be similarities between the Roh and Moon administrations.



The shifts in South Korea's middle power diplomacy will be dependent upon the rhetoric and behaviors of the administration in an attempt to identify themselves as a middle power.

### *Analytical framework*

For the analysis of Korean middle power diplomacy, this paper will work with the behavioral model as explained by Cooper et al. The analysis within this paper starts with the assumption that middle powers can be defined using the behavioral model, which includes the tenets that states act as good international citizens in their foreign diplomacy to achieve their status as middle powers.

The second step to analysis is that middle power status will become beneficial to a state to some degree. This claim is advanced in the analysis provided by both Andrew Cooper and Eduard Jordaan, who have found that traditional and emerging middle powers have (because of their different operating systems) different goals and their behavior is easily distinguishable.

As Jefferey Robertson states, the key measure of South Korea's middle power orientation between traditional and emerging comes from its settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue. He says, "South Korean foreign policy behavior will increasingly reflect that of other traditional middle powers, including the tendency to seek multilateral solutions, seek compromise, and demonstrate good international citizenship."<sup>39</sup> Thus a precedent has been set by Robertson, who gathered South Korea's specific middle power diplomacy strategy through an

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<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Robertson, "South Korea as a Middle Power: Capacity, Behavior, and Now Opportunity," n.d., 24.

observation of the handling of its biggest international issue, the North Korean nuclear issue.

If the aforementioned observations are to be accepted, South Korean progressive presidents differ from their conservative counterparts, mainly because of their different treatment of North Korea. The middle power diplomacy of these progressive administrations was guided by the need to utilize the middle power status to have some influence on the North Korean issue. It is expected that the North Korean regime cannot sustain itself forever and unification will come one day and along with it, cultural and economic complications. If South Korea can gain some autonomy in foreign affairs while the two Koreas are still separated, it will be easier to put in place some measures that will alleviate the issues that will come with unification. Thus, South Korea must retain this middle power positioning as a state which cares about humanitarian aid, non-proliferation, and bridging the gap between North Korea and the international community.<sup>40</sup>

The investigation of middle power diplomacy under South Korean progressive presidents presented in this paper will take us beyond the basic conceptual debate on middle powers into the observation of a how a commonly accepted middle power state in such a complicated situation is influenced by the political leanings of the reigning administration into either using either traditional or emerging middle power strategies to achieve its aims.

To create a new analytical framework for this research, this research will take the descriptors from Andrew Cooper and Eduard Jordaan's behavioral

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<sup>40</sup> Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, 206–7.

difference observations between emerging and traditional middle powers. Korea is considered a newer middle power than those of the established traditional powers, Australia and Canada, thus Korea should exhibit emerging middle power behavior. However, the situation of the two progressive administrations differs from other emerging middle powers, making their middle power strategies and subsequent behavior a bit different.

Thus, this paper hypothesizes that the two Korean progressive presidents of the past twenty years employ both traditional and emerging middle power behavior to gain autonomy in the North Korea issue and create opportunities for more regional cooperation. To analyze the diplomatic statements of the administrations, a framework is derived from Andrew Cooper and Eduard Jordaan's distinctions between traditional and emerging behaviors. The data will be separated by the sector of focus for the three major areas of focus for foreign diplomacy. These three areas are as follows; international, North Korea, and regional (beyond the peninsula).

Before moving to the main North Korea issue, the first area to be examined under each administration will be the international sector because that is where middle powers must claim their status and influence. International behavior as described by Eduard Jordaan, is useful for this subject as he explains that traditional middle powers' international behavior is to take appeasing and legitimizing actions to effect global change.<sup>41</sup> The purpose of these actions is to gain a distance from the powerful states in their region. Thus, by gaining recognition internationally and heavily promoting international norms, the

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<sup>41</sup> Jordaan, "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations," 168.

progressive presidents create a way for themselves to pursue their more heroic North Korea policies. This is to bring North Korea into the international order for a peaceful resolution and eventual unification.

The ROK-US alliance is another part of South Korean foreign policy which would affect their autonomy. The progressive presidents have often used their international positioning to gain autonomy within and outside of this relationship. Thus, an examination of how the presidents become involved in the international community is not only an indicator of how they want others to view them but also how they would wish to deal with the North Korea issue. Next, the North Korea issue is what sets South Korea apart from other middle powers and it is also the issue on which progressive and conservative Korean administrations differ. On this issue, this paper will describe them using Andrew Cooper's basic framework in which he has an axis of operating procedure that fluctuates between routine and heroic policymaking.<sup>42</sup>

Lastly, the regional section of South Korea's foreign diplomacy exhibits emerging middle power behavior as explained by Eduard Jordaan. While traditional middle powers focused on the international sphere to distance themselves from the larger powers who dominate their region<sup>43</sup>, the case is different for South Korean middle power behavior. In addition to using the middle power status for a stronger international presence, South Korean leaders have also used this greater presence to promote regional cooperation. As Eduard Jordaan has

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<sup>42</sup> Cooper, "Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview," 10–11.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew F. Cooper, ed., *Niche Diplomacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1997), 10–11, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25902-1>.

observed in emerging middle powers, they use their international presence and middle power status to take a balancing or leadership position in the region.<sup>44</sup>

In summary, the goals for each sector are as follows: The goals for the North Korea portion are to gain autonomy in the alliance and ultimately determine South Korea's security more independently. The goal of the regional sector is to become a hub for regional cooperation and influence the peace of the region rather than become a chess piece to the great powers in the region. The goal for these administrations internationally is to gain a greater presence in the international institutions which will then influence others to bring North Korea into the fold and maintain the status quo and create grounds for greater influence in the other two sectors.

## **Chapter 4. Roh Moo-hyun and Moon Jae-in**

This section will give attention to the language used by South Korean leaders of Foreign Affairs in describing the role South Korea plays in the region and the international community as a whole to determine South Korea's conceptualization of itself as a middle power during the Roh Moo-hyun and Moon Jae-in administrations. This will provide a unique definition of South Korea's middle power under the progressive administrations.

### **4.1 Roh Moo-hyun**

Following the Kim Dae-jung administration, Roh had large shoes to fill. Both the domestic and international situation made for complications in Roh's

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<sup>44</sup> Jordaan, "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations," 168.

foreign policy, however, the administration continued the process of conceptualizing Korean progressive middlepowerdom.

### Roh Moo-hyun Administration's Background

Roh Moo-hyun, one of the main subjects of this paper, is also discussed in Snyder's book. His administration started at a time when there was much anti-American sentiment following the incident of two girls killed by a U.S. military vehicle.<sup>45</sup> This was the first time the ROK-U.S. alliance became such a huge topic in public debate during the election. Snyder describes the sentiment that catalyzed the Roh administration as, a "rising public sentiment that insisted on greater respect for South Korean autonomy both within the context of the alliance with the United States and as a reflection of South Korea's rising international profile."<sup>46</sup> The Peace and Prosperity policy became Roh's main product for foreign policy. It faced difficulties because his camp was split between those who found the alliance beneficial to resolving the North Korean nuclear situation and those who found it to be an obstacle.

In terms of middle power, Roh's presidency is considered the starting point for a more concrete conception. According to Snyder, the Northeast Asian Cooperation Initiative was made, "to transform the region into a community with South Korea at the center. The desire to play a larger, central role in the region represented an early stage of South Korea's efforts to cast itself as a middle power."<sup>47</sup> Roh wanted South Korea to play the role of "balancer" in the region

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<sup>45</sup> Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads*, 114.

<sup>46</sup> Snyder, 116.

<sup>47</sup> Snyder, 120.

because of its new capabilities allowed it to do so. The Roh administration represents another step in the progressive style of South Korean middle power diplomacy following the Kim Dae-jung administration. This is especially true in its North Korea policy. Because Roh was ultimately not as successful as he might have hoped, he eventually opted for the “facilitator” and “shaper of peace” role later in his administration.<sup>48</sup> These titles imply a desire for more autonomy and influence in the international system.

Unfortunately, North Korea presented a challenge to Roh’s attempt for autonomy because the North wanted to directly deal with the US rather than work through South Korea’s government.<sup>49</sup> However, the Roh administration's middle power ideas still became a basis for the future of South Korean middle power conceptualization. There may have been less progress on reducing North Korean aggression under Roh, yet, it was under his administration that South Korea began to have the idea of becoming the most qualified country to mediate between North Korea and the United States.

To summarize the Roh administration, “sought to remake Korean foreign policy based on principles of autonomy and multilateral cooperation.”<sup>50</sup> Thus when analyzing documents related to Roh’s middle power conceptualization focus will be given to indicators of this desire for autonomy and what specific middle power means. The Statements are split into the three main issue areas; the first being international, which refers to involvement in the international community. Second,

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<sup>48</sup> Snyder, 124–25.

<sup>49</sup> Snyder, 130.

<sup>50</sup> Snyder, 140.

are North Korea-related statements, and the last issue area is the Northeast Asian region.

#### **4.1.1 Speeches, Statements, and Diplomatic White Papers (2003-2005)**

##### ***a. International***

###### ***President Roh Moo-hyun's Inauguration Speech (2003)***

Beginning with Roh's inaugural speech, his administration's middle power conceptualization can be identified through a few key phrases concerning each of the major areas of North Korea, the regional order, and international issues.

He begins his inaugural speech by expounding on the great progress South Korea has made over the years, alluding to its improved position internationally by becoming the 12<sup>th</sup> largest economic power.<sup>51</sup> This conforms to the ideas of middle power scholars, who see capabilities as a requirement for middle power legitimacy. Roh continues in this vein by saying "In this new age, our future can no longer be confined to the Korean peninsula."<sup>52</sup> This is an expression of a wish for Korea to extend its diplomacy outwards not only out of focusing mainly on North Korea, but also beyond relations with the U.S.

###### ***Minister Yoon Young-kwan's Statement at the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN***

###### ***General Assembly (2003)***

Roh's presidency also came at a time when the international community was dealing with the fallout of a war on terrorism following the 9/11 tragedy. In his

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<sup>51</sup> Moo-hyun Roh, "Roh Moo-Hyun's Inauguration Speech," February 25, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2797053.stm>.

<sup>52</sup> Roh, 2.



statement at the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly minister Yoon also commented on Korea's commitment to the promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and good governance.<sup>53</sup> He also mentioned that Korea's involvement in Iraq will focus on rehabilitation and reconstruction because only through socio-economic benefits will political changes hold meaning.<sup>54</sup> This indicates a more routine and traditional form of thought about international development. Yoon continues to discuss North Korea by emphasizing peaceful means of dealing with the nuclear issue and touting the success of the Six-Party talks,<sup>55</sup> indicating the administration's wish for more consensus-style and cooperative means of dealing with North Korea.

#### *Minister Ban Ki-moon's Statement at North Atlantic Council (2005)*

Korea's forward march into heavy involvement in international institutions went full steam ahead during the Roh administration. Minister Ban Ki-moon was able to make a statement at the North Atlantic Council (NATO) in 2005 as well. There he expressed some of South Korea's foreign policy and intent to the international community. He said the changes in the international community post-Cold War call for greater inter-regional cooperation.<sup>56</sup> This is a note on the need for middle power diplomacy within this new context. His presence as the first Korean foreign minister to address the council is suggested to be a reflection of those changes.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Young-kwan Yoon, "Statement at the 58th Session of the UN General Assembly," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 26, 2003, 5, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5689/view.do?seq=298454&page=29](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5689/view.do?seq=298454&page=29).

<sup>54</sup> Yoon, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Yoon, 5–6.

<sup>56</sup> Ki-moon Ban, "Statement at North Atlantic Council, NATO," December 2, 2005, 2, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5689/view.do?seq=298371&page=24](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5689/view.do?seq=298371&page=24).

<sup>57</sup> Ban, 2.

This speech would not be complete without reiterating South Korea's role and commitment to the international community. Ban mentions the fact that South Korea received a benefit from NATO and thus as a reciprocal gesture works hard in "playing a due part commensurate with its international standing."<sup>58</sup> Such a standing, although not outwardly expressed, should be that of a middle power.

*Minister Ban Ki-moon's Statement at the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council (2006)*

This expression of Korea's need to give back to the international community as thanks for its success is once again mentioned by Ban Ki-moon in 2006 in his statement at the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council. He claimed the experiences of South Korea's development prove the importance of the peace and stability, development, and the promotion of human rights and democracy."<sup>59</sup> As a state deeply involved in the institution, South Korea also took the initiative to express the concern of the council to North Korea through inter-Korean ministerial talks.<sup>60</sup> This gives South Korea a larger role in dealing with North Korea on behalf of the international community. Korea's positioning as the closest state with the necessary image in the institution affords South Korea the right to do so. He also said that engaging with North Korea on human rights as an international community would lead to the spread of human rights cooperation in other necessary areas as well.<sup>61</sup> This paints the resolution of North Korea's human rights

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<sup>58</sup> Ban, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Ki-moon Ban, "Statement at the 1st Session of the Human Rights Council," June 19, 2006, 2, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5689/view.do?seq=298155&page=23](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5689/view.do?seq=298155&page=23).

<sup>60</sup> Ban, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Ban, 5.

issues and engagement with North Korea as not only beneficial to North Korea but also to the international community in serving as a gateway to outreach to similar states.

### *2006 Diplomatic White Papers*

The 2006 Diplomatic White Papers of the then Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, give an even clearer view of Korean foreign policy behavior and intention. The 2006 white papers review many of the initiatives taken in 2005 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They describe the role South Korea played in the various international issues as well as how they plan to move forward. They give an overview of the various issues and how Korea plans on contributing to the resolution of these issues. The issues of Korean national interest during this time include:

“the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, enhancing the ROK-U.S. alliance, developing future-oriented Korea-Japan relations based on a correct understanding of history, reflecting its views in the process of the reform of the United Nations Security Council, and establishing an advanced trade policy to create a new engine of growth.”<sup>62</sup>

However, the foreign policy does not stop at its regional agenda as there is a section on advancing diplomacy in the international arena. The tasks for this include such activities as, “Advancing national interest through multidimensional summit diplomacy; successful hosting of the 2005 APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting in Busan; increasing Official Development Assistance (ODA) and

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<sup>62</sup> Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), “2006 Diplomatic White Paper,” ed. Policy Planning and Coordination Division et al. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, December 2006), 23.

fulfilling its international obligations; strengthening roles within the UN,<sup>63</sup> among other activities.

The Roh administration's intent in stepping into its middle role is expressed when it is stated that the ministry has worked to, "promote a positive image of Korea in the world by expanding the country's role and contribution to the international community in a manner commensurate with its economic power. It has strived to take a leading role in the age of globalization."<sup>64</sup> This is a clear statement of what sort of middle power the Roh administration wanted to be. The Roh government wished to hold higher influence in the international system to match its growth in capabilities.

#### *Minister Song Min-soon's Interview with Arirang TV (2007)*

Another instance of analysis comes from Minister Song Min-soon's interview with Arirang TV's "Diplomacy Lounge" in 2007, where he discussed a bit about Korea's foreign policy strategy with the host. Song mentioned that Ban Ki-moon's presence in the UN expresses Korea's "weight in the world" and would require Korea to play a responsible role in global peace, stability, and prosperity.<sup>65</sup> By this time, the Roh administration seems to have been stepping more comfortably into its middle power position and relishes the success of Ban's presence in the UN. When asked how the three countries (the United States, China,

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<sup>63</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 25.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Korea Republic of and Min-soon Song, "[Interview] Arirang TV 'Diplomacy Lounge' View|Minister | Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea," December 29, 2007, 2, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5689/view.do?seq=305524&page=18](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5689/view.do?seq=305524&page=18).

and South Korea) are working together to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula, Song answers that the goals are denuclearization and setting up a peace regime. He also mentions that “Korea is playing a key role in getting the parties concerned to the middle of the ground and make a deal and negotiate a settlement.”<sup>66</sup>

This interview seems to also have been an opportunity for the government to explain some of its foreign policy to regular citizens. After being questioned about the need for involvement in such a far-away region as Palestine, Song answered by saying other countries in the Middle East and Europe endeavor Korea to use its unique situation to “contribution to peace and security of that region” and further, “I’m telling to my Korean citizens that there lies the future of Korea’s expansion of role, Korea’s contribution to the world peace and stability.”<sup>67</sup> He reiterated the importance of South Korea gaining such an image and role in the international community. This analysis of the situation would allow Korean people to see that peace and stability abroad are also very beneficial to prosperity at home. The individualism of prior days does not apply to an age of globalization.

In such a connected world, middle powers exert their bit of influence to contribute to world peace and thus prosperity in their nations. Korea’s “unique situation” of lacking a predatory relation with other countries enables it to take up the role of the contributor and thus middle power with influence in such key international issues. This is also the attraction of allowing middle powers to have more influence as opposed to great power domination. Great powers often have

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<sup>66</sup> Korea and Song, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Korea and Song, 6.

tense relationships with former colonies that wish to protect their sovereignty at all costs.

### *2007 Diplomatic White Papers*

As another source of Korea's middle power behavior and conception under the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the 2007 Diplomatic White Papers will give a clear indication of the policies towards the end of his presidency. The document opens with Minister Song Min-soon's statement in which he stated that South Korea's issues could be resolved through, "multi-dimensional summit diplomacy with several states around the world."<sup>68</sup> Showcasing the administration's commitment to peaceful and diplomatic methods until the very end. He once again stated that Ban's presence in the UN would, "strengthen the Korean people's commitment to peace and development in the international community."<sup>69</sup> The document then goes on to describe Korea's foreign policy in which all of their initiatives were under the umbrella of "Towards the World and Future: Together with the People."<sup>70</sup>

Moving on to the international arena which is expressed under Objective II, under which the ministry sought, diversified diplomacy in the international arena:

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<sup>68</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), "2007 Diplomatic White Paper," ed. Policy Planning and Coordination Division (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, December 27, 2007), 12, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5684/list.do?page=3&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5684/list.do?page=3&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=).

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 12–13.

<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 26.

“Pursuit of the multi-dimensional summit diplomacy; exerting leadership in regional cooperation; advancing into the European market by utilizing the EU enlargement; expanding practical cooperation with the Caribbean and Latin America; and strengthening diplomatic relations with Africa and Central Asia.”<sup>71</sup>

The middle power conceptualization in this area comes from the desire to gain a leadership role and become friendly in different regions.

The section directly related to middle power diplomacy is stipulated under objective III, Advanced Diplomacy commensurate with Korea’s status in the world (also known as middle power diplomacy):

“Expanding international contributions commensurate with Korea’s economic power; increasing participation of the nationals in the major international organizations; reflection of Korea’s viewpoints with regard to UN Reforms; contribution to the promotion of the universal values and resolve global issues; and strengthening soft power through cultural diplomacy.”<sup>72</sup>

This section not only reflects the efforts for leadership positions but also the belief in adhering to the existing institutions and values. There is also the promise to participate in the resolution of global issues.

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<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 26.

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 27.

## *b. North Korea Policy*

### *Roh Moo-hyun's Inauguration Speech (2003)*

In his inaugural speech, Roh spoke about South Korea's biggest international threat, North Korea. He stated, "The third principle in his New North Korea policy is to, "seek active international co-operation on the premise that South and North Korea are the two main actors in inter-Korean relations."<sup>73</sup> This excludes the other states who have a vested interest and ostensibly gives South Korea the lead as the state with better capabilities. Although he makes a strong statement against North Korea's nuclear weapons, he wishes to discuss the issues with the United States and Japan to solve the nuclear issue with 'dialogue' while maintaining cooperation with all surrounding countries.<sup>74</sup>

In later remarks to the national assembly, Roh said, "there will be no war on the Korean Peninsula as long as we do not want it. Without an agreement with us, the United States will not take unilateral action in dealing with the North Korean nuclear problem. That promise will be honored by all means."<sup>75</sup> This appears to be a more combative diplomatic style by expressing that there will be disagreement if the U.S. goes against Korea's wishes. Even more directly he said, "We have to remember that the United States, or any other country, may not necessarily make a decision that we will feel is justified. In this context, it should

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<sup>73</sup> Roh, "Roh Moo-Hyun's Inauguration Speech."

<sup>74</sup> Roh.

<sup>75</sup> Moo-hyun Roh, "Remarks by President Roh Moo-Hyun at the National Assembly," April 2, 2003, [https://unikorea.go.kr/eng\\_unikorea/news/speeches/%3Bjsessionid=SIM+kDMI1lzV3NdAdhiwZadf.unikorea21?boardId=bbs\\_0000000000000036&mode=view&cntId=31935&category=&pageIdx=18](https://unikorea.go.kr/eng_unikorea/news/speeches/%3Bjsessionid=SIM+kDMI1lzV3NdAdhiwZadf.unikorea21?boardId=bbs_0000000000000036&mode=view&cntId=31935&category=&pageIdx=18).



be noted that solid Korea-U.S. coordination is of utmost importance in settling the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully.”<sup>76</sup> Equally important are improvements to inter-Korean relations. He also said, “Our destiny depends on your choice.”<sup>77</sup> This is related to the participatory government but also points to South Korea’s growing autonomy on its security issues.

*Statement at the 58<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly and Ban Ki-moon’s Speech at the Korea Society Dinner (2004)*

The Policy for Peace and Prosperity as documented by the Ministry of unification expresses the Roh government’s intent to seek a peaceful co-existence policy on the North Korean issue.<sup>78</sup> This peace will not be passive<sup>79</sup> because of the increase in dialogue and exchanges, leading it out of merely keeping the status quo as many traditional middle powers would seek. South Korean ministers constantly expressed the importance of the six-party talks abroad. One such example is when Ban Ki-moon expressed the success of each nation’s diplomacy in creating the talks and the need to continue to a 4<sup>th</sup> round to continue the momentum on the nuclear issue.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Roh.

<sup>77</sup> Roh, 5.

<sup>78</sup> ““The Policy for Peace and Prosperity,”” April 13, 2004, 4, [https://unikorea.go.kr/eng\\_unikorea/news/speeches/?jsessionid=FgmiM4h3UV1c2XzWNeij9nOM.unikorea21?boardId=bbs\\_0000000000000036&mode=view&cntId=31950&category=&pageIdx=17](https://unikorea.go.kr/eng_unikorea/news/speeches/?jsessionid=FgmiM4h3UV1c2XzWNeij9nOM.unikorea21?boardId=bbs_0000000000000036&mode=view&cntId=31950&category=&pageIdx=17).

<sup>79</sup> ““The Policy for Peace and Prosperity,”” 5.

<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Korea Republic of and Ki-moon Ban, “Speech at a Dinner hosted by the Korea Society,” September 23, 2004, 6, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5689/view.do?seq=298583&page=27](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5689/view.do?seq=298583&page=27).

## *2006 Diplomatic White Papers*

In terms of dealing with North Korea and the Six-Party Talks, the ministry describes the South Korean role using descriptive terms such as: Stably managing the situation to resume talks;<sup>81</sup> active role in dialogue;<sup>82</sup> fostering an atmosphere for agreement;<sup>83</sup> contributing to peace and stability in Northeast Asia and the world; taking initiative in creating a cooperation framework in Northeast Asia;<sup>84</sup> and endeavors to embrace the universal values of peace, security, development, and protection of human rights in foreign policy.<sup>85</sup> This long list gives a clear view of the Roh administration's prescribed tasks for middle power diplomacy.

### *Vice Minister Cho Jung-pyo's Statement at the 45<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council (2007)*

Moving forward in the administration's timeline, Vice Minister Cho Jung-pyo also continues Ban Ki-moon's previous point on South Korea sharing the concerns of the international community about North Korea's human rights issues. Thus, "In line with its current policy of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation, my Government will continue to make efforts to bring about substantial improvements of conditions of life in the DPRK."<sup>86</sup> This is also a part of improving conditions for smooth unification in the future.

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<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), "2006 Diplomatic White Paper," 31–32.

<sup>82</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 31–32.

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 35–36.

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 63.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), 95.

<sup>86</sup> Jung-pyo Cho, "Statement at the 4th Session of the Human Rights Council," March 14, 2007, 4, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5690/view.do?seq=298176&page=21](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5690/view.do?seq=298176&page=21).

### *c. Regional*

#### *Roh Moo-hyun's Inauguration Speech (2003)*

Within Roh's inaugural speech, not only does he express that the region is growing but Korea's position in the region is critical as a "big bridge linking China and Japan, the continent and the ocean."<sup>87</sup> This is critical because it allows Korea to make use of its well-educated population, and extensive infrastructure, and thus is, "equipped with all the basic requirements to lead the age of Northeast Asia in the 21st Century. The country is poised to emerge as an international logistics and financial hub in Northeast Asia."<sup>88</sup> So far, he has laid out a foundation for South Korea to take leadership in the region. The goal of this leadership is to bring a community of prosperity that is to be extended to all of humanity and eventually evolve into a "community of peace."<sup>89</sup>

#### *Minister Ban Ki-moon's Statement at North Atlantic Council (2005)*

Just as Roh expressed in his inauguration speech, Ban Ki-moon also expressed the need for cooperation in Northeast Asia as the region has become more important to the world economy.<sup>90</sup> However, because of various uncertainties, the region was unstable and thus he called for a "durable order of stability in the region."<sup>91</sup> He then continued to express South Korea's intent with its North Korea policy by saying, "a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula is an imperative task. It is vital not only for peace in Northeast Asia but indeed the world. My government is determined to rise to this task, making every possible effort in close cooperation

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<sup>87</sup> Roh, "Roh Moo-Hyun's Inauguration Speech."

<sup>88</sup> Roh, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Roh.

<sup>90</sup> Ban, "Statement at North Atlantic Council, NATO," 2–3.

<sup>91</sup> Ban, 3.

with the countries concerned.”<sup>92</sup> Not only will cooperation bring peace to the peninsula, but also to the region which should be in the interest of the entire global community as expressed through the importance of the Northeast Asian region. Now it would be good to question what is the intent of focusing on a regional issue, while also expanding the interest in its resolution to the international community as the Roh administration has done thus far?

### *2006 Diplomatic White Papers*

The 2006 White Papers depict the regional-oriented focus of South Korea’s foreign policy by expressing that the government must improve relations with Japan, solve the North Korean nuclear issue, develop a “balanced” ROK-U.S. alliance relationship, support North Korea’s participation in the international community and inter-Korean cooperation, and institutionalizing cooperation between Korea-China-Japan and ASEAN.<sup>93</sup>

### *2007 Diplomatic White Papers*

The diplomatic activities are divided into three different objectives. Under objective one of balanced and pragmatic diplomacy for peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia, the directives are:

“Concrete progress in the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue;  
Developing comprehensive partnership between ROK-U.S.; building  
future-oriented relations with neighboring countries; supporting the

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<sup>92</sup> Ban, 5.

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), “2006 Diplomatic White Paper,” 24.

development of Inter-Korean relations through international cooperation;  
and promotion of the Northeast Asian multilateral security dialogue.”<sup>94</sup>

These activities give South Korea a more autonomous and leading role in the region. From developing a comprehensive partnership with the United States to promoting cooperation in the region, the government wanted to be more active in the region.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis

Many of the comments made by Roh Moo-hyun and his ministers begin by shining light on Korea’s growth in capabilities as if to justify the need to expand Korea’s global activities. There seems to be an assumption that such capabilities, such as becoming the 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy,<sup>95</sup> are a prerequisite for holding the position of a middle power in international relations, or at least to engage in middle power activities. Such activities include gaining access to leadership roles in international institutions, proposing the agenda in such institutions, creating lines of communication with North Korea, garnering support for state policies, etc.

The first step in the analysis is categorizing Roh’s middle power according to Jordaan’s definition of a traditional and emerging middle power. Categorization is more difficult for Roh because South Korea had yet to officially claim itself as a middle power until the Lee administration. According to Jordaan’s description, Roh’s middle power is much like an emerging middle power in regional behavior. This is proven by the constant discussion of the need for cooperation in the

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<sup>94</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade(MOFAT), “2007 Diplomatic White Paper,” 26.

<sup>95</sup> Roh, “Roh Moo-Hyun’s Inauguration Speech.”

Northeast Asian region. Even on a more international stage, Roh and his ministers did not fail to mention the immense benefit of regional cooperation and integration.

The international behavior of the administration took more of the traditional and legitimizing role to effect global change. This is seen in the statements of the administration that support the international institutions' values of peace and democracy. Additionally, the administration showed a strong commitment to the development of different regions of the world.

Because Roh's administration does not fall too fully into either of Jordaan's two categories, it may be useful to position Roh's middle power on both of Cooper's frameworks of middle power behavior. In the basic framework, Roh's middle power is both heroic and routine in form. While the administration made heavy use of international institutions and sought approval from the international community, its policy can be considered heroic when it comes to North Korea. The North Korean policy is heroic because of the attempt to bring North Korea into the international community in a peaceful manner. Roh and his ministers constantly made suggestions to both North Korea and the international community encouraging peaceful engagement. The Roh administration did keep involved in other international issues but did not take the same initiative internationally, as it did regionally.

If we were to look at how Roh's middle power falls on the extended framework which is meant to include emerging middle power behaviors, it would fall more towards the middle of that specific intersection. The Roh government's foreign policy is neither combative nor accommodative. Tending more towards the accommodative side, in that it does not challenge the U.S. in international

institutions, yet, the administration still did not completely adhere to U.S. initiatives, particularly on North Korea. Roh was firm on wishing to take the lead in dealing with North Korea. Roh and his ministers seem to have focused more on regional institutionalization and leadership to improve stability. Often having the idea that regional activities will lead to more international recognition and thus give more of a role, which would then circle back to more success in the region. South Korea's middle power status, according to the Roh administration, would not only assist in gaining autonomy and influence, but will also be maintained by the same gains.

## 4.2 Moon Jae-in

The Moon administration exhibits a more advanced version of middle power diplomacy than those laid out by his predecessors, whether they be conservative or progressive. He seeks some autonomy from the ROK-US alliance proposed by the Kim Dae-jung administration which was continued under Roh Moo-hyun. He also built on the Lee administration's work by becoming much more involved in international institutions.

### 4.2.1 Speeches, Statements, and Diplomatic White Papers (2017-2021)

#### *a. International*

##### *2018 Diplomatic White Papers*

The 2018 Diplomatic White Papers give an even clearer look into the administration's foreign policy behavior and intentions throughout 2017. According to the minister's message at the beginning of the document, the national vision of the Moon Jae-in administration at the time was the achievement of a

“Nation of the People, a Just Republic of Korea.”<sup>96</sup> This was meant to be achieved through keeping national interest as a top priority, and diplomatic engagement with the international community “in a manner befitting the status” of South Korea. They also had the hope of continuing their historic momentum to spread peace beyond the Korean Peninsula and into the East Asian region.<sup>97</sup> The mention of their status in the international arena is akin to the Roh administration’s constant mention of international activity “commensurate” to their status and the international responsibility of a middle power. There is also a mention of expanding diplomatic horizons through stepping up roles in contributing to global issues as well as “becoming a driving force for the fostering of a favorable diplomatic environment.”<sup>98</sup>

*Vice Minister Lee Taeho's opening remarks at the Opening Session of the Seoul Conference on UN Peacekeeping (2018)*

On further activities in the international arena at this point in the Moon administration, this research will turn to Vice Minister Lee Taeho’s opening remarks at the Opening Session of the Seoul Conference on UN Peacekeeping. He urged other states to implement A4P. He also legitimizes Korea’s need for involvement as a state which values peace and thus since its admission to the UN “has continued to contribute to peacekeeping” through efforts such as sending

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<sup>96</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2018 Diplomatic White Paper” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, December 21, 2018), 2, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=).

<sup>97</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3.



several Korean peacekeepers to issue areas.<sup>99</sup> It is not a Korean statement to the international community without mention of the North Korean issue and thus, Lee went on to speak of peace on the Peninsula which South Korea continuously strived towards, along with peace in the international community.<sup>100</sup> In this statement, it is evident that there is slightly less regional focus than the Roh administration. Lee also spoke of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics' contribution to the reopening of dialogue between North and South.<sup>101</sup>

*President Moon Jae-in's address at the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) Summit in 2018*

An example of middle power behavior on a more niche international issues at the time comes from Moon Jae-in's address at the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) Summit in 2018. Korea's responsibility and ability are highlighted when Moon said, "The Republic of Korea was able to overcome the War thanks to supporting from Denmark and many other countries around the world. Because of their help, Korea can now join the world in responding to global crises."<sup>102</sup> Good global citizenship and superior morality are also highlighted in this instance when he mentioned a love for humanity is what has sparked Korea's involvement in environmental work and should do the same for others. He then cited several projects the Korean government has launched to

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<sup>99</sup> Taeho Lee, "2nd Vice Minister's Opening Remarks at the opening session of the Seoul Conference on UN Peacekeeping," December 3, 2018, 4, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5690/view.do?seq=319552&page=3](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5690/view.do?seq=319552&page=3).

<sup>100</sup> Lee, 5.

<sup>101</sup> Lee, 5.

<sup>102</sup> Jae-in Moon, "Address by President Moon Jae-in at Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) Summit," October 20, 2018, 2, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Briefingspeeches/Speeches/85>.

achieve major P4G goals.<sup>103</sup> Moon did not forget to mention the need for improvement in the Asian region because of its importance to improvement and international cooperation on that front. He even expressly mentioned South Korea as a country that, “grew to a middle power from a developing country, it also achieved successes through its environmental policies.”<sup>104</sup> Through the speech, Moon reinforces South Korea’s legitimacy to influence and help the international community resolve such issues. To conclude, he said, “We want such an ending. For sustainable growth and climate change response, the Republic of Korea will always stand with the international community in support of the spirit and implementation of P4G.”<sup>105</sup>

### *2019 Diplomatic White papers*

In the international arena, Korea sought to diversify diplomatic horizons beyond Northeast Asia through the promotion of the New Northern and the New Southern Policies. Korea expanded cooperation with many countries in eastern Europe. Along with that:

“Likewise, the 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit and the 2019 Korea-Mekong Summit in November are expected to provide a golden opportunity to enrich and develop the New Southern Policy in the long run. In addition, the Korean government made efforts to expand cooperation for co-existence and co-prosperity with Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean,

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<sup>103</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>104</sup> Moon, 3.

<sup>105</sup> Moon, 3.

Africa, and the Middle East through active high-level exchanges for deepening comprehensive cooperation.”<sup>106</sup>

The next section relates to “Enhancing Korea's Role and National Prestige in the International Community” directly relating to expanding South Korea’s middle power activities and influence. It is stated that: “The Korean government pursued diplomatic diversification by increasing the number of cooperation partners in the international community, as well as by intensifying multilateral cooperation to complement bilateral diplomacy.”<sup>107</sup> The achievements through these summits are prestige as a responsible middle power, clarifying state goals, playing a leading role, expanding its role in assistance, and gaining support from the international community for denuclearization and peace on the peninsula.<sup>108</sup> The Korean government has come a long way from the Roh administration to be able to state its middle power responsibilities and plans, as well as what it wishes to achieve through such diplomacy, including “increasing prestige as a responsible middle power” through involvement in resolving several global issues.<sup>109</sup>

Specifically related to increasing middle power status, there is a section of the document which recounts Korea’s efforts to enhance its role and standing in the international community. This section illustrates that the Moon administration considered various summit meetings with organizations both within the region and abroad as appropriate middle power behavior. At these various summit meetings

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<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2019 Diplomatic White Paper” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, December 30, 2019), 26–27, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=)

<sup>107</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28.

<sup>109</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28.

and interactions, Moon and his ministers would encourage the countries by promoting the benefits of cooperation which would ensure peace and co-prosperity.<sup>110</sup>

The issues discussed are not limited to North Korea and can vary, exemplified by the discussions on “ways to increase cooperation in sea-related issues, environment, energy, agriculture, and ecosystem”<sup>111</sup> Middle power diplomacy also includes contributing to international peace and security. This, of course, would include mention of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula with the help of the international community. If left alone to the great powers in the region, the situation could easily lead to war, which would account for why the Moon administration was constantly emphasizing the subject on an international stage.

*President Moon Jae-in at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly (2018)*

During the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, Moon Jae-in mentioned, “Korea's determination to make a substantive contribution in areas such as extending support for the vulnerable, abolishing sexual violence in conflict, and tackling climate change, highlighting Korea's status as a responsible middle power that actively participates in addressing global issues.”<sup>112</sup> The activities include participating in peace-keeping operations, peacebuilding through the promotion of

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<sup>110</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 255.

<sup>111</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 256.

<sup>112</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 257–59.

rule of law and democracy, and supporting Koreans wishing to take up career paths in international organizations.

*President Moon Jae-in, “Peace Through a Myriad of Acts” (2019)*

This paper will turn to Moon Jae-in’s words in his article, ‘Peace Through a Myriad of Acts, published in Project Syndicate in 2019. In the article, he says, “Peace can come about only through dialogue and numerous meetings, by taking bold actions that make the impossible possible, and by persistently looking for reasons why peace is preferable.”<sup>113</sup> This relates to Cooper and Jordaan’s point on the risk-taking of emerging middle power states. Moon expresses that while the situation has yet to improve satisfactorily, the North and the international community need to practice reciprocity with North Korea implementing denuclearization and the international community responding in kind.<sup>114</sup>

*President Moon Jae-in at the 2019 National Saemaul Leaders’ Convention*

More on middle power responsibility is mentioned by Moon Jae-in at the 2019 National Saemaul Leaders’ Convention: “As a responsible middle power globally, Korea will continue to provide support for shared prosperity in the international community.”<sup>115</sup> Middlepowerdom also includes providing support to the international community. So far, the Moon administration appears more outwardly facing in diplomatic activity, beyond the region.

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<sup>113</sup> Jae-in Moon, “Peace Through Myriad Acts | by Moon Jae-In,” Project Syndicate, December 26, 2019, 1, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/korean-peninsula-peace-international-community-by-moon-jae-in-2019-12>.

<sup>114</sup> Moon, 1.

<sup>115</sup> Jae-in Moon, “Congratulatory Remarks by President Moon Jae-in at 2019 National Saemaul Leaders’ Convention,” October 29, 2019, 4, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Briefingspeeches/Speeches/683>.

Korea also became the tenth-largest financial donor to UN peacekeeping operations in 2019 and participated actively as a member of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.<sup>116</sup> This same focus on institutional diplomacy was also extended to security organizations such as NATO and OSCE. Non-traditional issues were also a focus of Korean foreign policy.

Middle power diplomacy is referenced further in chapter five on Korea's role and standing in the international community. It includes middle power and minilateral diplomatic meetings, organizing events for MIKTA and preparing for the Korean chairmanship of the organization; speaking of common international issues in different forums and organizations, such as the Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum.<sup>117</sup>

The document continues to include tasks such as contributing to the promotion of international peace and security: Participating actively in diplomacy with the UN, such as attending UN general assembly sessions where Moon presented his idea of transforming the DMZ into an international peace zone.<sup>118</sup> Other activities involved, heavy involvement in UN peacekeeping operations and even preparing to host a ministerial talk in Seoul in 2021.<sup>119</sup> Middle power

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<sup>116</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2020 Diplomatic White Paper" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, February 26, 2021), 26, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=).

<sup>117</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 240.

<sup>118</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 241.

<sup>119</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 243.

presence is also fostered by aiding youth who wish to take careers in international organizations.<sup>120</sup>

*President Moon Jae-in's speech at the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (2020)*

In 2020, President Moon also spoke at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. He addressed the issues coming from the COVID-19 pandemic and recounts Korea's efforts to extend a helping hand to the international community through sharing equipment and leaving borders open.<sup>121</sup> He then reiterates his respect for the UN values which is what encouraged Korea to behave in such a way during the pandemic.<sup>122</sup> He said, "It lies in returning to the spirit of the UN Charter, that is believing in universal values of humankind, and it lies in marching toward a more inclusive world through multilateral action."<sup>123</sup>

Not only has the international community already supported successful endeavors, but also through continuous efforts can achieve tremendous results. This will also benefit the UN's agenda and thus the international community. He presents Korea's COVID-19 response as a model example for the rest of the world and Korea's wish to work alongside the UN in spreading peace.<sup>124</sup> The points on 'inclusive' international cooperation are quite interesting for Korea's middle power diplomacy and acting as a bridge. To conclude his speech, Moon said, "I would like to ask the UN, from this moment onward, to be the center of inclusive

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<sup>120</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 244.

<sup>121</sup> Jae-in Moon, "Address by President Moon Jae-in at 75th Session of United Nations General Assembly," September 23, 2020, 2, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Briefingspeeches/Speeches/881>.

<sup>122</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>123</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>124</sup> Moon, 4.

international cooperation in the new era.”<sup>125</sup> With the UN at the center of international cooperation, Korea’s growing presence in the organization can be useful in achieving national interests.

*Vice Minister Cho Sei-young’s keynote address at the 5<sup>th</sup> ROK-US Strategic Forum (2020)*

Another statement of South Korea’s growing capabilities allowing for its place and responsibility in the international community comes from Vice Minister Cho Sei-young’s keynote address at the 5th ROK-US Strategic forum. Vice-minister Cho stated, “We are recognized as among the top ten countries by measure of economic, military, technological and other indexes...in a way, the G7 invitation represents Korea finally stepping onto the big stage.”<sup>126</sup> Cho legitimizes Korea’s status through its growth in capabilities which should allow for its growing influence. Cho continues to say, “But with privileges come responsibilities. And Korea is ready and willing to take on the duties. For instance, our ODA level still falls short of what is expected of Korea.”<sup>127</sup> Korea does not selfishly seek benefit and would like to give back to the international community wherever possible.

*2021 Diplomatic White Papers*

In the 2021 White Papers, there is an overview of Korea’s 2020 foreign policy. The minister of foreign affairs, Chung Eui-yong, mentions the problems that came with the COVID-19 pandemic and how the Korean government “played

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<sup>125</sup> Moon, 4.

<sup>126</sup> Sei-young Cho, “Keynote Address By H.E. Cho Sei-young Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, The 5th ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum View,” June 25, 2020, 3, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5690/view.do?seq=319571&page=2](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5690/view.do?seq=319571&page=2).

<sup>127</sup> Cho, 3.



a leading role in efforts by the global community to overcome it.”<sup>128</sup> Related to this Chung says, “By sharing with the international community Korea’s experience and achievements from our COVID-19 response, Korea is playing a leading role in shaping an inclusive and sustainable new international order for the post-COVID-19 era.”<sup>129</sup>

Korea’s foreign policy during 2020 is described as dealing with the global pandemic as well as the US-China competition, thus the Korean government’s goals were: “achieving complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula; enhancing cooperation with the four neighboring countries; diversifying Korea’s diplomacy to broaden its horizon; promoting middle-power diplomacy for bridging developed and developing countries as its foreign policy objectives and pursued them vigorously.”<sup>130</sup> Much like the diplomacy of previous years.

Chapter two of the white papers showcases Korea’s diplomatic creativity in times of global crisis as it relates to diplomacy and global response to COVID-19. As the pandemic began and looked to be a very large world issue, the Korean government seems to have taken it more seriously as a middle power, even allotting it a section in the Diplomatic White paper. The tasks include promoting international cooperation and solidarity as well as, “playing a leading role in

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<sup>128</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2021 Diplomatic White Paper” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, December 31, 2021), [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5684/list.do?page=1&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=).

<sup>129</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3.

<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24.

launching a group of friends in health and security within the UN, WHO, and UNESCO in May.”<sup>131</sup>

Lastly, chapter five discusses Korea’s middle power diplomacy. This included acts such as: “Diplomacies Promoting International Peace and Security; Increasing Korea’s Contribution to Sustainable Development through Strategic Development Cooperation; Strengthening the Legal Basis for Foreign Relations and Diplomatic Activities”<sup>132</sup> The attention to the legal basis for foreign relations alludes to a more routine approach to middle power diplomacy with a strong adherence to the existing values of the international community.

### *2021 New Year’s Address by President Moon Jae-in*

In his 2021 New Year’s address President Moon, beginning his final year in office still remarks on Korea’s growing economy and the need for international cooperation to ensure mutual benefit.<sup>133</sup> On a niche issue such as climate change, Moon mentions the Korean government has worked to improve Korea’s carbon emissions per the Paris Agreement.<sup>134</sup> Seoul also even hosted the P4G Summit in May 2021. Directly relating to middle powers, Moon says, “the daily lives of people around the world are connected. As a proud middle power, Korea will fulfill the role of a bridge nation so that advanced and developing countries can prosper together through improved mutual understanding.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29.

<sup>132</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2020 Diplomatic White Paper,” 130.

<sup>133</sup> Jae-in Moon, “2021 New Year’s Address by President Moon Jae-In,” January 11, 2021, 4, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Briefingspeeches/Speeches/931>.

<sup>134</sup> Moon, 4.

<sup>135</sup> Moon, 4.

Finally, Moon explains to the Korean citizens, “If we can draw support from the international community in the process, the door to a community of peace, security, and life will open wide, not just on the Peninsula but also in East Asia.”<sup>136</sup> In a way, Korea is dependent on the help of the international community, but independently takes up critical contributor roles in global issues, which allows the state to call for help on its national security issue.

*President Moon Jae-in's Congratulatory Message for the Virtual 2021  
Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial*

Another attempt to be incorporated as a leader in the UN peace regime is made when President Moon presented a congratulatory message for the Virtual 2021 Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial. He reiterates how Korea's own experiences have made the government see the urgent need for peace. He said, “Korea intends to secure a seat on the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for the 2024-2025 term. We look forward to contributing to activities that build peace and prevent conflict.”<sup>137</sup> He urged the international community to be involved in achieving peace and permanent denuclearization on the Peninsula and even suggest what the first step to creating such a situation would be. He suggested an end-of-war declaration as the first step.<sup>138</sup> He concluded by saying, “I hope that the international community will work together so that we can create a new order

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<sup>136</sup> Moon, 5.

<sup>137</sup> Jae-in Moon, “Congratulatory Message from President Moon Jae-in for Virtual 2021 Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial,” December 7, 2021, <https://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/1116>.

<sup>138</sup> Moon, 2.

of reconciliation and cooperation and achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia and the world through an end-of-war declaration.”<sup>139</sup>

### *b. North Korea*

#### *President Moon Jae-in's Inaugural Speech (2017)*

In his 2017 inaugural speech, Moon Jae-in expresses some of his plans when he says, “My heart is burning with passion to make South Korea a nation never experienced before. My thoughts are now full of blueprints for the new world of unification and coexistence.”<sup>140</sup> In dealing with North Korea, Moon said the following, “I will not rest until peace is settled on the Korean Peninsula. I will fly to Washington, Beijing, and Tokyo if needed, and I will also go to Pyongyang, if conditions are met.”<sup>141</sup> Along with the loss of the Six-Party Talks, the Moon administration had the added difficulty of working with the THAAD issue between the U.S. and China to deal with in the region. On this Moon said he will work to resolve the issue and, “Strong national security comes from strong national defense. I will work to strengthen our independent national defense capability.”<sup>142</sup> Similar to how Roh’s administration sought “future-oriented” relations with the United States, they see a future where Korea is a bit more independent in its national security. Similarly, the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue will be sought through a Northeast Asia peace regime.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>140</sup> Jae-in Moon, “Moon Jae-in’s Inauguration Speech [FULL SCRIPT],” trans. Dong-hwan Ko, koreatimes, May 11, 2017, 1, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/04/356\\_229150.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/04/356_229150.html).

<sup>141</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>142</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>143</sup> Moon, 2.

### *100 Policy Tasks of the Moon Administration (2018)*

Later in 2017, Moon also makes references to events during President Roh's tenure. President Moon urged North Korea to honor the declaration from the summit between President Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Jong-il in 2007.<sup>144</sup> He alludes to the failures of the two previous conservative presidents in improving inter-Korean relations while reinforcing the actions of the Roh administration as proper and suitable even for the present day. He is quoted as saying, "I hope that South and North can together declare that the Oct. 4, 2007, declaration is still valid. I urge North Korea to stop its nuclear weapons and missile provocations and to return to the spirit of the Oct. 4, 2007, declaration."<sup>145</sup>

### *2018 Diplomatic White Papers*

The document recounts some issues present in the region and internationally by the time Moon Jae-in came into office and the solutions put forth by his administration. One such problem was North Korea's growing provocation of threats to the international community to which they responded with sanctions. Once in office, the Moon administration sought to, much like the Roh administration, expand summit diplomacy amongst all regionally involved parties. It is stated that "The administration devoted its diplomatic efforts to bring about a change in North Korea's behavior, while at the same time, responding firmly to North Korea's acts of provocation."<sup>146</sup> Moon was able to convince the Trump administration of the need to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue in a peaceful

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<sup>144</sup> Sojung Yoon and Young Shin Kim, "President Moon Urges NK to Honor 2007 Declaration," September 27, 2017, 1, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Media/News/152>.

<sup>145</sup> Yoon and Kim, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2018 Diplomatic White Paper," 40.

manner.<sup>147</sup> There was also a need for the administration to seek support for their North Korea policy from the international community which they attempted through various diplomatic meetings such as the UN General Assembly, G20, and ASEAN. The document recounts Moon Jae-in's tactic of "defining North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development as grave threats to world peace, and underlining the importance of the international community's joint response."<sup>148</sup>

The next agenda item at the time was the ROK-US alliance, which was threatened during the Trump administration. The efforts in this arena were made to "pave the way for the sustainable development of the ROK-US alliance."<sup>149</sup>

### *2019 Diplomatic White papers*

At the end of 2019, the annual Diplomatic White Papers were released once again. The opening message of minister Kang Kyung-wha expounds on the government's successes for peace in 2018. South Korea's role is described as "Based on the airtight cooperation between the ROK and the US, our government played a full bridging role between North Korea and the US and sought to foster a virtuous circle between inter-Korean relations and North Korea-US relations to generate a mutually reinforcing effect."<sup>150</sup> The ROK also encouraged neighboring countries to play constructive roles as was promised in the 2018 White Papers. She also says, "Our endeavors for peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula are a concrete demonstration of our will to ultimately contribute to the common

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<sup>147</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 41.

<sup>148</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 43–44.

<sup>149</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 51.

<sup>150</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2019 Diplomatic White Paper," 2.

prosperity and peace of Northeast Asia and beyond, and indeed around the world.”<sup>151</sup>

The document recounts the troubles the world faced in 2018 with the rising tensions between China and the United States as well the spread of “sharp power” in domestic politics across the globe.<sup>152</sup> As well as the issues of North Korean nuclear provocation which were handled through the numerous summits held in 2018. There were many successes in summit diplomacy between North and South including, the Pyongyang Joint Declaration.<sup>153</sup>

The next section recounts South Korea’s foreign policy during 2018. The section opens with:

In the region surrounding the Korean Peninsula, the Moon Jae-in administration played a leading role in resuming the inter-Korean talks, and the first US-North Korea summit in history was held, which accelerated the monumental progress by easing regional tension and serving as a historic turning point in the efforts to solve North Korea's nuclear issue.<sup>154</sup>

Once again, the goals from the 2018 white papers are spelled out: “making progress in the peace process on the Korean Peninsula, strengthening cooperation with its four neighboring countries, expanding its diplomatic horizon through diversification, and conducting diplomacy together with the people.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8.

<sup>153</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22.

<sup>154</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23.

<sup>155</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23.

The role Korea played in the advocacy of human rights and democracy includes participating in the UN efforts to address human rights in North Korea,<sup>156</sup> the spread of democracy through the Busan democracy forum,<sup>157</sup> burden-sharing with the international community to address the refugee crisis,<sup>158</sup> making efforts to discuss resolutions to nuclear proliferation through the construction of disarmament and non-proliferation networks not only with the UN but also bilaterally with other nations such as Japan, the US, and the EU.<sup>159</sup> There is also a section relating to the contribution to the international community's efforts for development cooperation.<sup>160</sup>

### *2020 Diplomatic White Papers*

The 2020 Diplomatic White Papers will give a clearer view of the Korean government's foreign policy behavior at the time. Once again the theme of the global trends during 2019 was recounted as a shift from a "retreat from globalism" to some improvement as the year went on.<sup>161</sup> The section on Korean foreign policy in 2019, focused on getting the ROK, US, and North Korea back in communication to achieve denuclearization and peace.<sup>162</sup>

Concerning the North Korea policy of the time, chapter two of the document provides insight into the tasks, the Moon administration took up to deal with establishing peace on the Korean peninsula and cooperation in the region.

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<sup>156</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 261.

<sup>157</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 263.

<sup>158</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 264.

<sup>159</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 269.

<sup>160</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 276.

<sup>161</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2020 Diplomatic White Paper," 8–9.

<sup>162</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22.



These tasks include: Promoting a peaceful resolution of the North Korean Nuclear Issue; Enhancing and deepening the Korea-US Strategic Alliance in a mutually beneficial way.<sup>163</sup>

Human rights concerns are first and foremost in North Korea. The Korean government recommended some policies the North could implement; international human rights, protecting persons with disabilities, resolving separated families, etc.<sup>164</sup> Active participation in the UN HRC for the promotion of human rights includes cosponsoring 40 country-specific and thematic resolutions adopted by HRC, sharing Korea's unique experience, playing a leading role in tabling issues for discussion, and sharing Korean views in debates.<sup>165</sup> For the promotion of democracy, the government has done a lot to take up leadership by monitoring the activities that have come about after the Korean initiative, such as the first-ever report on local government and human rights presented in 2019.<sup>166</sup>

#### *President Moon Jae-in's 2020 New Year's Address*

The end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 marked the beginning of the global pandemic which would hinder a lot of diplomatic activity. The situation with North Korea was no longer as hopeful as it once was after the end of the 2018 summit meetings. In his 2020 New Year's Address President Moon Jae-in urges the Korean people by saying, "We are now at a time when we must show endurance for the sake of peace on the Korean Peninsula. This is the time when – more than ever before – we desperately need faith in peace and national unity."<sup>167</sup> He is

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<sup>163</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24.

<sup>164</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 246.

<sup>165</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 246–47.

<sup>166</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 247.

<sup>167</sup> Jae-in Moon, "2020 New Year's Address by President Moon Jae-In," January 7, 2020, 5, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Briefingspeeches/Speeches/741>.

complimenting the middle power strategy taken by his administration and the success of bridging communication between North Korea and the United States through those earlier summits. This should be seen as a success during a somewhat unpredictable time in American foreign policy. He hopes to continue to encourage dialogue between the two states.<sup>168</sup>

With the situation looking bleak, he suggests, “internationally coordinated solutions are required to adhere to the three principles for peace on the Korean Peninsula: zero tolerance for war, mutual security guarantees, and common prosperity.”<sup>169</sup> However, he claims many issues can still be resolved between the two Koreas without foreign intervention.<sup>170</sup> He is suggesting that South and North Korea must work together first for the South to reach out to the United States and the international community. A possible point for cooperation could be the joint hosting of the 2032 Summer Olympics, which Moon promises to propose to the IOC.<sup>171</sup>

#### *2020 New Year’s Media Address by President Moon Jae-in*

During his New Year’s press conference with the media, Moon went into further detail on what South Korea’s role is in bringing Pyeongyang and Washington back to the table for discussion. In terms of leadership on the issue he says, "Because inter-Korean relations are our task, we must show a determination

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<sup>168</sup> Moon, 5.

<sup>169</sup> Moon, 5.

<sup>170</sup> Moon, 5.

<sup>171</sup> Moon, 5.

to resolve this more independently."<sup>172</sup> This is a direct indication of his administration's tendency to seek some more independence through their diplomacy.

*President Moon Jae-in at the 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly*  
(2020)

Once again he mentioned Korea's efforts to cooperate with its neighbors toward the goal of co-prosperity. More importantly, concerning North Korea he said:

"The region in most urgent need of the spirit of the UN to realize world peace is the Korean Peninsula. The Republic of Korea has been steadfast in seeking inter-Korean reconciliation and is making relentless efforts to achieve denuclearization and establish permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. With the support and encouragement extended by the international community, Korea was able to successfully host the PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games as Peace Olympics joined by North Korea, and it led to three inter-Korean summit meetings. The US-North Korea summit brought by bold decisions from the leaders of the two sides proved that the peace process can progress through dialogue."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Eun-young Kim and Jihae Lee, "President Moon Stresses Peace and Economy in New Year's News Conference," January 14, 2020, 2, <https://english1.president.go.kr/Media/News/681>.

<sup>173</sup> Moon, "Address by President Moon Jae-in at 75th Session of United Nations General Assembly," 3.

*Vice Minister Cho Sei-young's keynote address at the 5<sup>th</sup> ROK-US Strategic Forum (2020)*

During his address, minister Cho also mentioned the ROK-US security alliance as well as ways to resolve the North Korea issue during the address. Cho stated that while appreciative of the UN Command's maintenance of the armistice, "it is time for Korea to take center stage in maintaining its peace and security, by ending the current state of armistice and establishing a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula."<sup>174</sup> This is an indicator of the Moon administration's wish to have some autonomy in its security and on the Peninsula. Cho also suggested for the United States and China set aside differences for bringing peace and denuclearization to the Korean Peninsula because their rivalry has made the dream more unattainable.<sup>175</sup>

*2021 Diplomatic White Papers*

The administration's North Korea policy is expressed in chapter three of the 2021 White Papers when it is stated that the government would be establishing peace on the peninsula and strengthening cooperation in the region. Diplomacy in this arena includes attempts for inter-Korean cooperation; garnering international support for progress and trust-building on the Peninsula; and meetings with key figures in the region.<sup>176</sup> The Korean government believes only dialogue and peace can achieve peace on the Peninsula, "Accordingly, in 2020, the Korean

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<sup>174</sup> Cho, "Keynote Address By H.E. Cho Sei-young Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, The 5th ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum View," 4-5.

<sup>175</sup> Cho, 5.

<sup>176</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2021 Diplomatic White Paper," 68.

government exerted its efforts to secure the international community's support via major multilateral conferences for the resumption of the peace process on the Korean Peninsula."<sup>177</sup>

### *2021 New Year's Address by President Moon Jae-in*

To achieve a peaceful and nuclear-free peninsula, Moon promises, "The government will strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance in step with the launch of the Biden Administration. At the same time, we will make our final effort to achieve a breakthrough in the stalled North Korea-U.S. talks and inter-Korean dialogue."<sup>178</sup> Changes in American leadership can also affect the level of security South Korea feels in the alliance and thus, sways the action of seeking autonomy.

In a final attempt before the end of his administration, Moon continues his middle power strategy of bridging together North Korea and, the South's biggest ally, the United States. He expounds on the benefits of inter-Korean peace which are, improved quality of life for the Northerners and survival and safety of both states.<sup>179</sup> Moon highlights his government's dedication to peace on the peninsula through the declaration of, "determination to meet at any time and any place and talk even in a contact-free manner remains unchanged."<sup>180</sup>

### *c. Regional*

#### *100 Policy Tasks of the Moon Administration (2018)*

The Moon administration released a document titled '100 Policy Tasks Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in administration' from the beginning of his

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<sup>177</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 74.

<sup>178</sup> Moon, "2021 New Year's Address by President Moon Jae-In," 5.

<sup>179</sup> Moon, 5.

<sup>180</sup> Moon, 5.

presidency. One of the goals of the administration was to create a peaceful and prosperous Korean Peninsula through the improvement of South Korean security, a combination of hard and soft tactics with North Korea, and reinforcing international cooperation through diplomacy.<sup>181</sup> The goal for the region was to create a “Northeast Asia Plus Community” that would, “form a friendly, peaceful and cooperative environment in Northeast Asia.”<sup>182</sup>

### *2018 Diplomatic White Papers*

Along with dealing with the ROK-U.S. relationship. This area is also complicated by alleviating the issues that came with deploying THAAD, in this area, South Korea worked to study the environmental impact of deployment as well as assure neighboring countries of its use of defense against North Korean missile threats.<sup>183</sup> With neighboring countries, there were many summit meetings to convey the meaning of the New Northern Policy and garner support for South Korean leadership.

Under the section on the expansion of horizons in the international community was the promotion of the New Southern Policy. At summits in Southeast Asia Moon expressed his intentions to “expand the Republic of Korea’s diplomatic relations and economic outreach,” as well as, “his vision for a future community of ASEAN and ROK.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS), “100 Policy Tasks Five-Year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration,” August 2017, 4–17, <https://www.korea.net/Resources/Publications/About-Korea/view?articleId=7959>.

<sup>182</sup> Service (KOCIS), 18.

<sup>183</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2018 Diplomatic White Paper,” 55.

<sup>184</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 78.

## *2019 Diplomatic White Papers*

Promotion of the New Southern Policy is described within the document. The goals of the policy include the 3ps: people, prosperity, and peace.<sup>185</sup> The policy procedures include one-on-one summit diplomacy, where intent for cooperation is expressed, and ministerial talks, where offers for assistance are made.<sup>186</sup> The new Northern policy included diplomacy with Russia and various countries in Central Asia to expand the network of regional cooperation.

### *President Moon Jae-in, “Peace Through a Myriad of Acts” (2019)*

Later in the article, Moon mentions that “Korea dreams of becoming a bridging nation” and if successful in achieving peace the Peninsula would be in a position to connect Asia with the rest of the world and the global peace order.<sup>187</sup> This statement makes peace with North Korea a prerequisite for establishing a global peace order. Korea plans to become a bridge through the implementation of its New North Policy and expand cooperation outwards to China, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.<sup>188</sup> Achieving peace on the peninsula will enable it to fully focus on extending its helping hand (and proven to be a useful hand) in promoting peace across the globe. The reason Korea willingly takes such a role is that it has “benefited immensely from the international community.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2019 Diplomatic White Paper,” 98.

<sup>186</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 98–119.

<sup>187</sup> Moon, “Peace Through Myriad Acts | by Moon Jae-In,” 2.

<sup>188</sup> Moon, 2.

<sup>189</sup> Moon, 2.

## *2020 Diplomatic White Papers*

Korea also worked to diversify its diplomatic partners in 2019, working with ASEAN and for the first time Mekong.<sup>190</sup> The improvement of diplomacy also included a “two-top” strategy where the prime minister and the president visited 23 countries around the globe.<sup>191</sup> The next section focuses on expanding diplomatic horizons through progress in the New Southern and New Northern policies; diplomacy in regions outside of Asia; as well as inter-regional diplomacy.<sup>192</sup>

### *President Moon Jae-in's 2020 New Year's Address*

In the region, Moon informs the Korean citizens that he plans on improving relations with China, developing bilateral relations with Japan, and seeking progress in the New Northern diplomacy. And finally, he states that Korea will fulfill its middle power responsibilities through the hosting of various international forums events.<sup>193</sup> He says, “We will fulfill our responsibilities as a proud middle-power nation that cooperates internationally for the sake of responding to climate change and sustainable development.”<sup>194</sup> Moon actively mentions to the Korean people the middle power responsibilities of the government, further committing Korea to the concept.

### *2020 New Year's Media Address by President Moon Jae-in*

In the region, it is a bit more complicated for the Moon administration during this period. When discussing China, Moon mentions that improving

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<sup>190</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “2020 Diplomatic White Paper,” 25.

<sup>191</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26.

<sup>192</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 88–185.

<sup>193</sup> Moon, “2020 New Year's Address by President Moon Jae-In,” 6.

<sup>194</sup> Moon, 6.



bilateral relations is made easier by the fact that the two countries can find common ground between China's One Belt One Road and Korea's New Southern and New Northern policies.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, relations with Japan are possible on "simpler" matters such as Japan's export regulations and the General Security of Military Information Agreement, but difficult for matters related to Japan's colonial history in Korea.<sup>196</sup>

### *2021 Diplomatic White Papers*

Chapter four on expanding diplomatic horizons, just as in previous years, still refers to holding bilateral meetings with several states to seek mutually beneficial relationships and support for Korea's policies. Regionally, "the Korean government has been working on building a "people-centered community of peace and prosperity" by strengthening cooperation in achieving the 3Ps with ASEAN member states and India, which are partner countries of the New Southern Policy as well as Korea's key cooperation partners."<sup>197</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Analysis

By the time of the Moon administration, it is safe to say 'middle power' has become a much less foreign concept to the Korean government. Not only has the image of what a middle power does improved, but it can also now be implemented as a foreign policy objective in such clear detail as noted in the various diplomatic white papers. To describe the Moon administration's middle power behavior, the clear details and plans for expansion of the role as explicated

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<sup>195</sup> Kim and Lee, "President Moon Stresses Peace and Economy in New Year's News Conference," 2.

<sup>196</sup> Kim and Lee, 2.

<sup>197</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2021 Diplomatic White Paper," 118.

by the ministers, the president, and the ministry of foreign affairs, make the concept seem more textbook and thus more similar to traditional middle power diplomacy.

First in the analysis of Moon's middle power is categorization in Jordaan's dichotomy. Moon's middle power's regional behavior leans towards that of emerging middle power in that it is more regionally oriented. The New Southern policy provides evidence for this case. However, in comparison to Roh's middle power, the Moon administration is a bit less regionally oriented because of less content on the subject.

The international behavior of Moon's middle power is more traditional by conforming to and legitimizing the international values of the international community. The purpose of gaining higher status in international institutions does appear to be to gain distance from the powerful states in the region. The stronger the international system and institutions are, the more influence the Korean government can attain through middle power diplomacy.

Within Cooper's basic framework, the Moon administration's middle power behavior is more routine, rather than heroic, in operation because of its attention to the law, institutional cooperation, and constant building of support for Korean policies. The scope is more diffuse because the Korean government focused on niche-building on a wide spectrum of issues, exemplified by the quick diplomatic concocted to deal with the global pandemic. The Moon administration is on the Canadian side of Cooper's basic framework for the traditional middle powers.

As for the extended framework, usually applied to emerging middle powers, the Moon administration's middle power behavior falls somewhere in the middle between accommodative and combative styles, mainly because of its trusting North Korea policy. South Korea worked independently to achieve a summit meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un. As for the focus or target of foreign policy, unlike the Roh administration, the Moon administration falls somewhere in the middle for being neither too multilateral nor regionally focused. There is a more balanced amount of effort spent in each area.

### 4.3 Comparison

In comparison to the Roh Moo-hyun administration's more fledgling-like middle power diplomacy, Moon Jae-in's administration has a more fully-formed middle power conception. Under the Moon administration, there are clear purposes for diplomatic actions and there is even a section in the white papers related to broadening middle power activities. Giving a clear view of what the administration believes a middle power is. This also sits more in line with the activities of a traditional middle power according to Cooper's two frameworks.

For the Roh administration, the concept was fairly new for the Korean government, after having reached a point where their capabilities made pursuing such an international role possible. Both administrations agree on the fact that certain requirements are required are needed to gain legitimacy as a middle power. The criteria to begin to claim middle power status are material capabilities or success in democracy among other characteristics. The rest of their middle power concept can be derived from their behavior.

The clearest point of similarity between the two governments is their North Korea policy and international activities related to that quagmire of an issue. They need to seek a peaceful settlement of the issue, bring North Korea into the international community, manage the ROK-US alliance, hold summits with neighboring great powers, support inter-Korean communication, and address some non-traditional security issues. The task is daunting, but both administrations commonly sought to garner support for the peaceful resolution from the international community as is clear from several speeches at each UN general assembly meeting. The ROK-U.S. alliance is also a point where the two administrations have some similarities in seeking some sort of autonomy within the relationship. Often referring to making the relationship more “future-oriented” or mutually beneficial.

Regional activities were very important to both administrations, however, the Roh administration had a greater tendency to emphasize regional cooperation on international stages. The Moon administration similarly sought to take a lead in regional cooperation but also took the initiative on global niche issues, such as the global pandemic. This can be explained by the even greater globalization and economic interdependence the world faces in the present day. However, both administrations do mention the importance of Northeast Asia and the need for cooperation, where Korea will take the role of bridging Northeast Asia and the rest of the world.

The staple of middle power activity, involvement in international organizations, saw much improvement during the Moon administration. However, this is not because of the lack of trying of the Roh administration, his

administration began to set the standard for focusing on making Korean nationals a part of international organizations as well. Ban Ki-moon was able to hold office in the UN during the Roh administration. They recognized heavy involvement in international institutions, through high-level positions, is an important part of middlepowerdom. The Moon administration paid attention to promoting international values and laws. Other middle power activities common to both administrations are hosting summits and meetings and taking initiatives for the resolution of international issues. Setting Korea up as a standard for the international community to follow is also a part of ‘good global citizenship.’

## Chapter 5. Conclusion

To conclude, South Korea’s middlepowerdom under these two progressives can be separated from the diplomacy of conservative presidents, by North Korean policy. Presidents like Roh and Moon used their middle power status and commitment to peace to take a more autonomous role in inter-Korean relations. By enhancing South Korea’s middle power status, Korea was able to promote peace as is expected of middle powers, despite North Korea’s constant provocation. Peacekeeping is a common tool of foreign policy<sup>198</sup> and progressive presidents use that to their full advantage to bring North Korea into the organized international regime and bind it to the rules and norms.

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<sup>198</sup> Maline Meiske and Andrea Ruggeri, “Peacekeeping as a Tool of Foreign Policy” (Oxford University Press, September 2017), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.462>.

Youngmi Choi says Korean middle power diplomacy has become more and more of the traditional variety over time.<sup>199</sup> However, according to the results of this research Roh and Moon tended to not fall into either the traditional or emerging middle power category. On issues such as North Korea or Northeast Asian cooperation, the behavior tended to be similar to that of an emerging power. There is some indication that South Korea's progressive middle power has become more traditional because of the growing interdependence of the world economy. This can be seen in the development of the Roh administration's needing to explain to Korean citizens the need for Korea to be involved in the Middle East. To a time when the Moon administration believes the international community already expects Korea to have a helpful response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

South Korea's middle power conceptualization is part of a cycle of Korean foreign diplomacy. To gain autonomy on important issues related to the country's survival, the government needs to project an image of a middle power through efforts in niche international activities. This would give the country a platform to discuss regional issues such as cooperation and the North Korean nuclear issues and build a consensus on its various policies. This will increase security and consequently growth. Success in this area then gives more influence in the international community. Thus, seeking middle power status leads to many more benefits than losses.

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<sup>199</sup> Youngmi Choi, "A Middle Power's Trade Policy under U.S.-China FTA Competition: South Korea's Double Hedging FTA Diplomacy," *Contemporary Politics* 24, no. 2 (March 15, 2018): 236, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2017.1416735>.

Korean middle power diplomacy still has its problems as Scott Snyder claims, the paradox lies in its relations with Japan. Leif-Eric Easley and Kyuri Park claim, “The Republic of Korea has recently pursued a foreign policy in Northeast Asia that does not fit its interests or identity as a middle power.”<sup>200</sup> This is because the South Korean government has often taken an Anti-Japan attitude that is not in line with the middle power values of multilateralism and cooperation. The conflicts over Japan’s colonial past on the Korean Peninsula have proven to be a complication in cooperation between the two. This is one commonality between the conservative and progressive administrations; friendly relations with Japan were often dependent on Japan’s recognition of history. This could provide for interesting future research.

This research attempted to identify a commonality between the two last progressive South Korean presidents to illustrate a version of South Korea’s middle power concept following the behavioral model and distinguishing between traditional and emerging middle power behavior. Foreign policy related to North Korea, where the middle power status is needed the most, is where clues can be found. According to Moon and Roh’s concept of middle power, the middle power status is given to states with adequate capabilities, helpful experiences with peace and growth, commitment to international norms and institutions, and are active in regional cooperation. Middle power status, once acknowledged, can be used to gain autonomy in security affairs and improve consensus-building on important policy initiatives.

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<sup>200</sup> Leif-Eric Easley and Kyuri Park, “South Korea’s Mismatched Diplomacy in Asia: Middle Power Identity, Interests, and Foreign Policy,” *International Politics* 55, no. 2 (March 2018): 242, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.snu.ac.kr/10.1057/s41311-017-0073-5>.

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## Abstract in Korean (요약 (국문 초록))

**주제어:** 중견국; 한국; 노무현; 문재인; behavior 모델; 전통적인 중견국; 신흥 중견국<sup>201</sup>

모든 요건을 충족할 수 있는 정도로 정의하기가 어렵기 때문에 중간 권력 문헌에서는 합의가 거의 없다. 행동 모델은 중간 권력자들을 그들의 외교적 행동으로 식별한다. 캐나다와 호주와 같은 전통적인 중간 강국들과 아시아에서 발견되는 것과 같은 신흥 중간 강국들 사이에는 더 많은 차이가 있다. 이러한 새로운 중진국들은 한때 불가능했던 국제 문제에 있어서 어느 정도의 자치권을 얻으려는 의도로 이 지위를 차지하게 되었다. 그들의 행동 경향은 시대에 따라 예전과는 다른 다양성을 허용하면서 발전해 왔다.

한국 특유의 중진외교 사례는 북핵 문제, 한미동맹, 지역 불안 등에 대한 대처 필요성에 물들어 있습니다. 그러나 한국의 중간 권력 개념화를 더욱 복잡하게 만드는 것은 보수 대통령과 진보 대통령 간의 중간 권력 행태에 차이가 있다는 것이다. 보수 성향의 대통령들은 한미동맹에 크게 의존하는 경향이 있는 반면, 진보 성향의 대통령들은 자신들의 주요 현안 처리에 대한 자율성을 추구하는 경향이 있다. 따라서, 이 연구의 목적은 가장 최근의 진보적인 한국의 두 대통령인 노무현과 문재인에 의해 정의된 중진국 외교를 발견하는 것이다. 중진국 중 가장 독특한 부분에 초점을 맞춰 남한이 가진

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<sup>201</sup> 본 논문작성자는 한국정부초청장학금(Global Korea Scholarship)을 지원받은 장학생임.

다양한 중진국 외교의 이미지를 만들기 위해, 강대국 지위 없이 국가가  
영향력을 획득하는 것이다.