國立政治大學亞太研究英語碩士學位學程
International Master's Program in Asia-Pacific Studies
College of Social Sciences
National Chengchi University

碩士論文
Master's Thesis

在日韓雙邊爭端中檢視韓國之中型權力形象

Testing Korea's Middle-Power Image in Korea-Japan Bilateral Disputes

Student: James Eger III
Advisor: Chyungly Lee

中華民國 107 年 1 月
JANUARY 2018

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to test South Korea's image as a middle power by examining the country's approach to bilateral disputes with Japan. After a review of literature supportive and critical of Korea's status as a middle power nation, it then focuses on evaluating the country's management of ROK-Japan bilateral disputes using three different case studies span from the early 1990s to the Park Geun-hye administration. Finally, this thesis concludes by suggesting that since Korea does not consistently adhere to orthodox middle power behavior in its disputes with Japan, the middle power theory does not adequately describe South Korea's unique foreign policy orientation. However, with time and with a sincere reevaluation of its Japan policies, South Korea has the potential to adopt a more robust middle power alignment.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The interplay between Korea's government and its people extends back to the pre-democratic era, and it has continued to play an important role in guiding the course of Korea's national policies. The year 1987 was a pivotal one for South Korea. Until then, the nation had been governed by what was essentially a military dictatorship with General Chun Doo-hwan at the helm. The nation's first hosting of the Olympic Games in the prior year had been successful, and the country's economic development was rapidly progressing, but demands for democratic reforms to the political system had been boiling up from civil society for quite some time.

Korea's shift toward democracy goes back to 1980 when the government directed national security forces to crack down on university students for protesting against dictatorship. Many were injured and some were killed. In response, the local citizens attacked government offices in an event known as the Gwangju Uprising. Over the next decade, continuous offenses like this by the authorities against citizens led to more intense and widespread calls for democracy. The final stroke came in 1987 when a student protester from Seoul National University died under police interrogation. Violent public reaction left then President Chun with no option but to finally undertake social and political reforms, holding the country's first true presidential election the following year in 1988.

Democratization opened up society in new ways. One important change was that social issues that had previously been ignored or suppressed under dictatorship, could now rise to the surface to influence politics and society. Democratically elected leaders now had to take into account larger social issues that were of concern to voters. Activist and lobby groups formed around popular issues, and individuals within government could also begin to advocate for policy changes according to their concerns. Among those new concerns, three issues in particular found a wide audience at the state and social levels: justice for the so called 'comfort women,' sovereignty over Dokdo Island and rectifying the

name ‘East Sea’ in place of the international standard name ‘Sea of Japan.’ Over time, these three issues in particular have grown to become ever more important to Korean people.

1.1.1 Disputes: Comfort Women

From 1932 to 1945, the Japanese Empire collected young women from conquered territories around Asia, including Korea, and employed them as sex workers, or ‘comfort women,’ to service the Japanese soldiers **(Piper 2001)**. Comfort stations first sprang up in Shanghai, and by 1937 the military government adopted a general policy of establishing these brothels in all of its acquired territories **(Yoshimi 2000: 43-51).**

Korean civil society is generally very passionate about obtaining justice for the now elderly victims. For example, a weekly protest, called the Wednesday Demonstration, has been held in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul every Wednesday at noon since January 8, 1992. In 2011, a golden bronze memorial statue was erected at the protest site, and since then, advocacy groups have spent a great deal of effort to erect statues in other parts of Korea, and even in other countries**.**

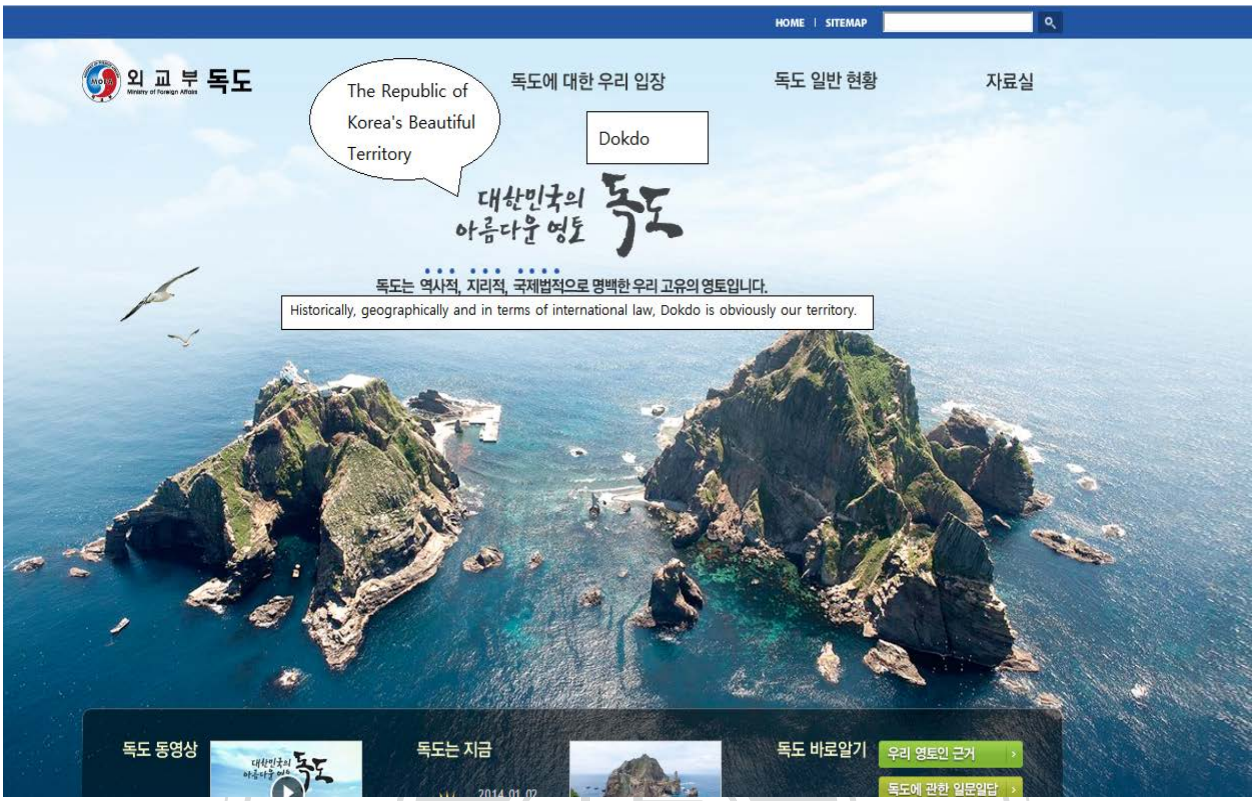
Oddly though, the Korean national government has been consistently rather limp in pressing Japan on this topic, much to the frustration of the Korean public. In the post-Korean War years, it never emerged as a major point of contention at the state level. At the time of this writing, it still does not appear as a policy issue on the Korean MOFA homepage, nor is there any information about it when searching the rest of the website. Judging from the treatment that the issue receives from official sources, compensation for Korea’s comfort women does not appear to be a priority issue for the national government.

1.1.2 Disputes: Dokdo Island and the East Sea

The international standard name for the sea separating Japan and Korea is the "Sea of Japan," but Korea objects to this designation. The ROK's position is that the name "Sea of Japan" only became widespread as a result of Japanese expansionism and colonial rule over Korea, so the sea's "true" historical name, the East Sea, should be restored or at least used concurrently **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, East Sea)**. Located within this sea is an outcrop of rocky islets, collectively called Dokdo Island, claimed by Japan but administered and passionately defended by Korea.

Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlights these two territorial disputes on the front page of their website. Following the links takes visitors to web pages filled with promotional videos, maps, diagrams, historical documents that "prove" why the disputed islets belong to Korea, and why "East Sea" is the true and correct name based on their view of history. The websites are attractively designed and much of the material is presented in multiple languages.[1]

[1] ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dokdo and East Sea webpages are available here: http://dokdo.mofa.go.kr/eng/ and here: https://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/policy/focus/eastsea/index.jsp?menu=m_20_10_20
ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs East Sea video is available here: https://www.youtube.com/embed/zmF2o3NEUd4?ecver=1



Picture 1: *Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dokdo Webpage: http://dokdo.mofa.go.kr/kor/*

Moreover, the Korean government continues to work closely with various think tanks, private organizations and civic groups in order to lobby international organizations, such as the United Nations and the International Hydrographic Organization, as well as foreign companies, like Google and the National Geographic Society, to replace "Sea of Japan" with "East Sea" or insist that the names be used concurrently. Enhanced government-civil society collaboration has also yielded a public relations campaign aimed at boosting international awareness and shaping global public opinion regarding the East Sea and Dokdo.

Korea's national educational curriculum also plays a prominent role in internationalizing the two disputes. History can of course be leveraged as a powerful tool to shape young minds; using education in this way is nothing new in South Korea. Under former dictator Park Chung-hee, the national education system was used to justify his rule, and subsequent Korean presidents

have similarly tried manipulate the curriculum to instill an uncritical love of country among youth, as in the recent scandal regarding the Park Geun-hye administration's approval of national textbooks that censor atrocities committed by her father, Park Chung-hee, the former Korean dictator **(Choe 2016)**. Patriotic education is now used to instill a love for Dokdo Island and an assertive preference for the term East Sea.[2]

Pictures 2 and 3: *Korean School children celebrate Dokdo Day (left), Korean students visit Dokdo Museum in Seoul (right).*

The emotional significance of all three of these disputes (comfort women, Dokdo Island and the East Sea) is rooted in Korea's experience of being colonized by Imperial Japan.

Dokdo was among the first pieces of Korean territory ceded to Imperial Japan, which preceded a complete loss of sovereignty over their own country and systematic suppression of

[2] As a state-sponsored English teacher in South Korea, my personal experience reaffirms this. During my orientation period, I was guided through a government sponsored Dokdo promotional center in Seoul. Because of the political education that children receive through the national school system, students sometimes approached me just to inform me that "Dokdo belongs to Korea." There are even TV commercials and popular songs celebrating Koreans' love for Dokdo.

their language, culture and traditions, as well as widespread discrimination by their Japanese colonizers **(Henry 2014).** The ROK feels that Japan's contemporary claim to the islets, like the name "Sea of Japan," are relics from what they perceive as an era of oppression and victimization.

Indeed, Korea's anti-Japanese nationalism, which is deeply rooted in sensitivity over Korean sovereignty, is at the heart of Dokdo and East Sea disputes. Many have identified nationalism as a primary driver of Korean policy on Dokdo and the East Sea. Palmer, for example, described in extensive detail the many ways in which the Korean government and civil society have embedded Dokdo and the East Sea into the nation's everyday culture as symbols of victimization by Japan (being taught in national school curriculum, presented in museums, found in popular songs, and exploited by businesses for profit) as a way to strengthen the ROK's official claims **(Palmer 2016).** Similarly, Kozisek elaborately explained how Dokdo has been converted by the ROK into a national symbol of emotional trauma, which is conveniently invoked by the elites to fuel anti-Japanese sentiments whenever necessary **(Kozisek 2016).**

Consequently, these issues are so important to Koreans at both the state level and societal level because they have become incorporated into their national identity as symbols of their nation's past victimization, and as symbols of resistance against imperialism and Japan's ongoing reluctance to face history; in this way, the elderly women, the islets and the sea are now practically imbued with sacred status. For these reasons, since the 1990s the comfort women, Dokdo and the East Sea have persisted as ongoing points of contention within ROK-Japan bilateral relations.

1.1.3 Korea and Middle Power

At around the same time as these debates over history began impacting ROK-Japan relations, South Korea's identity as a modern nation-state was beginning to form around the idea of middle power. The middle power concept with regard to Korea first appeared in the mid 1980's and continued to increase throughout the 90's and in the decades thereafter **(Jojin 2014: 329-332).** Since then, many more scholars have noted Korea's ascension to middle power status **(Ikenberry 2013; Kim Woo-sang 2008; Kim Sangbae 2014; Robertson 2007; Rozman 2007; Sohn 2012.)**

Throughout the 21st century, the concept of middlepowerism began to significantly influence ROK national policy-making. As early as the 1990s, newly democratic Korea asserted that it would begin to "seek new roles as a middle power" **(Evans and Grant 1995: 397).** Scholarship frequently references Korea's many international initiatives as evidence for the nation's middle power status, like Kim Young-sam's Globalization Policy; Lee Myung-bak's Global Korea Policy; Park Geun-hye's Eurasia Initiative, Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative and leadership of MIKTA. The steady increase in the number of organizations dedicated to multilateral peace initiatives and the U.N. sustainable development goals throughout Korea also point towards middlepowerism as an overarching national policy.

1.2 Purpose of Research

The discussion of middle powers in international relations examines role of mid-sized powers in the world system. There are several frameworks for analyzing middle powers. Three prominent categories are functional, positional and behavioral.

The functional perspective stipulates that a middle power is any nation capable of extending its influence over certain areas or functions in the international system. To be more

specific, middle powers must have sufficient control over material and non-material resources; must be willing to exercise leadership on important issue areas and bend other nations' actions toward supporting regional stability; and must be militarily capable of inflicting unacceptable damage to any potentially hostile great power **(Fels 2017).**

Positional theories focus on states' relative capabilities and where those capabilities locate them within a larger hierarchy of power **(Holbraad 1984; Wood 1988).** Kim **(2009)** noted that this perspective tends to use statistical indices for categorizing countries such as size of territory, GDP, the volume of trade and foreign currency reserves, population, or number of soldiers. In other words, the positional approach systematically ranks and categorizes states according to their objective capabilities.

The behavioral perspective, which forms the foundation of this thesis, defines middle powers by their foreign policy behavior under various geopolitical circumstances (**Cooper et al. 1993)**. The essential feature of middle powers in the behavioral perspective is that their foreign policies always lean toward a common set of characteristics: compromise, cooperation, conflict resolution, multilateralism and support for rule of law **(Cooper et al. 1993; Holbraad 1984; Jordaan 2003).**

This perspective furthermore contends that such nations behave in this way for ideological reasons, i.e., to be 'good' or 'responsible' international citizens **(Cooper et al. 1993: 19; O'Neil 2015: 77; Schweller 2017: 8)**. Schweller **(2017: 9)** describes middle power foreign policy as "a statecraft rooted in the conviction that [they] have a responsibility . . . to protect the international order from those who would threaten it, whether they be great or small powers." In other words, middle powers are determined to use multilateral and institutional methods to solve

international disputes and promote international peace - all because they see themselves, and want others to see them, as good international citizens.

In summary, archetypal middle power foreign policy behavior in international disputes is characterized by a tendency to seek multilateral solutions, to seek compromise and demonstrate good international citizenship **(Jojin 2014: 329)**.

In the case of Korea, the ROK has for many decades repeatedly claimed it is a middle power. Yet, the country is also in a series of bilateral disputes with Japan over history and territory. Previous studies have not considered instances where a middle power country is itself one of the disputants in an international conflict, because the current academic discussion operates under the implied assumption that middle powers are not themselves disputants in such situations.

Furthermore, the current literature discussing middle power in the Korean context usually analyzes either the country's position (the positional framework) or behavior (the behavioral framework), but it always applies these analytical frameworks to the global level. The positional framework asks where Korea is located in the global hierarchy of power, and the behavioral framework looks at how Korea conducts itself within the international system.

Considering these two points, there appears to be an opening within the scholarship for further analysis into the nature of middle power, especially with regard to South Korea. When a self-proclaimed middle power is itself a disputant in an international conflict, as in the case of Korea with Japan, how well do its actions conform to the established behavioral framework? Therefore, the purpose of this research is to develop a framework by which to test Korea's middle power image in bilateral disputes with Japan. In so doing, my research will add to the

existing body of literature on middle powers and their foreign policies, and contribute to a more thorough understanding of the nature middle powers, especially in bilateral disputes.

Finally, my research could shed some light on the logic behind Korea's behavior toward Japan. Were it not for the two nations being united under the American security umbrella, troubles plaguing their relationship might be even greater. This is unfortunate because, from the rise of China and the ever present threat posed by North Korea, to the shared democratic ideology and socio-cultural traits, South Korea and Japan clearly have many overlapping interests. It would be to their own mutual benefit for them to work together in promoting liberal democratic values, balancing against Chinese hegemony, and pressuring North Korea to be a more responsible member of the international community. Together, Korea and Japan have vast potential to promote peace, stability and democracy across Asia and the world. The logic appears to suggest that they ought to be obvious partners working together in these areas of shared concern. This is especially true if Korea is in fact following the foreign policy of a middle power, as it claims to be.

Providing some clarity on Korea's behavior toward Japan may also be able to help other researchers construct policy proposals to better guide the United States in managing its relationship with its two most important security partners in the Asia-Pacific.

1.3 Research Design

The behavioral theory holds that middle powers share a specific pattern of foreign policy actions, collectively termed 'middlepowermanship:' "[the] tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, [the] tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and [the] tendency to embrace notions of 'good international citizenship'

to guide...diplomacy" **(Cooper et al. 1993)**. Middle power diplomacy, as it is referred to by **Neack (2000)**, can be further identified by a commitment toward coalition-building and performing international conflict management and resolution activities, e.g., UN peacekeeping and mediating between two or more unfriendly countries. Finally, it is important to note that middle power diplomacy uses these sorts of multilateral and cooperative initiatives as a means of bringing stability and legitimacy to the global order **(Jordaan 2003)**.

Theoretically middle powers are expected to handle international disputes in the above-mentioned specific ways. In practice, nevertheless, individual country's approach to bilateral disputes may vary and even deviate from the middle power image. This study is thus to test South Korea's image as a middle power by examining her approaches to bilateral disputes with Japan.

Therefore the behavioral perspective will be used as the analytical framework of this thesis research. To test Korea's image, this perspective will be applied to three different cases of bilateral disputes. Case one is about Comfort Women, case two is about Dokdo dispute and case three is about the East Sea dispute. In each of the three test cases, the extent to which Korea's actions conform to the behavioral framework will be analyzed.

To summarize, the analytical framework of this thesis relies on three essential attributes of middle power foreign policy: multilateralism, compromise and exercising leadership towards peaceful outcomes.

1. MULTILATERALISM: Middle powers see themselves as good international citizens. They want to be model states who uphold the global order and follow international norms. As a result, they will tend to bring problems to multilateral

arbitration, rather than trying to settle them bilaterally. In each of the three disputes with Japan, does Korea favor bilateral or multilateral solutions?

2. COMPROMISE: Middle powers embrace compromise positions in international disputes to demonstrate their good international citizenship, and as a way of fostering peaceful relations. When there's a chance to make a deal in each of their disputes with Japan, does Korea offer to negotiate, or show willingness to accept negotiations from the Japanese side? Or do they shun compromise when the opportunities arise?
3. LEADERSHIP: Middle powers place regional stability as their end goal. Disputes can sometimes lead to armed conflict. But for middle powers, war is not an option, so they should prevent conflicts from arising in the first place. In each of the three disputes, does Korea take initiatives to move the conflicts in the direction of peace and stability, or do they tend to take provocative actions that aggravate problems even further?

Qualitative research serves as the methodological basis of this thesis. Qualitative research is a systematic method of inquiry that social scientists use to form theories that explain the world of human relations. While there are many definitions of qualitative research, most basic definition is that "it uses words as data . . . collected and analyzed in all sorts of ways. Quantitative research, in contrast, uses numbers as data, and analyzes them according to statistical techniques."[3] With regard to international relations in particular, qualitative analysis

[3] Merriam, Sharan. Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation. Jossey-Bass; 3 edition. 2009. p. 6.

tries to understand and explain various social and political phenomena, such as current events, as well as the formation of world regions and the behavior of countries and individuals.

This study focuses on the foreign policy of South Korea and its relationship to Japan, so although some statistical data may be included, qualitative, rather than quantitative research, is the main methodology. The research is informed primarily through past and current literature, historical documents and official government statements regarding the policies and implementation of Korean foreign policy and overall national strategy.

The time period necessary to cover for researching these cases will range from the beginning of Korea's use of the middle power concept - which took place in the early 1990s - to the Park Geun-hye administration.

1.4 Chapter Arrangement

The introduction provides a general description of the areas of tension in the Korea Japan relationship. This includes some of my own observations and experiences previously as an English teacher in the country.

In the second chapter, I will review the existing literature of middle powers, providing the general ideas and opinions of scholars regarding middle power foreign policy, in particular focusing on how they resolve international disputes. Included in this section will be a review of literature that is more specifically about Korea as a middle power.

In chapter 3, I will first introduce the source of the comfort women dispute, the positions of the Japanese and Korean governments, a timeline of the major events and the methods former Korean administrations have used in order to deal with the problem. I'll accomplish this by

looking at policy statements by officials, official records and news reports. I'll conclude this chapter with a discussion of the issue as it relates to the analytical framework.

In chapter 4, I will provide some historical background on the dispute over Dokdo island, including the official positions of both the Japanese and Korean governments. Following this, I will provide an outline of the major events in this dispute, describing how various Korean presidential administrations have handled the problem. Like in chapter 3, I will draw on official policy statements, records and news reports in order to illustrate the extent to which Korea used middle power foreign policy to deal with Dokdo. Again, I conclude this chapter by applying the analytical framework to the dispute.

As for chapter 5, it discusses the East Sea dispute following the same structure as the previous two chapters; an introduction to the source of the dispute and the official positions of the Japanese and Korean governments, followed by a timeline of events to show how Korea has historically managed this dispute with Japan, concluding with a review based on the behavioral framework of middle power foreign policy.

In the sixth and final Chapter, I will review the analysis made in chapters 3, 4 and 5 in order to assess the extent to which Korea's actions align with the behavioral framework within each of the these three ongoing disputes it has with Japan. This will include a theoretical discussion about how Korea's handling of disputes with Japan relates to its middle power foreign policy. Additionally, I will summarize the main points of each chapter in order to provide my own personal reflection and then make some final comments about the possible direction of future research.

This thesis consists of the following six chapters:

One Introduction

Background

Purpose of Research

Research Design

Chapter Arrangement

Two Literature Review

Middle Power Concept

Korean Middle Power

Critical Review of Korean Middle Power

Concluding Analysis

Three Comfort Women

Tension

Response

Analysis

Four Dokdo

Tension

Response

Analysis

Five East Sea Dispute

Tension

Response

Analysis

Six Conclusion

Research Findings

Theoretical Reflection

Future Studies

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Middle Power Concept

Within the field of IR theory, scholars disagree on what specific features make up a middle power. Foundational scholarship has guided the discourse on middle powers by identifying three distinct definitional categories: functional, behavioral and positional **(Chapnick 1999: 73-82)**.

The functional approach, which was devised by the Canadian diplomat Hume Wrong in 1942, says that a nation's ability to influence certain areas and functions in international affairs helps determine its status as a middle power **(Hynek 2004: 33-43).** The positional approach ranks and categorizes states by applying standards relating to objective material capabilities, such as size of territory, GDP, the volume of trade and foreign currency reserves, population, and number of soldiers **(Kim 2009: 7-36).** In this way, nations with medium-range capabilities can be grouped as middle powers.

The behavioral approach, on which this thesis is based, classifies a country is a middle power if it simply adheres to certain roles**.** More specifically, according to Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, middle powers all share:

> The tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, the tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and the tendency to embrace notions of 'good international citizenship' to guide...diplomacy. Middle powers are states who commit their relative affluence, managerial skills, and international prestige to the preservation of the international order and peace. Middle

> powers help to maintain the international order through coalition-building, by serving as mediators and "go-betweens," and through international conflict management and resolution activities, such as UN peacekeeping. **(Cooper 1993: 19).**

In other words, they tend to act out similar roles in the international system by pursuing multilateral solutions to international problems, preferring compromise positions in international disputes and embracing notions of good international citizenship. But by maintaining the international order through “serving as mediators and go-betweens,” the assumption here, as well as in other scholarship, is that middle powers are themselves not among the disputants in international conflicts.

Middle powers have also been noted for their ability to serve as “bridges” between great and small powers, adopting the position of a mediator when communication between them breaks down due to a dispute. In his discussion of this bridging role, Lee sites the opportunities that middle powers have to help resolve disagreements between powerful, developed countries like the United States and developing nations on contentious policies such as climate change: “To resolve this standoff, a middle power sides with neither group and continues to propose ideas that opposing sides can accommodate” **(Lee 2015: 6).**

O’Neil **(2015: 76)** elaborated on this bridging idea when he described the ability of orthodox middle powers, like Canada, Australia and the Netherlands, to play an “honest-broker” role in multilateral settings in order to promote positive outcomes between larger powers in diverse policy areas ranging from arms proliferation to environmental protection.

Norway, Sweden and Canada are especially well recognized for their "peace agendas," branding themselves as "peace-entrepreneurs" and leading the world in practicing conflict mediation **(Vandamme 2015: 54-55).** Canada in particular has long acted as the mediator and advocated for multilateralism during many international crisis. It's dedication to multilateralism as a founding membership of the United Nations and NATO, and its mediation of in the 1965 Suez Canal Crisis using diplomacy and peacekeeping forces to help avert a potentially major armed conflict in the Middle East, are just a few examples illustrating how its foreign policy behavior embodies the qualities of middle power.

Similarly, some policy proposals have suggested that middle powers also have significant capacity to settle maritime disputes, reducing political tensions by encouraging joint resource extraction and persuading the disputants to shelve issues of territorial sovereignty **(Lee 2015: 17)**.

The case of Australia is a good example. As a frequently cited middle power that also happens to be politically close to the US as a treaty ally, yet is economically dependent upon China as its largest trading partner, Australia has a vested interest in brokering peace between these to larger powers as they compete for geopolitical advantage in the Asia-Pacific. Hence, Australia is compelled for both ideational as well as practical reasons to mediate conflicts between the US and China, and this especially true in the South China Sea, where there is ongoing tension between the two countries.

It must also be noted that middle powers often seek to preemptively avert conflicts between warring parties by getting to the source of many geopolitical disputes - economic

instability **(Jordaan 2003: 6).** This is typically addressed through generous financial aid packages. Japanese foreign policy, for example, is noted for its middle power activism particularly in providing foreign economic relief, as well as its focus on conflict resolution [4]. The country has provided substantial economic assistance throughout Southeast Asia when the Asian Financial Crisis struck in the late 1990s, and has participated in conflict resolution and mediation activities in the region, including in Cambodia, Indonesia, East Timor and Mindanao **(Lam 2006: 141-159).**

In summary, the behavioral framework portrays middle powers as being driven to act out a certain role, i.e., good international citizenship, and they accomplish this by embracing a distinctive model of diplomacy that is based on multilateralism, compromise and mediation aimed at resolving international conflicts. But whether it is "serving as mediators and go-betweens," as a "bridge" or as an "honest-broker" between great and small powers, or working to settle maritime disputes, middle powers are analyzed by how they project their foreign policies at the global level to solve problems among foreign countries. As such, these portrayals all make the consistent assumption that the middle power in question is not itself among the disputants in the international conflict.

2.2 Korean Middle Power

South Korea's rising status in regional and global affairs has received significant attention in recent years. The country started off as an aid dependent, poverty stricken nation still reeling from the Korean War. The so-called Miracle on the Han River - a set of export-led economic policies started in the 1960's - fueled nearly thirty years of intense and sustained economic

[4] While it could be debated whether Japan is a great or middle power, its actions here nevertheless help to illustrate the global nature of middle power activism.

growth. By 1996, Korea's progress was internationally recognized when it was made an official member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Today, South Korea is a major economic and cultural power, a leader in many technological industries, and a frequent host to international summits and conferences.

As a result of the achievements in all of these areas brought by its intense economic development, some scholars have declared that South Korea today is a leader among the middle powers in the international system. **(Lee 2012; Robertson 2007: 151-174).** However, just as in the discussion of middle powers more generally, most of the literature regarding Korea's exercise of middle power puts a much great emphasis on its actions at the global level, while paying little to no attention to the nation's behavior at the bilateral level.

South Korea's middlepowerness is most often discussed in terms the country's deployment of a series of internationalist policies that have pushed for Seoul playing a larger role outside the Northeast Asian region and moving beyond the U.S. alliance as the focal point for national strategy. The earliest example of this kind of middle power activism was the emergence of the Segyehwa Policy (globalization) which sought to boost South Korea's global influence during the Kim Young-sam government from 1993 to 1998. In his first speech introducing Segyehwa Policy in 1995, President Kim stated that

> Globalization is the shortcut which will lead us to building a first-class country in the 21st century. This is why I revealed my plan for globalization and the government has concentrated all of its energy in forging ahead with it. It is aimed at realizing globalization in all sectors - politics, foreign affairs, economy, society,

education, culture and sports. To this end, it is necessary to enhance our viewpoints, way of thinking, system and practices to the world class level . . . we have no other choice than this. **(Kim 2000: 1)**

Since then, ROK elites have displayed a consistent interest in boosting their nation's image and expanding their international presence. President Roh Moo-hyun, for example, was responsible for the creation of a 'National Image Committee' within the Office of the Prime Minister, which was then upgraded to 'Presidential Committee on Nation Branding' by Roh's successor Lee Myung-bak **(O'Neil 2015: 82).** Importantly, the Lee administration also spearheaded an annual China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit designed to foster cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea in the areas of trilateral relations, regional economy and disaster relief.

But as O'Neil **(2015)** points out, it wasn't until President Lee Myung-bak's implementation of the Global Korea Initiative in 2009 that the ROK became a major player in the realm of middle-power diplomacy. The underlying philosophy of Global Korea envisioned "a Korea that leaves behind a habit of diplomacy narrowly geared to the Korean Peninsula, and adopts a more open and enterprising posture that sees the world as the appropriate platform for its foreign policy and national interest" **(O'Neil 2015: 83)**.

Hermanns **(2013: 68)** identified three important shifts in Korean foreign policy that emerged from the Global Korea Initiative: promoting itself as a responsible global player, an economic power, and a culturally relevant nation. Regarding Korea's desire to promote itself as an international mediator, he cites its aggressiveness in hosting international meetings and

institutions, as well as a number of other events, from sports events to political meetings such as the G20 Summit in November 2010 and the Nuclear Security Summit in March 2012. He furthermore notes the government's deft exploitation of cultural exports (e.g., Korean pop music, TV programs, films, collectively referred to as 'Hallyu,' or the 'Korean Wave') as a means to extend its soft power around the world.

The Global Korea Strategy, since it aimed to upgrade Korea's position as a hub of international exchange and peace-building, reflects some of the most important behavioral elements of middle power: multilateralism and exercising leadership towards greater stability in order to show itself as a good international citizen.

Though not an official policy of her administration, the spirit of Lee's Global Korea strategy has continued to grow under President Park Geun-hye. Importantly, Vice-Minister Kim Kyou-hyun touted middlepowerism as a central pillar of the Park administration during a 2013 keynote speech at an international conference on middle powers hosted by the Korean Association of International Studies and the Korea Foundation **(Kim 2013).** Moreover, President Park's Eurasia Initiative aimed to establish a network of energy, infrastructure and diplomatic links from North Korea and Russia out toward Central Asia and Europe **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK, 2015: 105-113).** The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) sought to address the 'Asian Paradox' phenomenon by building trust and cooperation among East Asian nations **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK, 2015: 100-104)**, while MITKA - a multilateral group comprising Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey, South Korea and Australia - convened regularly to identify and discuss global issues and common goals. Finally, on North Korea, the Park administration adopted a "trust-building policy" aimed at enhancing peace and reconciliation (**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK, 2015: 36-47, 107**).

Korea is also host to several noteworthy organizations that further reflect its commitment to multilateralism, compromise and peacebuilding at the global level. In 2010, Lee Myung-bak launched the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) which has since grown into an international treaty-based organization that supports and promotes sustainable economic growth in developing countries. Seoul is home to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia (ESCAP-ENEA), which according to their website, aims to "build and strengthen multilateral partnerships and intergovernmental cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development and integration in Northeast Asia."

There's also the East Asia Foundation, a think-tank and 'international partnership organization' established to promote conflict resolution through scholarship and dialogue. And as part of an initiative to frame its southern tourist spot Jeju Island as an 'Island of World Peace,' Korea has founded the Jeju Peace Institute as well as the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity which collaborate to disseminate research on conflict resolution and organize programs related to cooperation in Northeast Asia and the world. Jeju Island also hosts the UNITAR CIFAL Jeju International Training Center, which offers workshops, conferences, seminars and training on sustainable development to towns and cities throughout South and East Asia.

All of these organizations are part of a broader national strategy outlined in the Presidential Declaration of 2005, "A National Vision for Sustainable Development," the goal of which was to continue the growth of the ROK as "an advanced country while maintaining balance among economy, society and the environment" **(Chung 2006: 3).** Positioning South Korea as a leader in promoting and achieving the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and as a hub of multilateral peace initiatives clearly resonates with middle power values as they are classically understood.

Collectively, Korea's initiatives and policies - from Segyehwa to Global Korea and MIKTA - genuinely seem to embody the most important aspects middle power identity: multilateralism, compromise, peace-building, conflict resolution, and playing the role of a good international citizen. Finally, the ROK's robust engagement across these areas not only attracts high-profile participants to Korea but also generates substantial international attention on the nation, thus raising even further its ability to contribute to the peace and stability of the existing global order.

A nation can be defined as a middle power by looking at its foreign policy behavior. This is typically done by reviewing its policies and actions at the global level, such as in the cases of well-established orthodox middle powers like Canada or Australia, and in the case of nations whose middle power status is still debatable, like Japan. Scholars agree that these nations all seem to share a broad devotion to conflict resolution by promoting multilateralism, compromise and peace-building in order to portray themselves as good international citizens. In the case of an emerging or new middle power like South Korea, reviewing the literature clearly shows that there is a good case to be made based on its foreign policies at the international level.

Yet, these analysis fall short in several ways. The foundational literature regarding middle powers in general relies on the assumption that such nations not themselves among the disputants in international conflicts. In the case of Korea more specifically, the scholarship tends to focus on its behavior at the global level, while overlooking its bilateral relationships. Since Korea proclaims itself a middle power but at the same time is in a series of bilateral disputes with Japan, its handling of those bilateral conflicts should be studied in order to reveal much or how little alleged middle powers adhere to their roles as "bridges" and "peacemakers" when they are among the disputants in international conflicts.

2.3 Critical Review of Korean Middle Power

Many other observers have shown skepticism that the middle power framework best explains South Korea's identity and diplomatic initiatives. A majority of the criticism agreed in its skepticism about both the utility of the concept in the specific case of South Korea, and the lack in consistency of middle-power diplomacy from administration to administration. In the interest of clarifying South Korean grand national strategy, some analysts have proposed alternative frameworks for analyzing the country's status and behavior.

A prominent critique is that there are fundamental differences between South Korea's unique adoption of the middle power concept versus the orthodox understanding of it in a more Western-centric context. The classic idea of what middle powers are supposed to be like is based on an analysis of the behavior of Western nations like Canada, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In these analyses, it became clear that these nations generally prefer to play mediating roles between the great powers and weaker states **(Wight and Holbraad 1978; Cox 1989: 823-32; Young 1989: 335; Cooper and Nossal 1993)**, and tend to enact feel-good, peacebuilding policies like, foreign aid and immigration, out of a sense of ethical duty **(Stokke 1989; Pratt 1994).**

In the case of South Korea, analysts believe that in order to construct the country's international identity, South Korea, particularly under the Lee administration, has merely adopted the rhetoric of a middle power, and in so doing, have forced a Western-specific concept into a geopolitical, historical and cultural context that simply doesn't support it **(Shin 2012: 147-148).**

For example, traditional Western middle powers function within wealthy, stable political environments, meanwhile South Korea is a divided nation balancing between Chinese and American hegemony, while it deals with security threats from soon-to-be nuclear powered regime to the north. In particular, Kim **(2016)** points out that inter-Korean relations have chained the South to a Cold War style security structure that has prevented it from implementing more substantial middle-power diplomacy**.** Empirical evidence supports this: "public support for peacekeeping activities tends to decrease quickly when tension between the two Koreas rises" **(O'Neil 2015: 87).**

Given this reality, it is argued that using a Western-oriented theory to understand South Korea's identity and behavior may be inappropriate.

Other valuable research conducted by Robertson **(2016: 127-30)** has argued that nations' diplomatic styles are informed by their individual history, culture, geography, and formative experiences. In the case of South Korea, he demonstrates that foreign policy is driven largely by various aspects of traditional Korean social values: emotionalism (i.e., pride, honor) and a preoccupation with status. For instance, in his interviews with current and former Korean diplomats, Robertson found that middlepowerism was most frequently viewed as merely as the achievement of a status symbol, which is in turn used compare and contrast the security, economic and political influence of South Korea relative to other states. The emotion-based diplomatic style of the Korea was revealed in diplomats' frustration over the discord between their self-perceived status and the status they believe is to accorded to their country by the international community.

Looking at Korea's unique history as a "shrimp among whales," geopolitically dominated first by the Chinese and then by the Japanese, Hwang **(2017)** has argued that the ROK's

aggressive participation in such a wide range of global forums is simply a strategy to ensure its security, rather than an effort to maximize its middle power capabilities. Meanwhile, the long term sustainability of South Korea's middle power agenda has also been called into question. Because the South Korean presidential system encourages foreign policy differentiation, so Robertson **(2016: 25-27)** suggests that future administrations are likely to abandon former middle power initiatives in an effort to separate themselves from their presidential predecessors: "The country's political leaders are often reluctant to recycle existing initiatives from previous governments, instead preferring to try to inspire constituents with novel concepts."

Likewise, despite middle power rhetoric surrounding Park Geyun-hye's administration, she has made little substantial progress in any of her diplomatic efforts, which has led O'Neil **(2015: 86)** to warn that South Korea is likely to face a "credibility deficit," making it harder to propose future multilateral initiatives if her initiatives fall apart or fail to bear fruit.

For the above reasons, at least one analyst has proposed alternative concepts that might better match South Korea's overall foreign policy strategy: utilizing the attractiveness and influence of Korean culture to act as a 'creative' or 'constructive' regional power; a 'principles-based' approach that focuses on doctrines rather than hard-power or identity; or "embracing a posture of ambiguity in international relations" **(Kim 2016: 13).**

And although South Korea's leadership in China-Japan-ROK trilateral relations has been used as an example to demonstrate its middlepowerness **(Vio 2012: 43-46),** Teo **(2015)** has pointed out that it is difficult to reconcile South Korea's claim to middle power status on the global stage with the reality of its troubled relationships with those two countries.

She points to the annual China–Japan–ROK Trilateral Summit initiated by Lee Myung-bak, which was put on hold for 3 years from 2012 - 2015 due to political and historical disputes among the three nations, especially between Korea and Japan. Likewise, security concerns over North Korea have led to the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system by Seoul. This in turn has invited harsh criticism and powerful economic sanctions from China that have seriously impacted the Korean economy. The important takeaway from Teo is that South Korea can hardly be considered a credible conflict negotiating middle power if it can't even get over its own bilateral disputes with its two closest neighbors.

2.4 Concluding Analysis

Reflecting on this literature review, there is today a gap in the scholarly discussion. It well understood that middlepowerism is defined by a desire to resolve international conflicts through multilateralism, compromise and peace-making, yet few scholars have considered how middle power theory as a whole would be affected when established middle powers are themselves involved in bilateral disputes. Under such circumstances, do middle powers still remain committed to multilateral resolutions, or try to solve the problems by themselves? Do they still seek negotiated solutions, or do they reject opportunities to compromise? Do they still tend to move the dispute toward peaceful resolution, or are they more willing to take provocative actions that potentially inflame the disputes even further? There aren't any clear answers to these questions because bilateral disputes among middle powers are understudied.

It also appears that while many observers have shown skepticism that the middle power framework best explains South Korea's identity and diplomatic initiatives, in-depth discussion of the effect that ROK-Japan disputes has on the nature or legitimacy of South Korea's middlepowerness appears to be lacking. Clearly, Korea is ardently promoting multilateralism,

compromise and peace-building globally, but does it remain so enthusiastically dedicated to these principles in its bilateral disputes with Japan? As of this writing, this question too remains unclear because few, if any, proponents or critics of Korean middle power have discussed it in terms of ROK-Japan bilateral disputes.

Bilateral disputes are not adequately considered in literature about middle power foreign policy, while Korea-Japan bilateral disputes are not adequately covered in literature critical of the South Korean middle power framework. Reflecting on this, what is assumed about middle power foreign policy in international conflicts needs to be more rigorously tested. This research will help to answer these questions by testing Korea's commitment to middle power diplomacy in bilateral disputes by evaluating how it handles three ongoing historical and territorial conflicts with Japan. Doing so will help to fill in a gap of missing critical evaluation about middle power behavior in bilateral disputes. It could also lead to a more careful use of the middle power concept as an analytical framework in future assessments of Korea's grand national strategy and foreign policy behavior.

Chapter 3: Comfort Women

3.1 Tension

Of all the crimes committed by Imperial Japan, perhaps none has had a more lasting impact on Korea-Japan relations than the use of so called “comfort women,” a euphemism for women and girls recruited to work in brothels for the Imperial Army. Since Korea’s democratization, the issue has become increasingly complex.

The first comfort station was established in the Japanese colony of Shanghai in 1932 **(Hicks 1997: 45)**. The number of comfort stations expanded within China and throughout other conquered territories. As for the total number of comfort women, the number is believed to have been around 200,000 altogether **(Asian Women’s Fund: 10).** Comfort women were not exclusively Korean; women were also drawn from Japanese controlled territories and even from Japan itself. These stations continued to provide sexual services for soldiers until Japan’s defeat in 1945.

Because it wasn’t included in the 1965 Basic Treaty, the Korean government largely ignored the comfort women issue throughout the post-war decades. It wasn’t until the late 1980’s and early 90’s that this historical issue became a major sticking point in Korea-Japan relations when activism by women’s groups in both countries, along with a series of highly publicized news articles, forced the issue into public awareness **(Matsui 1984; Hicks 1994: 173-178).**

As a result, in 1989 women’s groups staged a protest and wrote a letter to the Korean government against a planned Korean emissary to the funeral of Japanese Emperor Hirohito. They were ignored by the Korean government, who, echoing the official line of the Japanese

government, cited lack of documentary evidence **(Edwards 2013: 110)**. In 1990, leaders of these organizations sent a letter to then Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki demanding an admission, an apology and financial compensation. Japan asserted the women were prostitutes who had worked voluntarily for private contractors, so the government and military couldn't be held responsible **(Soh 2009: 63).**

By this time, Korea had transitioned from dictatorship into a democracy. As a result of new political freedoms and civil rights, many people began organizing advocacy groups around different issues, including advocating on behalf of former comfort women. The most prominent such organization is the Korean Council which was established in 1990. The Korea Council issued a list of demands to the Japanese government that, according to their website, includes financial reparations, official apology and acknowledgement, construction of a memorial and the inclusion of comfort women system into Japanese history textbooks.

In particular, former Korean comfort woman Kim Hak Sun is well noted for bringing the issue into the political spotlight when in 1991, she publicly testified about her past experience as part of a lawsuit against the Japanese government demanding compensation for forced prostitution. Motivated by her efforts, other former comfort women soon filed lawsuits against Japan too. The following year, many of these women testified at the United Nations, bringing the world's attention on the issue and increased international pressure on Japan. No longer insulated from public opinion as in the pre-democratic era, Korea's elected leaders have been forced by growing domestic outrage and advocacy groups to address the issue.

3.2 Response

I intend to highlight the response of the South Korean government to this issue by highlighting notable actions and statements by each presidential administration, beginning with the Roh Tae-woo administration - when middle power first entered political dialogue - and ending with the Park Geun-hye administration. Responses from current President Moon Jae-in are not included because he has been in office less than a year, so it is too recent to consider.

3.2.1 Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993)

Roh Tae-woo served as President of South Korea from 1988 to 1993, just when awareness of the comfort women issue was beginning to gain traction in Korean society.

The problem caused by Japan's use of Korean women as sex workers was first formally raised in June 1990, after the state visit by Roh Tae-woo, whose official inquiry into the matter was instigated by the demands for apology and compensation by democratic South Korea's new advocacy groups, particularly the Korean Council **(Soh 2009: 63)**. In the meeting, Roh requested a list of draftees, which the Japanese provided but only names were included without any other information **(Stetz 2001: 15).** With public pressure growing, Roh again requested that relevant facts be brought to light during Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa's state visit to Korea in January 1992 **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1993)**. Importantly, after a 1992 investigation performed by the Japanese government itself revealed that it was indeed complicit in organizing the comfort women system, Miyazawa again visited South Korea and apologized to President Roh **(Jameson 1992).**

3.2.2 Kim Young-sam (1993-1998)

In response to these revelations, LDP Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued an official apology in 1993 for Imperial Japan's abuse of women as sex slaves, which came to be known as the Kono Statement **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1993)**. This was followed by an official apology delivered in 1995 by Prime Minister Murayama for Japan's aggressive role in WWII. Known as the Murayama Statement, it apologized for Japan's colonial rule, war of aggression, and for the various other atrocities committed by Japan's Imperial forces **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1995).**

In the same year, the Japanese government also established the Asia Women's Fund (AWF) to provide further apologies and compensation for the former comfort women. However civil society organizations in South Korea opposed this action because they insisted that since the payments were funded by Japanese citizens rather than the national government, it was merely an attempt to evade full legal responsibility. Activist groups therefore called on individuals to reject both the payments and the apology.

In contrast, the Kim Young-sam administration seemed to eager to work with Japan. Records of the negotiations between the ROK and Japan indicate extensive negotiations between the two countries leading up to the Kono Statement and establishment of the Asian Women's Fund, despite an acknowledgement from the ROK itself that it "would not be able to exert pressure domestically in order to try to control the situation." **(Tadaki, Akizuki, Arima, Kawano, Hata 2014: 8).**

The day before the official issuance of the Kono Statement, Kim Yong-sam furthermore stated that he "appreciated" the final draft presented by Japan and "communicated to Japan that the Government of South Korea accepted the wording of the draft" **(Tadaki et al., 2014: 17).**

3.2.3 Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003)

In 1998, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung made a state visit with Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. During the visit, the two signed the Joint Declaration of a New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership Towards the Twenty-First Century, also known as the Obuchi Declaration, in which Kim stressed the importance of building future-oriented relations by overcoming their unpleasant history **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1998).** Likewise, Obuchi expressed Japan's apology for having inflicted pain and suffering on the Korean people. Their joint declaration was heralded as "groundbreaking" and the beginning of "a new era in partnership" **(Dudden 2014: 45).**

The following year the two leaders celebrated the six-month anniversary of the Obuchi Declaration by staging a live TV broadcast in which they touted a policy of "cultural sharing." **(Dudden 2014: 47).** Under the new policy, the Kim Dae-jung administration lifted the ban on Japanese movies, music and television which had been in place for over fifty years. Japan returned the gesture by boosting tourism to South Korea.

But despite the expanded political, security, cultural and people-to-people exchanges that Kim Dae-jung's policies enabled, the South Korean public was still outraged over the comfort women issue. Between 1996 and 1997, comfort women activist groups led fundraising campaigns in order to prevent the surviving women from accepting money from the Japanese AWF. At the urging of the Korean Council, the Kim Dae Jung administration was instead forced in 1998 to pay out 31.5 million won in support money to about 140 survivors, who were required

to pledge not to accept Japanese AWF money **(Soh 2003: 209-233).** The seven Korean survivors who did accept AWF money faced extreme outrage and violent criticism by the wider public, especially activist groups **(Lu 2017: 136).**

3.2.4 Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008)

On one hand, some have pointed out Roh Moo-hyun's strong anti-Japanese attitude. For instance, in his first meeting with United States Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Roh government proposed defining Japan as "hypothetical enemy" **(Dong-A Ilbo 2012).** In 2006, Roh even went so far as to appoint an investigation commission to identify the descendants of Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese during the colonial era. In 2010, the commission concluded its report, and 168 South Korean citizens' properties were seized by the government **(Ryall 2010).**

Yet on the other hand, it is repeatedly said that Roh initially took a passive stance in his first year in office by not raising the comfort women issue. In fact, he entered office hoping to improve ROK- Japan as part of a broader strategy to have Korea facilitate the economic and cultural integration of Northeast Asia **(Pastreich 2005: 12)**. To that end, both Tokyo and Seoul recognized 2005 as a "Year of Friendship" to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and South Korea.

In any case, from 2003 onward, Roh Moo-hyun put greater international spotlight on Japan over the comfort women than any previous administration.

To begin with, the Roh Moo-hyun administration was the first one to assert that the comfort women issue had not been resolved by the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations with Japan, and that the Japanese government was still legally liable for this matter **(Okuzono 2015: 3)**.

At the same time, he also introduced a new campaign to raise Japan-related historical issues within the international community. In September 2006 the Roh Moo-hyun administration established a government-funded international research institute called the Northeast Asian History Foundation to advocate for nationalist issues (e.g., Dokdo Island, the East Sea, and Comfort Women disputes with Japan, and other historical disputes with China). The foundation has continued to disseminate information related to these topics.

In a 2007 speech marking the 88th anniversary of Korea's March 1st Independence Movement, Roh argued that ROK-Japan bilateral disputes, like "distortions in Japanese textbooks" and "compensation for Korean comfort women," can only be resolved by Japan **(Chosun Ilbo 2007).** It has been noted however, that this activity grew out of pressure from activist groups, like the Korean Council, for the Korean government to settle the issue **(Ku 2015).**

3.2.5 Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013)

Like Roh at the beginning of his administration, Lee Myung-bak's government initially took a soft stance on the comfort women problem. Although Prime Minister Naoto Kan's message of apology on the 100th anniversary of Japanese annexation of Korea didn't reference the comfort women issue **(Kan 2010)**, Seoul nevertheless welcomed Japan's effort to improve bilateral ties **(MBC News 2010)**.

In August 2011 a South Korean constitutional court called out the South Korean government for not doing enough to seek redress from Japan on behalf of South Korean comfort women; the court ruled the government's inaction was unconstitutional because it violated the women's human rights **(Yonhap 2011).** Interestingly, even after this court ruling, the issue was

still not raised at ROK-Japan summit-level meetings that followed in September and November 2011 **(Panda 2011).**

However, just as with Roh, it was public pressure, along with the court ruling, that forced Lee to take the issue more seriously. Just as the Korean Council's 1000th weekly protest took place in front of the Japanese embassy, along with their unveiling of the first comfort women monument, President Lee for the first time in his term demanded apologies and reparation at a summit with Japan in December 2011 **(YTN 2011)**.

Soon after, South Korea for the first time raised the issue at the United Nations Third Committee, demanding that Japan take "legal responsibility" for its use of comfort women during WWII **(Glionna 2011.)** The pressure kept up and in 2012, Lee continued to call for Japan to resolve the comfort women issue, even to the extent of telling the Japanese emperor to apologize if he ever wants to visit Korea **(Japan Times 2012)**.

In effect, the Lee Myung-bak Administration had left this issue untouched and had brought it up in its diplomatic exchange with Japan only after the Constitutional Court decision and heightened public pressure that followed it **(Okuzono 2015: 2).**

3.2.5 Park Geun-hye (2013-2017)

Amid decades of these ongoing grievances, a deal was suddenly announced between the foreign ministers of Korea and Japan on December 28th 2015 that "finally and irreversibly resolved" the issue. According to the agreement, Japanese Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida phoned President Park Geun-hye to issue a new formal apology. Furthermore, each surviving comfort woman received $90,000, and each their families $18,000 directly from the Japanese government. Meanwhile, the Foundation for Reconciliation and

Healing, a Korean governmental organization designed to support surviving comfort women and their living relatives, also received 1 billion yen (roughly $8 million) from the Japanese government. In exchange, Seoul promised to refrain from criticising Japan over the issue and work to relocate the comfort women memorial in front of the Japanese Embassy **(South China Morning Post 8/2/2016).** The Japanese and Korean governments celebrated the move to improve bilateral ties by cooperating to solve a long-standing point of diplomatic tension. But yet again the media, civil society and activist groups led by the Korean Council collectively rejected their government's cooperation with Japan.

Surviving comfort women rejected the disbursements from the foundation, and then filed a lawsuit against the Park Geun-hye government for initiating the agreement without consulting them (**South China Morning Post 8/31/2016).**

Other civil society groups immediately rejected the deal, issuing a statement in which they called it a "diplomatic humiliation" **(jtbc 2016).** Since then, activist groups led by the Korean Council have put up dozens more memorial statues, both in South Korea and abroad. In 2016, a statue appeared outside the Japanese consulate in the southern city of Busan. The city government attempted to remove it, but quickly bowed to public pressure. Public support for memorial statues is so strong that the South Korean government says it is powerless to prevent campaigners from erecting them **(Park 2017).**

Campaigners continue to be active even outside of Korea. In 2013 the Korean American Forum of California together with the Korea-Glendale Sister City Assn. unveiled a comfort women memorial statue in Glendale, California and according to their website, they have also recently launched a campaign to have California students at public high schools learn about the comfort women as part of the school curriculum beginning in 2017. The Korean Council,

together with the local Korean community, erected a similar monument in Sydney, Australia in 2016. The unveiling ceremony was attended by Korean Council co-representative Yoon Mee-hyang and Seongnam City Mayor Lee Jae-myung **(Lee 2016)**. Memorial statues continue to grow in number around the world wherever Korean communities exist.

3.3 Analysis

According to the analytical framework used in this thesis, Korea's handling of the Comfort Women issue must be analyzed to determine the extent to which they have remained committed to middlepowerism in three key areas: multilateralism, compromise and exercising leadership toward peaceful resolution.

3.3.1 Multilateralism

Does South Korea favor multilateral solutions on the comfort women dispute in order to show itself as a good international citizen? Since the 1990's when this issue became a major point of conflict, there has only been once instance in which Korea participated in a multilateral attempt to resolve the dispute. This came in the form of third-party mediation from the United States. Former U.S. President Obama, after months of hard diplomacy, finally brought Park and Abe together in March 2014 to discuss future trilateral cooperation in a high profile meeting at the Hague. From that time onward, representatives of the Obama administration claimed he "raised the [comfort women] issue in nearly every meeting 'he's had with the leaders of Japan and South Korea over the last several years" **(Eilperin 2016).** These efforts eventually resulted in an agreement between the ROK and Japan in 2015 to officially settle the comfort women problem, but severe domestic backlash in Korea has since made the agreement tenuous.

Washington's motivation for bringing these two together was the "Asian Pivot," the foundation of the United States' strategy for Asia during the Obama administration. The policy framework operated on the notion of "Forward Deployed Diplomacy" that according to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton required, "strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights" **(Clinton 2011).**

For the strategy to work, America's partners in the Asia-Pacific had to collaborate more closely. However, frictions over the comfort women issue have long been a barrier to effective strategic coordination between Korea and Japan **(Nishino 2017)**. Without an upgrade to security cooperation between its two major democratic allies in Northeast Asia, the Asia Pivot strategy wouldn't work.

So it seems that under certain conditions, Korea can be persuaded to engage in multilateralism in order to solve this issue, but it took the leverage of a superpower like the United States to make it happen, and even then, domestic resistance made it difficult. Civil society strongly protests against trilateral cooperation with Japan and the U.S., sometimes violently[5].

[5] For example, Kim Ki-kong, a pro-North Korean nationalist, is noted for his 2010 attack of the Japanese Ambassador to South Korea and his 2015 attack on the U.S. Ambassador.

Picture 4: *Former Korean comfort women protest summit meeting between U.S. and Japan. Poster reads: "The US-Japan alliance condemns peace and calls for war!!"* The Japan Times[6]

Without American instigation, it is unlikely Korea would have been able to take the initiative in setting up multilateral talks on this issue given the strong domestic opposition. Though they may be willing, it seems that Korean leaders are unable to take the lead in engaging in sustained multilateral solutions on this issue.

3.3.2 Compromise

[6] https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/07/national/history/seoul-plans-erect-comfort-women-monument-mark-1945-liberation/#.Wm1VNaiWaM8

When there's a chance to make a deal with Japan on comfort women, does Korea offer to negotiate, accept negotiations from the Japanese, or shun compromise altogether? For Korea, the comfort women issue is a personal problem of historical justice that must be solved with Japan bilaterally, but even bilateral meetings have been difficult. Throughout most of here time in office, Park Geun-hye had repeatedly vowed never to meet with Japanese Prime Minister Abe unless Japan demonstrated "sincere repentance for past wrongdoings, though observers have noted that her strong stance on this was likely an attempt to boost her nationalist credentials for the domestic audience" **(South China Morning Post 2014).** Finally, after years of urging by Obama, Park did hold a friendly summit meeting with Japan's Abe in November 2015, just a month before her abrupt announcement of the comfort women deal.

Despite this, there are strong indications that the ROK is willing to compromise. Over the presidential terms covered, the Korean government has on repeated occasions demanded "sincere" apologies from Japan, but has also shown a tendency to downplay and overlook the comfort women issue in favor of maintaining stable ties. Most presidential administrations maintained this posture for as long as possible, until domestic public pressure forced the national government to take a hardline with Japan on the comfort women issue.

The Korean government's demand for retribution seems to depend on how salient the issue is domestically. For this reason, action on the comfort women issue has largely been led by citizen activism, rather than by state action. So just as in the case of multilateralism, the Korean government may be willing, but unable to negotiate with the Japanese due to strong domestic opposition.

3.3.3 Leadership

Does Korea exercise leadership to move this conflict in the direction of peace & stability, or do they tend to take provocative actions that aggravate the problems even further? Over the time frame that was analyzed, ROK typically appears willing to overlook this historical issue, and in a few instances, even quietly cooperated with Japan to settle it. However, strong domestic opposition has limited the ROK in seeking more robust and open compromise, or considering multilateral solutions. Additionally, whenever Japanese nationalists and their sympathizers in government openly question the history of comfort women, or when the Japanese government approves textbooks that omit parts of that history, the Korean public's angry response forces the ROK to respond harshly. Altogether, these factors prohibit the ROK from leading the issue toward a peaceful resolution.

Chapter 4: Dokdo Island

4.1 Tension

Territorial sovereignty over Dokdo/Takeshima remains a sharp point of contention in contemporary ROK-Japan relations. The island is actually a rocky outcrop composed of two rock-like land features, known as Dokdo in South Korea, Takeshima in Japan and the Liancourt Rocks internationally. The land features are about 87 kilometers from the nearest Korean territory, and South Korea considers them under the jurisdiction of Ulleung Island. Japan considers the islets under the jurisdiction of the Oki Island, which is about 157 kilometers away. Tokyo and especially Seoul continue to produce their own maps, charts, documents and records that they claim proves why they are the rightful owners of these barren, desolate sea rocks.

Picture 5: *Map of Dokdo between Korea and Japan.*[7]

[7] Korean National Geographic Information Institute:
http://www.ngii.go.kr/dokdoen/contents/contentsView.do?rbsIdx=42

Picture 6: *Dokdo Island* [8]

Although military personnel have been stationed there for decades, multiple Korean scholars have noted that the islands are unsuitable to support human habitation, and that "rock" is probably the best term to describe these land features **(van Dyke 2013: 54).** Therefore, the terms "island," "islet," or "rock" will all be used interchangeably in this thesis.

Territorial disputes are commonly tied up with national history and formation of the state; Dokdo is a case in point. Thus, any assessment of this territorial dispute would be incomplete without considering the historical baggage associated with the claims.

Japanese Imperial forces seized the islets in January 1905, the same year in which Japanese forces compelled Korea to accept a treaty that made it into a Japanese vassal state, which was in turn a prelude to full colonial annexation in 1910. Prior to the 1905 Korea-Japan Treaty, Korea's international relations were primarily governed by its tributary relationship with China. As a colony, Korea, like Japan's other acquired territories, benefited from modernization

[8] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of Korea: http://dokdo.mofa.go.kr/eng/

policies that produced many social improvements, but was also subjected to assimilation policies that suppressed native languages and cultures, discriminated against non-Japanese, and forced people to adopt Japanese names and convert to Shinto, the state religion of Imperial Japan **(Henry 2014).** These negative aspects are well remembered by Koreans today. One commentator stated that from the perspective of the Korean public, the dispute represents a "deep emotional trauma that occurred as a result of Imperial Japan's brutal occupation that has since been internalized into Korea's cultural narrative and represents an unhealed psychic scar that has become an article of faith with an almost religious significance" **(Mazarr 2012).** Consequently, Japan's contemporary claim to Dokdo is inherently tied to the past subjugation and humiliation of the nation at the hands of Japan.

The 1951 San Francisco Treaty between the United States and defeated Japan did not clarify to which country the Dokdo islets were to be surrendered. The unresolved nature of specific territorial borders in the treaty opened the way for discord between Japan and its neighbors, especially Korea **(Hara 2006: 9).** Calder in particular noted that the failure of the San Francisco Treaty to establish clear territorial boundaries was a factor in making Northeast Asia the "Arc of Crisis" that it has been ever since **(Calder 2004: 135-139).**

Korea's transition to democracy opened up the government's foreign policy decisions to be influenced by domestic populism. Just as public activism forced the government to take action on the comfort women issue, so too has public activism encouraged the government to take Dokdo seriously. However, the ROK has much more aggressively advocated the latter over the former.

Just one year after the Treaty of Basic Relations was signed, South Korea's first President, Syngman Rhee, unilaterally declared the so called "Rhee Line" which delineated a clear border between Korea and Japan, and of course included Dokdo on the Korean side.

In the following decades, Korea has stationed other armed personnel to the islets and set up other facilities including a helipad and a port facility which have helped to legitimize their claim to the islets. All the while, Japan has contested Korea's claim and has been urging International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction over the issue, to which Korea has responded by stating that "no territorial dispute exists regarding Dokdo, and Dokdo is not a matter to be dealt with through diplomatic negotiations or judicial settlement **(Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency).**

4.2 Response

Just as I did in the previous chapter on comfort women, I intend to highlight the most notable actions and statements by each South Korean administration. However, since the earliest actions/statements on the Dokdo issue begin with Kim Young-sam, I will begin there and conclude with Park Geun-hye.

4.2.1 Kim Young-sam (1993-1998)

The Dokdo question came to the forefront of Korea-Japan relations in the late 90's after antagonistic actions taken by both Japan and Korea. Despite this, there were initially some signs of accommodation. In August 1996, the ROK and Japan held talks on establishing a joint fishing area around Dokdo **(Min 2010: 88)**.

But this accommodation didn't last; after Korea decided to construct a wharf facility on Dokdo in 1996, Japan's Foreign Minister Ikeda Yukihiko demanded that the facilities and

personnel be immediately removed from the islets **(New York Times 1996)**. Violent anti-Japan protests erupted across the country, with Korean citizens burning Japanese flags and effigies of Ikeda.

At the state level, Kim Young-sam canceled a meeting with Tokyo legislators and threatened to cancel a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of Japan. Under the direction of the Presidential Office, the Korean Foreign Ministry refused to cooperate in concluding EEZ and fisheries talks until Japan officially acknowledged Korea's sovereignty over Dokdo **(Bong 2002: 103-105, 120-121).**

Kim later ordered his cabinet to develop Dokdo as a tourist site capable of supporting human habitation in order to use the islets as a baseline for South Korean EEZ, boosted the number of military guards on the islets and directed military forces to practice repelling enemy vessels approaching the islets **(Min 2010: 87).**

4.2.2 Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003)

Upon taking office, Kim Dae-jung is widely noted for taking steps to improve Korea's relationship with Japan. As noted in the previous chapter, Kim signed on with the New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership Towards the Twenty-First Century with Prime Minister Obuchi in his first visit to Japan in 1998 that expanded trade and cultural relations.

Regarding Dokdo in particular, Korea put aside the sovereignty issue by finally accepting a long-standing offer from Japan for a new fisheries agreement in January 1999, though it must be noted that this was primarily motivated by "economic collapse and dire need for emergency loans from Japan" **(Min 2010: 91).** Moreover, given popular opposition to the agreement, South Korea declined to implement the joint regulatory measures **(Van Dyke 2002: 297, 405).**

Otherwise, Korea-Japan state-level relations were generally cool but not cold during Kim Dae-jung's administration.

4.2.3 Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008)

Like Kim Dae-jung before him, Roh entered office pledging not to escalate tensions with Japan. The initial strategy of the administration was the pursuit of a notion of "Peace and Prosperity in the Era of Northeast Asia," **(Kim 2005)** with Japan and Korea even celebrating 2005 as the “Year of Friendship.”

Despite this, the South Korean national post office inflamed the sensitive situation when in 2004 it issued special stamps depicting the Dokdo islets. Japan issued its own Takeshima-themed stamps and then lodged a formal complaint with the Universal Postal Union **(Min 2010: 93).**

Japan in turn escalated the situation further in 2005 when the Shimane Prefectural Council officially declared February 22 “Takeshima Day,” and urged the national government to reclaim the islets, and then Japan’s ambassador to Seoul reiterated the claim **(Faiola 2005).** This was followed up by Japan’s Ministry of Education approving middle school textbooks that claimed Dokdo is Japanese territory. Once again, violent demonstrations erupted throughout Korea, with multiple individuals chopping off their fingers in protest, an attempted self-immolation, burning and defecating on Japanese flags, and local authorities in the city of Taegu even redirecting traffic so that vehicles would have to drive over a Japanese flag **(Demick 2005).**

These incidents - Japan’s shift to the nationalist right coupled with Korea’s emotional domestic politics - marked a shift Roh Moo-hyun’s policy orientation toward Japan. In response, the Roh administration adopted a more hard-line, populist approach toward regarding history and

territorial issues. At least 4 points that reflected Roh's new policy approach have been identified **(Kim 2005):**

1. an announcement that he would respond firmly to Japanese attempts to justify its history of imperialism and occupation
2. declaration of an aggressive "diplomatic war" that would continue to raise the issue until a solution acceptable to the Korean people was in place
3. a written message defending Dokdo to the people of Korea which was subsequently posted on the homepage of the Presidential Office
4. Korea formally announced its opposition to Japan's bid for permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council, claiming that Japan isn't qualified because it hasn't sufficiently reflected on its past imperialism

In other words, rather than striving to minimize conflict between the two countries, the Roh administration took numerous steps that heightened tension with Japan, thereby making him popular domestically but making it more difficult to resolve this difficult territorial issue. Its a case of conservative nationalism on one side fueling conservative nationalism on the other side.

4.2.4 Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013)

Tokyo initially attempted to steer relations back on track after Lee Myung-bak's election. Japan offered a bilateral meeting to discuss Dokdo on the sidelines of the ASEAN regional security summit in Singapore, but Korea rejected the offer **(Al Jazeera 2008).**

Later, Japan and Korea continued to escalate tension between each other. On 2011, officials from Japan's Democratic Party for the first time attended Shimane prefecture's Takeshima Day event **(Ko 2011)**. This was soon followed up by Japan's Ministry of Education

issuing new middle school textbooks that again claimed Dokdo belongs to Japan, and described South Korea's administration of the islets as "illegal occupation" **(Seldon: 2011: 8).**

Lee Myung-bak continued the populist policy shift set by his predecessor Roh Moo-hyun. The following year in 2012 Lee became the first Korean president to officially visit Dokdo. At this time, Lee was embroiled in a serious corruption scandal that hurt his popularity **(Choe 2012)**. After his controversial visit to Dokdo however, his domestic popularity quickly rose again **(Yokota 2012).** Numerous analysts have observed that Lee was strategically using populism over Dokdo to showcase his nationalist credentials in order to deal with the corruption scandals he was facing **(Kim 2012).**

After Lee's highly publicized visit, Japan offered to settle the issue by proposing in 2012 that the two nations officially take the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Korea declined the offer **(Reuters 2012)**.

4.2.5 Park Geun-hye (2013-2017)

During the 2013 Independence Memorial service in Seoul, newly elected Park Geun-hye proclaimed, "The historical perspective of aggressor and victim cannot be changed, even though a thousand years pass by. It is incumbent on Japan to have a correct understanding of history and take on an attitude of responsibility in order to partner with us in playing a leading role in East Asia in the 21st century" **(Park 2013).** As this was just one month after she took office, so clearly she wasn't starting her presidency hoping to boost ties with Japan.

Later that year Park attended a Coast Guard ceremony for the launch of a new Dokdo patrol ship. During the ceremony, she vowed "we will never tolerate any challenges to our sovereignty over all of the Republic of Korea's islands, continental shelves and exclusive

economic zones," adding that "defending Dokdo is to defend the pride of the Republic of Korea" **(Yonhap News Agency 2013).** Either Park is herself a nationalist, or she knows how to use nationalism to build public support just as her presidential predecessors did.

Oddly, after refusing to meet or even speak with Japanese Prime Minister Abe throughout her time in office, Park Geun-hye in her final months in office suddenly held a friendly summit meeting in November 2015, just a month before her abrupt announcement of the comfort women deal with Tokyo. In the meeting she stated she'd like to "work together toward creating an atmosphere that is conducive to holding friendly summit meetings more frequently" **(Minegishi 2015).**

Nevertheless, observers have noted that due to her father's collaboration with Japanese occupiers during the colonial period, Park tended to use nationalism and anti-Japanese rhetoric to legitimize herself as a trustworthy patriot **(McGill 2014)**. Again, Korea's politicians exploit nationalism for political profit.

4.3 Analysis

According to the analytical framework used in this thesis, Korea's handling of the Dokdo issue must be analyzed to determine the extent to which they have remained committed to middlepowerism in three key areas: multilateralism, compromise and exercising leadership toward peaceful resolution.

4.3.1 Multilateralism

Does Korea favor multilateral solutions on the Dokdo dispute in order to show itself as a good international citizen? Japan first proposed in September 1954 that the sovereignty of Dokdo be referred to the International Court of Justice, made a second offer in 1962 during ministerial

talks, and a third most recent offer in 2012 **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015).** The ROK rejected each of Japan's offers to peacefully settle the conflict using a well-established multilateral organization. Perhaps this is because domestic politics may make it politically infeasible for the Korean government to consider ICJ adjudication, or perhaps it is because they don't want to bring any legitimacy to Japan's claims.

Whatever the reason, Korea is adamantly declaring sovereignty over a disputed territory, but then consistently objecting to the established procedures of international law in order to solve the problem. Judging from this, Korea is either unable or unwilling to pursue multilateral behavior typical of middle power foreign policy on this issue.

4.3.2 Compromise

When there's a chance to make a deal with Japan on Dokdo, does Korea offer or accept negotiations, or shun compromise altogether? On a few occasions, Korea has extended olive branches to the Japanese, but in many of these instances either the state or civil society took steps that invalidated those efforts. The 1996 talks on establishing joint fishing agreement around Dokdo were a step in the right direction that got sidelined by the government's provocative decision to begin building facilities and expand the military presence on the islets. Then the acceptance of Japan's offer in 1999 to resume talks on a new fisheries agreement was terminated because of strong domestic opposition.

In other cases, the possibility of compromise has been altogether rejected, as when Korea turned down Japan's offer to discuss Dokdo at the ASEAN security summit. Additionally, the current official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs couldn't be more clear about the possibility of compromise: "Dokdo is an integral part of Korean territory, historically,

geographically and under international law. No territorial dispute exists regarding Dokdo, and therefore Dokdo is not a matter to be dealt with through diplomatic negotiations or judicial settlement."[9]

So the ROK has made some limited attempts at compromise, but domestic nationalism and subsequent counterproductive policies nullified those actions, and an anti-compromise policy perpetually dominates the official government stance. Korea is both unwilling and unable to seek genuine compromise.

4.3.3. Leadership

Has Korea taken the initiative to move the Dokdo dispute in the direction of peace & stability? Generally, the answer here must be negative. Domestic nationalism has constrained the actions of the ROK government in the few instances where it tried to take positive steps with Japan in the past. At other times, the government continued to take a hardline stance and make provocative actions even in cases when it was open to negotiation.

In addition, Korea's leaders also tend to play up the Dokdo issue for political gain whenever domestic support is low, as in the case with Roh Moo-hyun's policy shift toward populism and Lee Myung-bak's visit to the islets, or as a way to legitimize themselves, as with Park Geun-hye's appeal to nationalist rhetoric in order to distance herself from father who infamously collaborated with colonial Japan. This means that Korea is overall both unable and unwilling to seek lead this dispute toward a stable and peaceful outcome.

[9] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK. "The Government's Basic Position." http://dokdo.mofa.go.kr/eng/dokdo/government_position.jsp

Chapter 5: East Sea

5.1 Tension

Bordered by Japan, Korea and Russia, the Sea of Japan is a small body of water that divides the Japanese Archipelago from the Asian mainland. The internationally accepted name is the Sea of Japan. Korea insists that the correct term is their preferred name, the East Sea, and wants that name to be internationally adopted, either instead of or in addition to, Sea of Japan.[10]

The core of the disagreement is about when and how the name "Sea of Japan" became the international standard. Japan claims the term has been used internationally since at least the early 19th century, before Japan became a colonial empire, with some examples of usage going back as far as 1602.[11] South Korea counters that the name “Sea of Japan” only became widespread as a result of Japanese expansionism and colonial rule over Korea, and prior to that, other names such as "Sea of Korea" or "East Sea" were used in English **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK, East Sea)**. The current name Sea of Japan was adopted and standardized by the International Hydrographic Conference in 1929, but Korean scholars and officials argue that “this standardization was during Japan’s colonial rule over the Korean Peninsula, so it was a unilateral decision and absent of Korea’s say” **(Yoo 2010).**

For this reason, the widely known name for this body of water is, to Koreans, an injustice that still lingers from the era of Japanese colonization. The “Sea of Japan” represents of an era of

[10] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, East Sea: http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_5435/contents.do
[11] Japan Coast Guard. Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department. The Name Sea of Japan (Japan Sea). “The establishment of the name - Sea of Japan (Japan Sea).” http://www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/nihonkai/index_eng.html

oppression, occupation and violence. Just as with the Dokdo dispute, East Sea is an issue that Koreans from a young age are taught to care about through the national education system.

In this sense, the East Sea and Dokdo issues are closely intertwined. The international use of the name "Sea of Japan" is seen as perpetuating the injustice of Japanese colonialism in much the same way that Japan's claim to Dokdo represents Japan's reluctance to completely renounce its colonial history. To rectify this perceived injustice - to right this wrong - the Korean government and private Korean citizens are thus steadfast in promoting use of the name "East Sea" in the international community.

5.2 Response

In the previous two case studies, I tried to show how each Korean administration handled the issues of Comfort Women and Dokdo Island from the early 90's - just when middle power entered Korea's political discourse - to the Park Geun-hye administration. Because the Korean government's East Sea initiatives are not confined to individual presidential terms, but are instead are part of a long-term strategy spanning multiple presidential terms, so in this case I've decided instead to focus on simply explaining those strategies rather than by breaking up the initiatives by presidential administrations as I did in the previous two chapters. Because private citizens and organizations have been quite active in promoting the East Sea, I've included a section to elaborate on that as well.

5.2.1 State-led Initiatives

According to former Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan, South Korea has been engaged in a campaign to have the name Sea of Japan changed to East Sea ever since 1991

(Chosun Ilbo 2011). This campaign has focused on pushing the United Nations and the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) to officially replace the name Sea of Japan, or at least add the name East Sea, on world maps.

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) is a team of experts working under the United Nations to manage the national and international standardization of geographical names. Every five years these experts convene to hold the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN). This international meeting holds discussions to review countries' policies on the standardization of geographical names and name marking systems.

After being admitted into the United Nations as a full member in 1992, South Korea immediately objected to the name Sea of Japan at the Sixth annual meeting of the UNCSGN **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK, East Sea).** At every annual meeting since then, delegates from the ROK have repeated the claim that until an agreement is reached between the ROK and Japan, the names "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan" should be used concurrently **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK 2017)**.

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), is the central global body set up to support safety of navigation and the protection of the marine environment. The IHO is also responsible for standardizing the world's maritime place-names, and to that end, holds a major international conference every five years to discuss and settle geographic names and marking systems. The IHO's nautical chart publication "Limits of Oceans and Seas" (S-23) has used the name "Sea of Japan" since its first publication in 1929.

The South Korean government first proposed the East Sea name to the IHO in 1997, stating that the two names “East Sea” and “Sea of Japan” should be used together until an agreement can be reached with Japan **(Kim 2017).** South Korea has since pushed for the name change at each of the subsequent IHO meetings, and each time the organization has declined to amend the long established name of the sea.

A recent meeting of the IHO was in 2012, and once again they decided not to change the current single name "Sea of Japan" rejecting South Korea's request to use "East Sea" together with "Sea of Japan" In response to this failure of the South Korean campaign over two decades, South Korean foreign minister Kim Sung-hwan suggested that the government should consider more strongly advocating other historical names instead, such as "Sea of Korea” **(Chosun Ilbo 2011)**.

Despite the apparent failure of the UNCSGN and IHO campaigns, South Korea has seen progress in unofficial changes to the name of the sea. This is because the South Korean government has also expended great effort to lobby foreign media outlets, encouraging them to use the dual name “Sea of Japan/East Sea.” A number of prominent publications now employ both terms, including the National Geographic Society, Rand McNally, The Economist, CNN, The Wall Street Journal, and Le Monde **(Lewis 2012)**. In 2008, Google put both names on Google Earth, using East Sea for local Korean servers and Sea of Japan for web users internationally **(Li 2010).** According to government statistics, the percentage of international maps using the East Sea name alone or along with Sea of Japan rose from 2.8 percent in 2000 to 10.8 percent in 2005, to 23.8 percent in 2007 and then to 28.07 percent in 2009 **(Northeast Asian History Foundation 2009: 6)**. If not an official win for Korea, the steady increase in dual

name usage at the global level at least demonstrates an increased awareness of the dispute, and accommodation of Korea's claims.

Official and unofficial efforts continue. In February 2017 the ROK Foreign Ministry uploaded a series of promotional videos to its official website which claims, "Japan knows the truth" and calls for greater awareness of the name East Sea **(Kim 2017).** In April 2017, South Korea sent a delegation made up of 30 government officials and private experts to the most recent IHO meeting. Just as in previous meetings, there goal was to have the waters labeled solely as the "East Sea," or settle for dual use of "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan" until an agreement is reached on the matter between the two countries **(KBS 2017).**

It is worth noting that a singular example of compromise was attempted by former Korean President Roh Moo-hyun. In November 2006, during the APEC summit in Hanoi, Roh informally proposed to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that the sea be renamed the "Sea of Peace" or "Sea of Friendship." Abe, of course, rejected the idea and in the following year Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki reiterated, stating that there was no need to change the name of the Sea of Japan **(Japan Times 2007).**

5.2.2 Other Initiatives

In addition to official government campaigns, there are also many private efforts to promote and disseminate information about the East Sea, often including Dokdo. However, private citizens and organizations frequently act in close coordination with their local and national government offices to promote the East Sea and Dokdo together.

For example, the Society for the East Sea is a non-profit group that was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994 to promote the use of the term East Sea more globally. According to their website, the organization accomplishes this by inviting foreign experts to international seminars in order to explain and justify dual name usage for the sea. The organization's first president was the former Minister of Science and Technology, but subsequent presidents have been from academia. Since its foundation, the organization has continued to maintain close relationships with multiple government agencies including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency, the National Geographic Information Institute (NGII), the Korean Culture and Information Service, the Northeast Asian History Foundation, and the Korea Foundation[12].

The Northeast Asian History Foundation (NEAHF) is a very active state-funded organization that bills itself as a research institute dedicated to promoting peace in Northeast Asia by confronting and correcting alleged "historical distortions." Through research, activism, political lobbying and partnership with related organizations, the group publishes research papers and promotional materials in foreign languages for global distribution. The organization has a Dokdo Research Institute as an internal department that works with NEAHF to support the ROK's Dokdo/East Sea claims by "developing strategies [as well as] educational and promotional activities to correct inaccurate understandings about Dokdo and the East Sea, often collaborating with civic and social organizations to do so...in order to lay out the basis for peace in Northeast Asia" **(Dokdo Research Institute).** This includes publishing educational materials in order to build support for Dokdo and East Sea among Korea's elementary, junior and high school students **(Northeast Asian History Network).**

[12] Please refer to the 'Introduction' section of their website to find this information: http://eastsea1994.org/eng/html/

Although VANK (Voluntary Agency Network of Korea) doesn't directly receive support from the Korean government, it states on its website that it does collaborate with other government affiliated organizations. This quasi-governmental "cyber diplomacy" organization advertises itself as a group promoting global citizenship and international exchange, but does so by organizing its members (mainly elementary, middle, high school and university students) to promote Dokdo overseas, find cases of the East Sea being mislabeled, and then address these "inaccuracies" by requesting through email that these errors be fixed **(VANK).**

And finally, after years of campaigning by ROK supported Korean-American civic groups, the House of Delegates in the U.S. State of Virginia passed legislation to use both "Sea of Japan" and "East Sea" in all local school textbooks **(Robertson 2014)**. This success galvanized Korean-American groups in other U.S. states to also begin pushing for revised textbooks **(Park 2014).**

No doubt these unofficial initiatives on the part of private Korean citizens and organizations have contributed greatly to the increasingly used dual name "Sea of Japan/East Sea," despite the apparent lack of progress in the ROK's official campaigns at the UN and IHO.

5.3 Analysis

According to the analytical framework used in this thesis, Korea's behavior regarding the East Sea issue must be analyzed to determine the extent to which they have remained committed to middlepowerism in three key areas: multilateralism, compromise and exercising leadership toward peace.

5.3.1 Multilateralism

Does Korea favor multilateral solutions on the East Sea conflict in order to show itself as a good international citizen? In a sense, yes. To handle the dispute, Korea has taken up the issue with two different international bodies (UNCSGN and IHO) and pressed its claim according to international law. But since this didn't produce the desired results, the ROK has at the same time invested much time and money into organizing unofficial East Sea campaigns to get around the law by pressuring map publishers, foreign educational systems and international companies into adopting a new status quo in which both names are used anyway.

Since this tactic has proven much more successful and because the East Sea issue is deeply important to most Koreans, it is likely that Seoul will continue to funnel more resources into this strategy. Korea first attempted multilateral approach, but when this failed, they abandoned it for another strategy that proved to be more effective. Since it hasn't offered the benefits they seek, Korea is apparently unwilling to persist with multilateralism to solve the East Sea conflict.

5.3.2 Compromise

When there's a chance to make a deal with Japan on the East Sea, does Korea offer or accept negotiations, or turn away from compromise? Superficially, Korea tries to present an image that its dual name framework is a legitimate compromise. South Korea argues that the sea should not be designated by the name of a single country, which seems reasonable. According to Korea's National Geographic Information Institute, the ROK's official position is that "The Republic of Korea believes that naming such a sea area after a particular country's name is not justified and that the sea should have a neutral name. The name "East Sea," [is] neutral [in] character" **(Kim 2005).** In other words, Korea's preferred name "East Sea" is justified because it

is neutral. But if “East Sea” is preferred by Korea, then it can’t be a neutral name. If this is an attempt at peaceful compromise, it makes little sense.

If South Korea was sincerely seeking out a compromise, it would lobby for a name that neither they nor the Japanese were already sympathetic toward, something like “Pacific Sea” or “Sea of East Asia,” as Roh Moo-hyun did in the 90’s with his “Sea of Friendship” proposal. At the time of this writing, there have been no other such proposals; Roh Moo-hyun’s gesture seemed to have been a one-off event. There is no real attempt at compromise here, just an unrelenting campaign to demonize and delegitimize the name Sea of Japan while popularizing the name East Sea by framing it as an endeavor to rectify the injustices of Japanese colonialism.

5.3.3 Leadership

Has Korea taken leadership of the East Sea issue to move it in the direction of greater peace & stability? Once again, the answer here is a clear negative. Korea’s entire motivation for pressure on this issue is deeply tied to anti-Japanese nationalism and the nation’s desire to undo aspects of of Japanese colonialism that still lingers into the present.

The “East” in East Sea clearly refers to a Korea-centric geographical location. The same is true of Korea’s name for “West Sea” for the body of water off of its west coast, rather than the internationally accepted Chinese name Yellow Sea. Likewise, the body of water to the south is called the South Sea in Korean, though internationally it's simply the Korea Strait, and beyond that, the East China Sea.

Picture 6: *South Korea refers to its surrounding waters as the East Sea, South Sea, and West Sea.*[13]

South Korea drives hard to present its case for the East Sea in the international arena, but there is no similar campaign to promote use of the names West Sea or South Sea.

Moreover the Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency (KHOA) devotes entire sections of its website dedicated to both Dokdo and the East Sea, with extensive maps, documents and videos explaining why the body of water's true name is East Sea, not Sea of

[13] Source: *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan_naming_dispute#/media/File:South_Korea_map_-_en.png

Japan.[14] This is not moving the issue toward greater peace and stability, on the contrary, it provocative behavior that could invite a strong reaction from the Japanese side, or at the very least is not terribly likely to motivate the Japanese to consider cooperating.

It is also important to notice that the map on KHOA's English website even uses the name Yellow Sea rather than West Sea. In short, South Korea pays no mind to the West Sea, but lobbies hard for the East Sea. This is telling because it suggests that foreign policy here is strongly driven more by anti-Japanese nationalism than by the peaceful compromise associated with middlepowerism. A foreign policy driven by nationalistic concerns in this way is simply not reflective of a nation willing to take leadership to solve a bilateral historical conflict such as this one.

[14] The Agency's East Sea webpage is available here: http://www.khoa.go.kr/eng/kcom/cnt/selectContentsPage.do?cntId=eastsea_submain

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Research Findings

The comfort women, Dokdo Island and East Sea all have an extremely important symbolic meaning for Korean national identity. South Korean domestic and political conditions slowly changed as a result of democratization in 1987, and this in turn gave rise to a plethora of new civil society, governmental and non-governmental groups dedicated to these issues. For this reason, these three issues have emerged as critical diplomatic points of contention between Korea and Japan following the ROK's democratization.

Since the 1990s, the comfort women, Dokdo and the East Sea have typically reemerged as bilateral conflicts between Korea and Japan whenever the question of Japan's past actions has been raised in response to comments made by Japanese officials, or due to the approval by Japan's Ministry of Education of textbooks with content unappealing to Koreans. Moreover, politicians have frequently relied on anti-Japanese sentiments for various political purposes, for example when their domestic popularity was low.

Also beginning in the 1990s, the idea of middlepowerism began to enter into the political culture of South Korea, and in the subsequent decades, Korean scholars and officials have consistently proclaimed their country and its foreign policy to be based on the theory of middle power. Academic observers of the nation's alleged middlepowerism, whether supportive or critical, have mostly analyzed the county by looking at its policies and actions at the global level, without paying sufficient attention to Korea's problematic bilateral relationship with Japan.

.According to Chapnick **(1999)**, approaches to analyzing middle powers can be organized into three broad categories: functional, positional and behavioral. The behavioral perspective

holds that middle powers' foreign policies are defined by their commitment to multilateralism, to compromise and to conflict resolution. Middle powers tend to bring problems for multilateral arbitration to project an image of good international citizenship, tend to seek compromise in international disputes, and tend to exercise leadership on major issues to prevent conflict and promote stability. However, the prevailing assumption throughout the literature is that middle powers are not among the disputants in international conflicts.

For this research, the behavioral perspective was applied to three different examples of ROK-Japan disputes as a way of testing middle power foreign policy when the middle power is itself one of the disputants. The three bilateral disputes were regarding the comfort women, sovereignty over Dokdo Island and the naming of the East Sea/Sea of Japan. In an attempt to evaluate Korea's middlepowerness in bilateral disputes with Japan, this thesis sought to answer three questions:

1. MULTILATERALISM: When it comes to Korea's historical and territorial disputes with Japan, do they favor bilateral or multilateral solutions?
2. COMPROMISE: When there's a chance to make a deal in each of their disputes with Japan, does Korea offer to negotiate, or show willingness to accept negotiations from the Japanese side? Or do they shun compromise when the opportunities arise?
3. LEADERSHIP: In each of the three disputes, does Korea take initiative to move the conflicts in the direction of peace & stability, or do they tend to take provocative actions that aggravate the problems even further?

Comfort Women

Although multiple Korean administrations have tried to exercise leadership in an effort to work toward resolving the comfort women conflict, their ability to maintain this posture is limited by powerful and sometimes violent domestic opposition. And although they seem willing to negotiate, all negotiations with Japan have been bilateral rather than multilateral. Finally, Park Geun-hye's formulation of an agreement with Japan in secret, and Seoul's general predisposition to downplay the issue, hint at Korean leaders' desire to compromise. So on the comfort women issue, Korea confidently passed only 1 (compromise) out of the 3 key criteria of middlepowermanship.

Dokdo

Unlike with the comfort women issue, which is primarily led from the bottom up through civil society, action on the Dokdo issue has been taken up by the state as much as it has been by citizen activism. When the Korean government has pressured Japan, it has come about by domestic pressure on the national government to take action, as well as independent action of the state without any citizen pressure. In many cases the state and society have reinforced one another.

To summarize, Korea has repeatedly turned down opportunities to solve the Dokdo problem multilaterally at the ICJ, its domestic politics reward leaders for shunning compromise, and indulging in hardline rhetoric as a way to boost popularity amid scandals has been a popular approach by many of Korea's former Presidents. Altogether, this prevents Korea from exercising leadership to enhance peace and regional stability. So on the Dokdo dispute, Korea failed to perform in all three of the key areas of middlepowermanship.

East Sea

Korea has engaged in decades of work with multilateral organizations to try and settle the issue, though ultimately decided to bypass these groups in order to achieve its goal of dual name usage for the Sea. This has proven to be more effective tactic for them. Moreover, Korea asserts that since "East Sea" doesn't name any specific country, its a neutral name and considers that a compromise. But since East Sea also happens to be the name that the ROK prefers, this can't actually be considered a compromise position.[15]

Finally, the ROK's apparent disinterest in promoting the term West Sea or South Sea suggests that nationalism plays a major role in their East Sea agenda; drawing on anti-Japanese nationalism is not an effective way to gain cooperation from Japan, and thus isn't in line with middle power foreign policy because does the exact opposite of encouraging conflict resolution. So on the East Sea issue, Korea partially passes only 1 (multilateralism) and fails on 2 (compromise and leadership) of the key criteria of middlepowermanship.

Below is a summary of the results of this study. In the category of multilateralism, Korea passes in only one case - East Sea. In the category of compromise, Korea again passes in only one case - the comfort women. In its willingness and ability to exercise leadership toward peace and stability, Korea fails in all three test cases. Failures are marked with an "X" and successes are marked with an"O."

	Comfort Women	Dokdo	East Sea
Multilateralism	X	X	O
Compromise	O	X	X

[15] Except for the single case of Roh Myu-hun's "Sea of Friendship" offer.

Leadership	X	X	X

Table 1: *Results of the analysis of ROK's behaviors in three bilateral disputes with Japan.*

6.2 Theoretical Reflection

Based on the results of this study, there are several conclusions that can be drawn about the middle power theory generally, and more specifically as it relates to South Korea's situation.

First, about Korea more specifically, it is well established that Seoul is both willing and able to act on its self-proclaimed middle-power status at the global level. In just a few brief examples, Korea has undertaken initiatives to achieve and promote the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and Millennium Development Goals, spearheaded MIKTA, and has funded and established multiple organizations dedicated to promoting democracy, human rights denuclearization, anti-terrorism, foreign aid and international peace. Korea's participation in these middle power endeavors, as well as the global recognition that it achieves for doing so, are all great sources of pride for Korean people **(Green 2017: 20, 28; Hermanns 2013: 74-76; Robertson 2016: 127-136)** the national government is focused on promoting itself as a middle power at the global level and has the enthusiastic support of its people behind them.

But at the bilateral level in its territorial disputes with Japan, Korea is severely constrained by frequent inability, and many times an unwillingness, to apply the theory to its foreign policy. The three most important limiting factors, as discussed in the previous section and throughout this thesis, are (1) fervent Korean nationalism that is rooted in anti-Japanese attitudes; (2) the ROK's decision to incorporate ROK-Japan bilateral disputes into national symbols of resistance against colonial oppression, thereby reinforcing anti-Japanese sentiment as

a central aspect of Korean national identity; as well as (3) Japan 'bashing,' which has become a politically rewarding strategy for Korea's leaders. All three of these factors reinforce one another, ultimately inhibiting leaders from adopting middle power values to resolve conflicts with the Japanese.

This puts South Korea in an awkward position of confidently declaring itself a middle power but frequently stepping back in the face of compromise and cooperation to solve territorial and historical disputes with Japan, either through the force of domestic opposition, or simple reluctance to do so at the state level. This is not consistent with a nation willing and able to follow a middle power foreign policy to solve bilateral problems.

Secondly, this research has important implications for the understanding of middle power theory more broadly. As the case study of Korea has shown, middle powers excel in following a virtuous foreign policy agenda in areas where it is relatively easier to do so, such as in promoting peace, cooperation and conflict resolution at the global level. In these sorts of cases, middle powers are usually not themselves involved disputes, so it is not difficult for them to uphold the image of being good international citizens.

However, in areas where it is relatively more challenging to adhere to middle power ideals, like when a middle power is itself a participant in an international conflict - as in the example of ROK-Japan disputes - in this case it can be much harder to maintain their commitment to middle power values. As a result, also becomes much harder for them to sustain their image as good international citizens. The behavior of two classical middle powers -- Canada and Denmark -- in handling a similar territorial dispute provides additional corroboration for this idea.

For the past three decades, Canada and Denmark have been contesting each other's sovereignty over a barren, uninhabited rock known as Hans Island. The problem is that the island is technically located within both Danish and Canadian waters, since it lies within 12 miles of legally claimable territory between Canada and Greenland[16]. Denmark's Minister of Greenland Affairs visited the island in 1984 to plant the Danish flag along with a bottle of whisky and a note reading "Welcome to the Danish Island." Since then, according to Peter Takso Jensen, former Danish Ambassador to the US, "when Danish military go there, they leave a bottle of Schnapps. And when [Canadian] military forces come there, they leave a bottle of Canadian Club and a sign saying, 'Welcome to Canada' **(Bender 2016)**. Although the two countries signed a joint statement in 2005 committing to continued negotiations and promising to inform one another in advance of any planned activities related to the island **(Mackrael 2012)**, as of March 2017 the sovereignty dispute is yet to be resolved. Relations remain good despite the fact that "every now and then it crops up as an issue between the two parties, [but] they just simply try to put aside because [neither] side is interested in dealing with it" **(Mackrael 2012).**

It is apparent that Hans Island is not a flashpoint the way Dokdo is for Korea and Japan. Nevertheless, Canada and Denmark are two classical middle powers who have tethered their national identities and foreign policies for more than 50 years to the idea of conflict resolution, compromise and multlilateralism, and yet they have succeeded no more than Korea has in resolving its own historical and territorial conflicts with Japan.

The middle power theory indicates that certain nations who strive to uphold an image of good international citizenship will tend to rely on multilateralism, compromise and peacebuilding to resolve international problems. Scholars have arrived at this description based

[16] Greenland is an autonomous territory of Denmark.

on observing middle powers' response to conflicts at the global level. However, the literature has not looked closely enough at middle powers' behavior at bilateral conflicts. This is important because, as this thesis demonstrates, there is new perspective to be gained when analyzing alleged middle powers' response to bilateral conflicts in which they are personally involved. In this situation, middle powers struggle to settle the disputes and it is much more difficult for them to uphold their images as responsible international citizens. This insight must be added to the current literature in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the nature of middle powers' foreign policies.

6.3 Future Studies

The literature on middle power in the specific context of Korea can be improved by beginning to consider the country's bilateral conflicts with Japan in future analysis. This is especially true of scholars seeking to critique South Korea's middle power status, but it is also a factor that proponents might take into account too. Meanwhile, future discussions of middle power theory should consider adding more comparative studies by beginning to look more closely at bilateral disputes among and between middle powers. There are ample case studies to draw from in this regard.

The Turbot War, which lasted from 1994 to 1996, was an international fishing dispute between two middle powers, namely Canada and Spain. The problem centered around Canada's assertion that Spanish ships were illegally overfishing Greenland halibut, also known as Greenland turbot, just outside Canada's declared exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Acting on these claims, Canada provocatively stopped a Spanish fishing trawler international waters and

then arrested its crew. Other confrontations and inflammatory exchanges were made by both sides, until the EU on the side of Spain finally buckled under Canadian pressure. [17]

Another still ongoing dispute involving a middle power is the territorial conflict over the South China Sea between Indonesia and China. Using its so called "9-Dashed Line," Beijing has claimed most of the South China Sea as its own territory, including a waterway located within Indonesia's EEZ. Indonesia is challenging China for control over this Natuna Waterway, which is abundant in natural resources, particularly oil, natural gas and fish. Indonesia has responded to Chinese claims with military buildup in its nearby Natuna Islands, the deployment of naval warships, and publically released new maps that have officially renamed the waters around the waterway with a more distinctly Indonesian name. At the time of this writing, Indonesia is continuing to take an aggressive posture in the region to defend its territorial claims against China.[18]

Further study by scholars of these kinds of situations will add additional clarity about how middle powers tend to handle disputes in which they are among the disputants, and how that contrasts with their handling of disputes in which they are not personally involved.

[17] For further reading see Barry, Donald. Fishing for a Solution: Canada's Fisheries Relations with the European Union, 1977-2013. University of Calgary Press. 2014.
[18] For further reading, see Cochrane, Joe. Indonesia, Long on Sidelines, Starts to Confront China's Territorial Claims. The New York Times. September 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/10/world/asia/indonesia-south-china-sea-military-buildup.html

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