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TRIANGULATION

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KOREA EUROPE REVIEW

ROUNDTABLE

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine and its Impact on South Korea

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Ewha Womans University**Keywords**

South Korea, geopolitics, niche diplomacy, foreign policy, Russia, Ukraine, Yoon Suk-yeol

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1. Geopolynomic is a term used to aggregate geostrategic, geopolitical, geoeconomic, geohistorical, and geocultural considerations of the distribution of power and influence. Brendan Howe, "Three futures: geopolynomic transition and the implications for regional security in Northeast Asia" *Modern Asian Studies* 39(4) (2005): 761-792.

2. For development of the concept of niche diplomacy see Andrew Cooper, *Niche diplomacy: Middle powers after the Cold War*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

3. Ellen Kim and Victor Cha, "Between a rock and a hard place: South Korea's strategic dilemmas with China and the United States" *Asia Policy* 21 (2016): 101-121. http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/free/120516/AsiaPolicy21_Kim_Cha_January2016.pdf

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Email: howeb[at]ewha.ac.kr**Abstract**

South Korea is a self-identified middle power with significant geopolitical constraints upon its foreign policy formulation caused by geostrategic dependence on its major security guarantor, the United States (US), and geoeconomic dependence upon its major trading partner, the People's Republic of China (PRC). The competing geopolitical demands of these two global superpowers has left the Republic of Korea (ROK) struggling between a "rock and a hard place" or trying to exert a degree of autonomy as a "shrimp among whales". Successive administrations have tried to diversify this dependency, and to carve out a diplomatic niche wherein Seoul can gain more bang for its buck or Won as a middle power. The Russian invasion of the Ukraine has complicated these efforts. Hence, with the incoming conservative Yoon Suk-yeol administration, these considerations demand even greater attention. This talk first, therefore, considers the impact of the most recent developments on South Korean geopolitical perspectives. It then turns to address the potential consequences for the continuation of South Korea's humanitarian niche diplomacy as a middle power.

Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to engage in this important dialogue. I would like to talk about two global impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine from a South Korean perspective. First, the implications for the Republic of Korea (ROK)'s geostrategic and geoeconomic position (a broad geopolitical or geopolynomic consideration of what this means for South Korean positioning in the hierarchical global and regional orders).¹ Second, the impact on South Korea's humanitarian positioning, which has been the foundation of Seoul's attempts to punch above its weight through niche diplomatic focusing.²

These impacts must also be addressed with reference to the change of incumbent in the Blue House (although the actual executive seat of power will also physically relocate to the Ministry of National Defense property in Yongsan, central Seoul). President Yoon Suk-yeol took office on May 10 (the date of this presentation) after winning March 9's hotly contested election by a slender margin.

Geostrategy and Geoeconomics

Ellen Kim and Victor Cha have likened South Korea's geopolitical positioning to being stuck between a "rock and a hard place".³ Before the invasion and the election, South Korea had been pursuing a policy of diversifying its geopolynomic

4. Kent Calder, "Japanese foreign economic policy formation: Explaining the reactive state" *World Politics* 40(4) (1998): 517-541.

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

6. Kim Bo-eun, "Can Indo-Pacific Economic Framework help South Korea reduce reliance on China?" *Korea Times* May 23, 2022. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/biz/2022/05/488_329553.html?fa&fbclid=IwAR1CjIreVNIkAOu9hIDJjs6XdgoH_3zToAOdvCyx9K2fk9U7D2As984ffCg

7. Trading economics "Russia Exports by Country" <https://tradingeconomics.com/russia/exports-by-country>; Eunice Kim, "South Korea to Join Russia Sanctions, But Won't Lodge Its Own" *VOA* February 25, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/south-korea-to-join-russia-sanctions-but-won-t-lodge-its-own/6459138.html>

8. Valentin Voloshchak, "A Closer Look at South Korea's Plan for Cooperation With Russia

Exploring the viability of Moon Jae-in's Nine Bridges plan" *The Diplomat* January 9, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/a-closer-look-at-south-koreas-plan-for-cooperation-with-russia/>

9. OEC World, "Bilateral: Korea-Russia". <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/kor/partner/rus>

10. OEC World, "Country Profile: Russia" <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/rus>

11. Andrew Yeo, "How will South Korea's new president approach Russia's Ukraine invasion?" *Brookings* May 9, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/05/09/how-will-south-koreas-new-president-approach-russias-ukraine-invasion/>

12. Eunice Kim, "South Korea to Join Russia Sanctions"

13. Korea Herald Editorial, "Terrible logic" *Korea Herald* March 2, 2022. <http://www.korea-herald.com/view.php?ud=20220301000260>

14. Hyeonhee Shim and Cynthia Kim, "South Korea bans exports of strategic items to Russia, joins SWIFT sanctions" *Reuters* February 28, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/skorea-bans-exports-strategic-items-russia-join-swift-sanctions-2022-02-28/>

15. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, "South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol unveils foreign policy goals" *Washington Post* April 14, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/14/south-korea-president-interview/>

engagement with and dependency on a rather limited number of security and trade partners. Part of this meant attempting to balance the demands of its chief security guarantor, the US, and its chief trading partner, the People's Republic of China (PRC). It also meant reaching out to another major geopolitomic player, Russia.

To put this in context, so great has the Korean dependence upon the US been in terms of security, that it can, like Japan, be termed a "reactive state",⁴ with South Korea risking being sidelined in negotiations, or left out of the regional power play altogether.⁵ Meanwhile, In the first three quarters of 2021, 3,941 out of 12,586 items that the ROK imported had a minimum 80 percent dependency on a particular country, with some 1,850 items, or almost half, having at least an 80 percent dependency on China.⁶

South Korea and Russia have become important trading partners (ranked eighth overall for Russian exports, and tenth overall for Korean exports), but they have become central partners in certain key areas (petroleum products from Russia to the ROK, and automobiles in the other direction).⁷ In his keynote speech at Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September 2017, South Korean President Moon Jae-in broadened the concept of his Northeast Asian focused "New Northern Policy" with the "Nine Bridges" initiative, setting up several areas of cooperation between the two countries (the "bridges" here being metaphorical). Nine Bridges was not only a political declaration but also an economic cooperation program, focusing on specific projects, of which a potential "gas bridge" was to be the most important.⁸

Trade between the two countries has increased steadily year-on-year, peaking in 2021, despite the global shrinkage of trade and distortion of supply chains and the global economy caused by the impact of COVID-19.⁹ So important has the relationship between the two become, that in January 2022, the increase in Russia's year-by-year imports was explained primarily by an increase in imports from South Korea (US\$728M or 133 percent rise), followed by Vietnam (US\$113M or a 43.5 percent rise), and a distant third, Italy (US\$72.7M or a 13.5 percent rise).¹⁰ Since the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, all these figures have weakened somewhat. Nevertheless, they do indicate the ways in which Russia is important to South Korea. First, in terms of mutual economic dependency, but second in terms of diversification away from dependency upon the US and Australia as energy suppliers, and upon China and US markets for Korean products.

Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, the ROK's initial response to Russia's invasion was measured relative to the US and other allies of the US.¹¹ The Moon Jae-in government supported international sanctions against Russia, but in contrast to Japan and Australia, it did not impose independent sanctions of its own.¹² Members of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea seemingly even blamed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for provoking Russia through his inexperienced diplomacy.¹³ South Korea did ultimately, however, decide to ban the direct export of strategic materials such as semiconductors to Russia and Belarus, halted transactions with major Russian banks, and, unlike many other Asian countries, condemned the Russian invasion in direct policy statements and in votes at the United Nations (UN).¹⁴

"Rebuilding" South Korea's alliance with the United States, is central to President Yoon Suk-yeol's foreign policy commitments and is a recognition of Washington's frustrations with the outgoing government of President Moon Jae-in, whose foreign policy ambition of brokering peace with North Korea made

16. Dong Hyuk-lee, "South Korea's President-Elect Envisions 'Comprehensive Alliance' with US" *VOA* May 7, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/south-korea-president-elect-envisions-comprehensive-alliance-with-us/6561638.html>

17. Kwon Hyuk-chul, "Yoon's call for additional THAAD to protect Seoul stirs controversy over practicality" *Hankyorey* February 4, 2022. https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1029791.html

18. Dong Hyuk-lee, "South Korea's President-Elect"

19. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, "South Korean President-elect"

20. *Ibid.*

21. Andrew Yeo, "How will South Korea's new president approach Russia's Ukraine invasion?"

22. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, "South Korean President-elect"

23. Dong Hyuk-lee, "South Korea's President-Elect"

24. Andrew Salmon, "US, Korean leaders brandish extended deterrence" *Asia Times* May 21, 2022. https://asiatimes.com/2022/05/us-korean-leaders-brandish-extended-deterrence/?fbclid=IwAR-27V7uHfHFHziuGEI2_hnzTZ_jiDm0lNdpJzgB-guLUqFa_2Q3HnS7OVxBw

25. Yoon Suk-yeol, "South Korea Needs to Step Up" *Foreign Affairs* February 8, 2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-korea/2022-02-08/south-korea-needs-step>

him wary of jeopardising relations with China and Russia.¹⁵ President Yoon has declared that "South Korea needs to do more than merely expressing that we agree with U.S. policies or that we stand with the U.S. but actually labour over global issues together with the U.S."¹⁶ Yoon has made it clear that his administration will not shy away from contentious issues such as expanding the deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense system and even exploring joining the "Quad", a grouping of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India designed to counter China's rise (thereby perhaps converting it to a "Quin").¹⁷

This means for Yoon that Seoul needs "to play a leading role in the areas that necessitate our part".¹⁸ Hence, "We should not only focus on relations with North Korea, but rather expand the breadth of diplomacy in the E.U. and throughout Asia with the South Korea-US relationship as our foundation".¹⁹ This therefore necessitates taking part in the international pressure campaign on Russia, which the outgoing administration had started to do but to an even greater extent, so that, "When we are asked by the international community to participate more, we need to firmly demonstrate our attitude of respect for the international rules-based order".²⁰

South Korean export controls and sanctions against Russia, and deepened ties to NATO will carry economic and diplomatic costs going forward. Russia has already placed South Korea on its list of "unfriendly" countries. Chinese pundits have also warned Seoul that its tilt towards the US and away from its more traditional stance of balancing between Beijing and Washington will end badly for South Korea.²¹ Before deciding whether to seek entry into the Quad, however, Yoon has stated that South Korea will support and cooperate with its working groups in tackling global issues such as vaccine distribution and climate change.²² He has noted that "The concept of security in the ROK-US alliance has to go beyond military security now to include security in the areas of economy, advanced technologies and supply networks as well as global issues surrounding climate change and health care so that the relationship could be expanded and upgraded to a comprehensive level of alliance".²³

At the Seoul summit between the two allies on May 21 and 22, 2022, the comprehensive nature of their partnership was emphasised with discussions on "commitments to deepening cooperation on economic and energy security; enhancing protection and promotion of emerging technologies, including semiconductors, eco-friendly EV batteries, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, biotechnology, bio-manufacturing, and autonomous robotics; securing supply-chain resilience; and upgrading nuclear energy cooperation".²⁴ Nevertheless, with further sabre-rattling from Pyongyang, North Korea took centre stage.

The Ukraine crisis does, however, allow the Yoon government to showcase early on what their interpretation of a "principled" foreign policy looks like – one that "advances freedom, peace, and prosperity" in defence of a liberal international order, as Yoon put it in an article for *Foreign Affairs*.²⁵ At the Seoul summit, Yoon again talked up the importance of promoting the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. This then spills over into the second topic for discussion, the implications for South Korea's humanitarian policymaking and middle power niche diplomacy.

Humanitarian Policymaking

Humanitarian policymaking or principled foreign policy as niche diplomacy is one area of consistency between different administrations in Seoul. 30 years

26. Brendan Howe, "Korea's Role for Peace-Building and Development in Asia" *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 5(2) (2017) 243-266: 257-258.

27. Kang Ho Park, "Korea's Role in Global Development" *Brookings East Asia Commentary* 36. (2010)<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/koreas-role-in-global-development/>

28. Philip Olbrich and David Shim, "South Korea as a Global Actor: International Contributions to Development and Security" *GIGA Focus* 2. (2012): 2. <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/south-korea-global-actor-international-contributions-development-security>

29. Iain Watson, "Beyond the Aid Trap for Emerging Donors: Private and Public Partnerships in South Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Strategy" *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* 12 (2) (2013): 212-244: 232-233.

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

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

32. Valentin Voloshchak, "A Closer Look at South Korea's Plan for Cooperation With Russia

Exploring the viability of Moon Jae-in's Nine Bridges plan" *The Diplomat* January 9, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/a-closer-look-at-south-koreas-plan-for-cooperation-with-russia/>

33. Jaehyon Lee, 2019 "Korea's New Southern Policy"

34. Brendan Howe and Min Joung Park, "South Korea's (Incomplete) Middle-Power Diplomacy Toward ASEAN" *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 15(2) 2019: 117-142, 118.

35. Howon Kim, 'Refugee Services in South Korea: Quality over Quantity' *Center for Transnational Migration and Social Inclusion* 21 February 2022. <https://ctms.or.kr/en/blog/refugee-services-in-sk-quality/>

since acceding to membership of the UN, the ROK has grown from being the host of the largest UN enforcement operation to date, to being a major contributor to international peacekeeping operations (PKOs). The Korean military has contributed substantially to humanitarian operations. South Korea has been part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams since 2003 and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group since 1999. South Korea specialises in search and rescue efforts and has participated in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-administered Asia Pacific Humanitarian Partnership since its establishment in 2004.²⁶

At the G20 Seoul Summit in 2010, much was made of the concept of Korea serving as a bridge between the developing and developed worlds as a result of its own experience and expertise, and the forum offered Seoul the opportunity also to stimulate a recommitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the global agreed framework for development leading up to 2015.²⁷ The 2011 Busan HLF-4 on aid effectiveness was noteworthy for its inclusive nature; more than 2,000 government, civil society, and business representatives, from both developed and developing countries, participated in discussions on the current global development assistance situation.²⁸ The August 2012 "Development Partnership of Korea" led to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) "signed by a broad range of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, KOICA, the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Cooperation, the Federation of Korean Industries, the Korean Council for University Education, the Korea Association for International Development and Cooperation, the Global Compact Korea Network, and the UN Academic Impact" to identify existing projects where such collaboration can make a difference.²⁹

President Moon's humanitarian commitment had been clear from the early days of his administration. On July 19, 2017, through a report to the nation on the Five-year Plan for the Administration of State Affairs, the Moon Jae-in Administration unveiled its national vision "A Nation of the People, a Just Republic of Korea." Five policy goals were set related to this vision, which included both internal domestic and external foreign policy elements – "a Government of the People, an Economy Pursuing Mutual Prosperity, a Nation Taking Responsibility for Each Individual, Well-balanced Development across Every Region and a Peaceful and Prosperous Korean Peninsula." To achieve these goals, 20 policy strategies and 100 policy tasks were also established.³⁰ New policy initiatives included the aspirational "Northeast Asia Plus Community" (NEAPC) of responsibility project.

The presidential transition committee on foreign policy and national security had prepared a report on NEAPC which contained three components: a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform (NAPCP), a New Northern Policy (NNP) and a New Southern Policy (NSP).³¹ The ambitious aim was to build a sustainable regional system of cooperation with the 10 Member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the "middle power" grouping of MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Argentina), India and Northeast Asian states.³² In particular, the Republic of Korea's (ROK's) "New Southern Policy" announced during President Moon Jae-in's tour of three Southeast Asian nations in November 2017, seeks to elevate the relationship between South Korea and ASEAN countries, as well as India, to the same level as the one between the ROK and its four strategic neighbors - the United States, Russia, China and Japan.³³ In line with Moon's domestic policy of the "people-oriented economy",

the basic idea of the New Southern Policy is to form a people-centered peace community that advocates co-prosperity.³⁴

Yet, South Korea accepted just 0.4 percent of non-North Korean refugees in 2020 (52 out of 6,684 applications).³⁵ Seoul initially promised to provide “US\$10 million in emergency humanitarian assistance to help the Ukrainian government, people, and refugees facing a severe crisis due to the illegal invasion by Russia”.³⁶ President Yoon pointed out that this amounted to only 20 cents per Ukrainian citizen, an amount he considered woefully inadequate. Hence, he directed his staff to investigate how this humanitarian assistance could be increased.³⁷ The outgoing Moon administration did vote to suspend Russia’s membership to the UN human rights council (UNHRC), and later upped its pledge for humanitarian assistance to the Ukraine to \$40 million.³⁸

As mentioned above, President Yoon envisions South Korea as a “global pivotal state,” on that “advances freedom, peace, and prosperity through liberal democratic values and substantial cooperation”.³⁹ This means that the ROK needs to take on more non-traditional security responsibilities, including providing more official developmental assistance (ODA) overseas, humanitarian assistance in times of crisis including vaccine assistance in the face of global pandemics, and action on climate change.⁴⁰ He has noted that, while South Korea is home to the UN-backed Green Climate Fund and International Vaccine Institute, and is well positioned to take a leadership role on climate change and pandemic response, to date the country has failed to “take advantage of those assets and step up to the most important global challenges of our time”.⁴¹

There are also external pressures linked to Seoul’s aspirations to play a more prominent role as a good global citizen, and to putting the US-ROK alliance on a more equal footing. Climate change has been a top priority of US President Joe Biden’s administration, and South Korea, the world’s ninth-largest carbon emitter, has been slow in taking action to meet the 1.5-degree Celsius temperature limit set by the Paris Agreement to which Seoul is party.⁴² Regional cooperation will play an increasingly important role, with Yoon proposing an “ABCD Strategy” toward Southeast Asia (advance human capital, build health security, connect cultures, and digitise Asian infrastructure) reflecting something of a continuation of Moon’s New Southern Policy focused on people, peace, and prosperity, as well as looking to improve relations with the other major liberal power in the region, Japan.⁴³

Conclusion

International crises linked to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, whether geopolitical or humanitarian, represent both threat to and opportunity for South Korean activism on the international stage. The stepped-up international role for South Korea that Yoon envisions will be welcomed, especially at a moment when there are increasing strains on the ability of nations to contribute simultaneously to the international security agenda and the international humanitarian agenda. Thus, there could be a happy coincidence of Seoul pursuing its own national interest, striving to get the biggest bang it can for its niche diplomatic buck, while at the same time contributing to international stability and the wellbeing of the most vulnerable. What Seungjoo Lee has referred to previously as a “noble opportunity”.⁴⁴

Yet, as is always the case in the volatile Korean democratic landscape, such international cooperation is only likely to materialise if Yoon can maintain strong domestic political support for his leadership.⁴⁵ This could be undermined by the impact of the very policies he proposes. Siding explicitly with the Western liberal

36. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Korea to Provide Humanitarian Assistance to People of Ukraine” *Press Release* 28 February 2022. https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=322004&page=1

37. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, “South Korean President-elect”

38. Andrew Yeo, “How will South Korea’s new president approach Russia’s Ukraine invasion”

39. Yoon Suk-yeol, “South Korea Needs to Step Up”

40. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, “South Korean President-elect”

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43. Scott Snyder, “South Korean President-Elect Yoon Suk-Yeol’s Early Foreign Policy Challenges” *Forbes* 24 March 2022. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/scottsnnyder/2022/03/24/south-korean-president-elect-yoon-suk-yeols-early-foreign-policy-challenges/?sh=72f0416a656d>; Sea Young Sarah Kim, “South Korea’s New Southern Policy: Will Its ‘Legacy’ Continue Under the Next Administration?” *Korea Economic Institute of America* 2 March, 2022 <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/south-koreas-new-southern-policy-will-its-legacy-continue-under-the-next-administration/>; Yoon Suk-yeol, “South Korea Needs to Step Up”

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

45. Scott Snyder, “South Korean President-Elect”

46. Thomas Kalinowski and Hyekyung Cho, "Korea's Search for a Global Role between Hard Economic Interests and Soft Power." *European Journal of Development Research* 24 (2012): 242-260; Olbrich and Shim, "South Korea as a Global Actor".

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

48. Seungjoo Lee, "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Multilayered World Order and The Case of Development Cooperation Policy." EAI MPDI Working Paper, October 2014: 3. https://www.eai.or.kr/data/bbs/eng_report/2014102816225492.pdf

49. M.A. Rudderham, "Middle Power Pull": 2.

international order powers, could lead to severe economic repercussions due to retaliatory measures from both Russia and China. As part of this engagement with the liberal coalition supporting the international rule of law, rapprochement with Japan could also lead to domestic push-back. Expanding commitments to refugees and migrants beyond ethnic Koreans (whether North Korean refugees or Koryo-Saram from Russia and Ukraine) could also meet with resistance at home.

Nevertheless, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has not only unified the target country, but also Europe, NATO, and even the West and the non-West (including Asian powers Japan and South Korea, and even Malaysia, one of the major proponents of Asian exceptionalism) at the UN to an unprecedented degree. Meanwhile, South Korea may well have reached peak expenditure in terms of generating returns on geopolymic investment in its unilateral roles in Northeast Asia. Furthermore, Seoul's tendency to go it alone in pursuit of humanitarian or principled diplomacy has also been criticised by its peers.⁴⁶

Thus, there are added incentives for the ROK to pursue a more "networked" model of diplomacy.⁴⁷ Middle powers like South Korea need to go beyond narrowly defined national interests to accommodate other actors' interests "to organize the global governance of development cooperation by linking multiple fora".⁴⁸ Indeed, middle power states have most recently been defined by their internationalism, with qualifying behaviour including good global citizenship, humanitarian niche diplomacy, and "accepting roles as mediators, followers, or staunch multilateralists".⁴⁹ As a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, combined with the election of Yoon Suk-yeol, the ROK is likely, therefore, to be a more engaged multilateral actor, but with less room for independent policy activity.



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