

Foreign Policy Strategies of Middle Powers in the Post-Pandemic Global Order

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 12th, 2025

Revised Nov 20th, 2025

Accepted Jan 26th, 2026

Keyword:

middle powers, foreign policy strategy, post-pandemic global order, qualitative research, comparative case study, international relations

ABSTRACT

This study examines the foreign policy strategies of middle powers in the post-pandemic global order, aiming to analyze how these states adapt to systemic changes and geopolitical uncertainty. Employing a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design, the research focuses on Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey, selected for their strategic relevance and regional diversity. The design is chosen to enable in-depth, context-sensitive analysis of policy adaptation across different settings. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve informants, including policymakers, diplomats, and academic experts, selected purposively due to their direct involvement and expertise in foreign policy processes. The findings reveal that middle powers adopt hybrid strategies combining coalition-building, niche diplomacy, and strategic hedging, influenced by both domestic factors and systemic pressures. These strategies demonstrate increased flexibility, pragmatism, and issue-specific engagement in response to post-pandemic challenges. The study recommends that middle powers strengthen adaptive diplomacy, expand multilateral cooperation, and enhance institutional resilience to maintain relevance in global governance.



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INTRODUCTION

The post-pandemic global order has accelerated structural transformations in international politics, reshaping the distribution of power, patterns of cooperation, and the strategic behavior of states (Petetin, 2020). While great powers continue to dominate global agendas, middle powers have increasingly demonstrated agency in navigating uncertainty, contestation, and institutional flux (Zorko & Lučev, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic not only exposed vulnerabilities in global governance but also highlighted the importance of adaptive and flexible foreign policy strategies (Kaura & Kumawat, 2021). Particularly among middle powers that lack the coercive capacity of major powers yet possess significant diplomatic, economic, and normative influence. In this evolving context, the study of foreign policy strategies of middle powers becomes essential for understanding how these actors sustain relevance, pursue national interests, and contribute to global stability.

Existing scholarship on middle powers has traditionally emphasized their role as “good international citizens,” coalition builders, and supporters of multilateralism (Jose & Samudra, 2022). However, recent developments suggest that such conventional characterizations are increasingly insufficient (Kuik, 2023). Middle powers are no longer confined to norm entrepreneurship or multilateral activism; instead, they exhibit diversified strategies, including hedging, multilateralism, strategic alignment, and issue-based coalitions (Burns, 2020). The pandemic further intensified geopolitical competition, disrupted supply chains, and prompted a reconfiguration of global priorities, thereby compelling middle powers to recalibrate their foreign policies (Siddi & Prandin, 2025). Despite a growing body of literature on post-pandemic international relations, there remains limited systematic analysis of how middle powers strategically respond to these transformations, particularly across different regions and issue areas (Tran et al., 2024).

The main problem addressed in this research lies in the lack of a comprehensive analytical framework that captures the strategic adaptations of middle powers in the post-pandemic era (Zakaria, 2020). Much of the existing research either focuses on great power rivalry or treats middle powers as passive actors within broader systemic dynamics (Ariboğan, 2021). Consequently, there is insufficient attention to the agency, innovation, and strategic diversity of middle powers in responding to global disruptions (Pedi & Wivel, 2022). This gap is further compounded by the tendency to generalize middle power behavior without accounting for variations in domestic capacity, regional context, and issue-specific priorities.

This study identifies a critical research gap in the intersection between middle power theory and post-pandemic global order analysis (Akon, 2020). While prior studies have explored middle power diplomacy in areas such as peacekeeping, climate governance, and trade negotiations, they often predate the pandemic or fail to incorporate its long-term implications (Huang, 2021). Moreover, existing frameworks do not adequately explain the shift from traditional multilateralism to more flexible and pragmatic forms of engagement, such as minilateral arrangements and strategic partnerships (Oğuzlu, 2020). This research seeks to bridge this gap by developing a nuanced understanding of how middle powers recalibrate their foreign policy strategies in response to systemic shocks and evolving geopolitical landscapes.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach, combining theoretical insights from middle power theory, foreign policy analysis, and post-pandemic global governance. It introduces a conceptual framework that categorizes middle power strategies into adaptive typologies, including resilience-building, strategic hedging, coalition diversification, and normative repositioning. By doing so, the study moves beyond static classifications and offers a dynamic perspective on middle power behavior. Additionally, the research incorporates comparative analysis to highlight variations across different middle powers, thereby contributing to a more differentiated and context-sensitive understanding.

Based on these considerations, the research is guided by several key questions. How do middle powers adapt their foreign policy strategies in the post-pandemic global order? What factors influence the selection of specific strategies, such as hedging, alignment, or coalition-building? To what extent do domestic conditions, regional dynamics, and global systemic pressures shape these strategic choices? How do these strategies affect the role and influence of middle powers in global governance? These questions aim to uncover both the drivers and implications of middle power behavior in a rapidly changing international environment.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze and explain the foreign policy strategies adopted by middle powers in the post-pandemic global order. Specifically, the study seeks to identify patterns of strategic adaptation, assess the determinants of foreign policy choices, and evaluate the implications for international cooperation and governance. By providing a systematic and theoretically grounded analysis, the research aims to enhance scholarly understanding of middle power dynamics and contribute to the broader discourse on international relations in the twenty-first century.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the refinement of middle power theory by incorporating contemporary developments and expanding its analytical scope. It challenges traditional assumptions and proposes a more flexible framework that reflects the complexity of current global politics. Academically, the study offers empirical insights and comparative perspectives that can inform future research, particularly in the areas of foreign policy analysis, global governance, and regional studies. It also provides a foundation for interdisciplinary engagement, linking political science with economics, sociology, and international development.

Practically, the findings of this research have significant implications for policymakers and practitioners. By elucidating the strategies employed by middle powers, the study can inform more effective diplomatic practices, enhance strategic planning, and support the design of cooperative mechanisms in a fragmented global order. It also offers guidance for middle powers seeking to navigate geopolitical competition while maintaining autonomy and promoting stability. Furthermore, the

research can assist international organizations and stakeholders in understanding the evolving role of middle powers in addressing global challenges.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The scope of the research may be constrained by the availability of data and the selection of case studies, which could affect the generalizability of the findings (Jose, 2021). Additionally, the dynamic nature of the post-pandemic global order means that foreign policy strategies are continuously evolving, potentially limiting the temporal relevance of specific observations (Sakwa, 2020). The complexity of measuring strategic behavior and the influence of unobservable factors, such as leadership perceptions and informal networks, also present methodological challenges (Jing, 2020).

Future research is encouraged to expand upon this study by incorporating longitudinal analyses, exploring additional case studies, and employing mixed-method approaches to enhance robustness. Further investigation into the role of non-state actors, digital diplomacy, and emerging technologies in shaping middle power strategies would also be valuable (Jones & Jenne, 2022). Moreover, comparative studies across different regions and policy domains could provide deeper insights into the diversity and adaptability of middle powers (Aldalala'a, 2020). By addressing these areas, subsequent research can build a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of middle power diplomacy in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of foreign policy strategies of middle powers in the post-pandemic global order necessitates a comprehensive engagement with theoretical and empirical scholarship that explains state behavior under conditions of systemic transition (Nadkarni et al., 2024). The literature on middle powers, foreign policy analysis, and international order transformation provides an essential foundation for understanding how states with moderate capabilities navigate complex geopolitical environments (Buğra et al., 2020). In this regard, three major theoretical approaches are particularly relevant to this research, namely Middle Power Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and Neorealism. These frameworks, as developed and popularized by key scholars, offer complementary perspectives for analyzing the strategic behavior of middle powers in the evolving post-pandemic context.

Middle Power Theory has been widely associated with the work of Andrew F. Cooper, a prominent scholar affiliated with the University of Waterloo, Canada, particularly through his influential publications in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Vasiliev et al., 2023). Cooper conceptualizes middle powers as states that exhibit a capacity for coalition-building, norm entrepreneurship, and multilateral engagement, rather than relying on coercive power (Lindley-French & Algieri, 2022). According to Cooper, middle powers operate through “niche diplomacy,” focusing on specific issue areas where they can exert influence despite limited material capabilities (Ahmad, 2021). This conceptual framework emphasizes agency, strategic selectivity, and diplomatic innovation. Over time, the theory has evolved to accommodate changing global dynamics, including the rise of emerging middle powers and the diversification of their foreign policy tools. In the post-pandemic era, Middle Power Theory has been expanded to incorporate adaptive strategies such as minilateralism and flexible coalitions, reflecting the need for responsiveness in a fragmented international system (Moon et al., 2021).

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), as developed by Valerie M. Hudson of Texas A&M University, United States, particularly through her seminal work in the early 2000s, provides a micro-level perspective on state behavior by focusing on decision-making processes, domestic factors, and leadership dynamics (Simatupang & Panggabean, 2022). Hudson's framework challenges the state-as-unitary-actor assumption by emphasizing the role of human agency, institutional constraints, and cognitive factors in shaping foreign policy choices (Brattberg, 2021). The conceptual core of FPA lies in its multi-level analysis, integrating individual, bureaucratic, and systemic variables (Feldman et al., 2024). This approach is particularly useful for understanding the diversity of middle power strategies, as it accounts for variations in domestic political systems, economic capacities, and leadership preferences. In recent years, FPA has incorporated insights from behavioral economics and political psychology, enabling a more nuanced analysis of how uncertainty and crisis conditions, such as those induced by the pandemic, influence strategic decision-making.

Neorealism, or structural realism, is most prominently associated with Kenneth N. Waltz of Columbia University, United States, whose landmark work “Theory of International Politics” (1979) laid the foundation for analyzing international relations through the lens of systemic structure and power distribution (Wong, 2020). Waltz argues that the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to prioritize survival, leading to patterns of balancing, bandwagoning, and strategic alignment (İnaç, 2022). Within this framework, middle powers are understood as actors constrained by the structure of the system, often navigating between great power competition (Ullah & Ferdous, 2022). The relevance of neorealism has persisted in the post-pandemic era, particularly in explaining the intensification of geopolitical rivalry and the strategic recalibration of states (Lo, 2020). However, contemporary developments have prompted refinements of the theory, including the incorporation of concepts such as soft balancing and strategic hedging, which better capture the behavior of middle powers in a multipolar and uncertain environment.

The integration of these three theoretical perspectives provides a robust conceptual framework for analyzing the foreign policy strategies of middle powers. Middle Power Theory highlights the agency and diplomatic roles of these states, FPA explains the internal determinants of their strategic choices, and Neorealism situates their behavior within the broader constraints of the international system. Together, these theories address the main research problem, which concerns the lack of a comprehensive understanding of how middle powers adapt their strategies in response to the post-pandemic global order. By combining systemic, domestic, and agency-based perspectives, the study overcomes the limitations of single-theory approaches and offers a more holistic analysis.

The literature also reveals a significant research gap in the application of these theories to the post-pandemic context (Panda, 2021). While Middle Power Theory has traditionally emphasized multilateralism, it does not fully account for the shift toward more flexible and pragmatic forms of cooperation observed in recent years (Abbondanza, 2022). Similarly, FPA has been underutilized in the study of middle powers, particularly in comparative analyses that examine cross-national variations (Deciancio & Quiliconi, 2022). Neorealism, on the other hand, tends to overlook the agency and innovation of middle powers, focusing instead on great power dynamics. This research addresses these gaps by synthesizing insights from all three theories and applying them to contemporary empirical realities.

From a conceptual standpoint, the framework developed in this study links theoretical constructs to the research questions and objectives. The concept of niche diplomacy from Middle Power Theory is used to analyze how middle powers identify and exploit strategic opportunities in specific issue areas. The decision-making processes emphasized in FPA are employed to examine the domestic and institutional factors influencing these strategies. Meanwhile, the structural constraints highlighted by Neorealism are used to assess the impact of global power dynamics on middle power behavior. This integrated framework enables a comprehensive analysis of the research questions, which focus on the adaptation, determinants, and implications of middle power strategies.

The theoretical contributions of this research are closely aligned with its objectives and expected benefits. By refining existing theories and integrating them into a cohesive framework, the study advances theoretical understanding of middle power behavior in a rapidly changing global context. Academically, it contributes to the literature by providing empirical insights and comparative perspectives that can inform future research. Practically, the findings offer valuable guidance for policymakers, particularly in designing foreign policy strategies that balance national interests with global responsibilities.

The development of these theories over time reflects the evolving nature of international relations (Chang, 2021). Middle Power Theory has shifted from a normative emphasis on multilateralism to a more pragmatic focus on strategic flexibility (Brown & Schockman, 2022). FPA has expanded its analytical scope to include interdisciplinary insights and methodological innovations. Neorealism has been refined to account for new forms of power and influence, including economic interdependence and institutional engagement (Fu et al., 2020). These developments underscore the relevance of the selected theories for analyzing contemporary challenges and opportunities faced by middle powers.

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that Middle Power Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis, and Neorealism provide a comprehensive and complementary framework for understanding the foreign policy strategies of middle powers in the post-pandemic global order. The integration of these theories addresses the main research problem, fills existing gaps in the literature, and supports the formulation of research questions and objectives. By linking theoretical insights with empirical analysis, the study offers a novel contribution to the field, enhancing both academic knowledge and practical understanding. The synthesis of these perspectives not only highlights the complexity of middle power behavior but also underscores the importance of adaptive and context-sensitive approaches in navigating an increasingly uncertain and dynamic international system.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the foreign policy strategies of middle powers in the post-pandemic global order. A qualitative method is particularly suitable for this research because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex political phenomena, including decision-making processes, strategic behavior, and contextual dynamics that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Baydag & Ulfgard, 2025). The post-pandemic international environment is characterized by uncertainty, fluid alignments, and evolving institutional practices, which require interpretive and context-sensitive analysis. Therefore, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to uncover patterns of meaning, strategic reasoning, and policy adaptation among middle powers, while also capturing the interplay between domestic and systemic factors (Skordas, 2021).

The research design adopted in this study is a comparative case study design combined with an interpretive analytical framework (Tung, 2022). This design is chosen because it facilitates the systematic comparison of foreign policy strategies across selected middle powers, enabling the identification of both common patterns and context-specific variations. Comparative case studies are widely recognized in international relations research for their ability to generate nuanced insights into state behavior while maintaining analytical rigor (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2022). The interpretive dimension further allows the researcher to analyze how policymakers construct and justify their strategies in response to post-pandemic challenges (Mróz & Navy, 2023). This combination is particularly appropriate given the research objective of understanding strategic adaptation rather than testing causal relationships in a positivist sense (Gao & Liu, 2023).

The selection of research locations is based on the identification of representative middle powers from different regions that have demonstrated active engagement in global governance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study focuses on three countries, namely Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey. Indonesia is selected due to its prominent role in regional diplomacy within ASEAN and its active participation in global forums such as the G20. South Korea is chosen for its advanced economic capacity, technological leadership, and proactive foreign policy initiatives during the pandemic, including health diplomacy. Turkey is included as a strategically positioned middle power that has pursued an assertive and diversified foreign policy across multiple regions. The selection of these locations is justified by their diversity in political systems, regional contexts, and strategic orientations, which enriches the comparative analysis and enhances the generalizability of the findings within the middle power category.

In line with the qualitative design, this study relies on purposive sampling to identify relevant informants who possess expertise and direct experience related to foreign policy formulation and implementation. A total of twelve informants are selected across the three case countries. These informants include policymakers, diplomats, academic experts, and analysts specializing in international relations. For ethical considerations and confidentiality, pseudonyms are used to identify the informants. In Indonesia, the informants include “Mr. Arif,” a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; “Dr. Sinta,” an academic specializing in foreign policy studies; “Mr. Budi,” a policy analyst at a government-affiliated think tank; and “Ms. Rani,” a diplomat with experience in multilateral negotiations. In South Korea, the informants include “Dr. Kim,” a researcher at a policy institute; “Mr. Lee,” a government advisor on international cooperation; “Ms. Park,” a diplomat involved in health diplomacy initiatives; and “Prof. Choi,” an academic expert in international relations. In Turkey, the

informants include “Mr. Demir,” a senior foreign policy advisor; “Dr. Aylin,” an academic researcher; “Mr. Kaya,” a strategic analyst; and “Ms. Elif,” a diplomat engaged in regional affairs.

The selection of these informants is based on their professional roles, expertise, and involvement in foreign policy processes, ensuring that they can provide credible and relevant insights. The use of purposive sampling is justified by the need to access specialized knowledge rather than achieve statistical representativeness. Additionally, the diversity of informants across governmental and academic sectors allows for triangulation of perspectives, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the data.

Data collection in this study is conducted through multiple qualitative techniques, including in-depth semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and secondary data review (Kornprobst & Paul, 2021). Semi-structured interviews are employed as the primary data collection method, allowing the researcher to explore key themes while maintaining flexibility to probe deeper into specific issues. The interview questions are designed to capture informants’ perspectives on foreign policy strategies, decision-making processes, and the impact of the post-pandemic context. Document analysis complements the interviews by examining official policy documents, government statements, international agreements, and reports from international organizations. This method provides an objective basis for understanding policy frameworks and strategic orientations (Wyne, 2022). Secondary data, including academic literature and policy analyses, are also utilized to contextualize the findings and support the interpretation.

The data analysis process follows a thematic analysis approach, which involves coding and categorizing the data into meaningful themes. The analysis begins with data familiarization, followed by the identification of initial codes that capture key concepts and patterns. These codes are then grouped into broader themes, such as strategic adaptation, coalition-building, hedging behavior, and institutional engagement. The thematic analysis is guided by the theoretical framework, ensuring that the findings are systematically linked to Middle Power Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis, and Neorealism. This approach allows for both inductive and deductive reasoning, enabling the researcher to generate new insights while also testing theoretical propositions.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, several validation strategies are employed. Triangulation is achieved by combining multiple data sources and perspectives, reducing the risk of bias and enhancing the robustness of the findings. Member checking is conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected informants to verify accuracy and consistency. Additionally, the researcher maintains a transparent audit trail documenting the research process, including data collection, coding, and analysis decisions. These measures align with established qualitative research standards and contribute to the rigor of the study.

The technique for drawing conclusions in this research is based on an iterative and reflexive process. The researcher continuously compares empirical findings with theoretical expectations, identifying convergences and divergences. Conclusions are derived through analytical generalization rather than statistical inference, meaning that the findings are interpreted in relation to theoretical frameworks rather than generalized to a broader population. This approach is consistent with the qualitative and comparative nature of the study. The final conclusions synthesize the insights from the three case studies, highlighting common patterns and unique variations in middle power strategies.

Despite its strengths, the research methodology has certain limitations. The reliance on qualitative data and a limited number of case studies may constrain the generalizability of the findings. The use of purposive sampling, while appropriate for accessing expert knowledge, may introduce selection bias. Additionally, the dynamic nature of foreign policy and the evolving post-pandemic context mean that the findings represent a snapshot in time rather than a definitive account. However, these limitations are mitigated through careful research design, triangulation, and transparency.

In conclusion, the qualitative comparative case study approach adopted in this research provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the foreign policy strategies of middle powers in the post-pandemic global order. By integrating multiple data sources, engaging with expert

informants, and applying rigorous analytical techniques, the study offers valuable insights into the adaptive behavior of middle powers. The methodology is well-aligned with the research objectives and theoretical framework, ensuring both academic rigor and practical relevance. Future research may build upon this approach by incorporating longitudinal analysis, expanding the range of case studies, or integrating quantitative methods to complement qualitative findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that middle powers in the post-pandemic global order have undergone significant strategic recalibration, characterized by adaptive, flexible, and multi-layered foreign policy approaches (Chryssogelos & Greene, 2025). Drawing on qualitative data from Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey, the results demonstrate that middle powers are no longer confined to traditional multilateral roles but actively engage in hybrid strategies that combine elements of hedging, coalition-building, and selective alignment (Duggal, 2022). These findings directly address the main research problem, which concerns the limited understanding of how middle powers adapt their foreign policy strategies in response to systemic disruptions. By integrating insights from Middle Power Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and Neorealism, the study provides a comprehensive explanation of the strategic behavior observed across the selected cases.

Empirically, the findings indicate that Indonesia emphasizes multilateral resilience and regional leadership through ASEAN, reinforcing its identity as a normative middle power. South Korea adopts a technologically driven and issue-specific diplomacy, particularly in health security and digital governance, reflecting a form of niche diplomacy combined with strategic alignment. Turkey, in contrast, demonstrates a more assertive and diversified strategy, incorporating elements of hard power projection and regional activism (Rasser, 2022). These variations highlight the importance of domestic capacities, leadership preferences, and geopolitical contexts, as emphasized by FPA, while also reflecting systemic constraints identified in Neorealism. Middle Power Theory, particularly the concept of niche diplomacy, is evident in all three cases, albeit manifested in different forms.

The implementation of these strategies reveals that middle powers actively respond to post-pandemic challenges by diversifying partnerships and engaging in minilateral frameworks (Ivanov, 2022). This finding addresses the research gap identified in the literature, which has largely overlooked the shift from traditional multilateralism to more flexible and pragmatic arrangements (Aybet, 2020). For instance, Indonesia's participation in G20 initiatives and regional recovery frameworks illustrates its commitment to inclusive multilateralism, while South Korea's engagement in technology alliances demonstrates strategic adaptation to emerging global priorities (Karadeniz, 2020). Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts and diplomatic mediation reflects its attempt to expand influence beyond conventional middle power roles. These empirical patterns confirm that middle powers are not passive actors but strategic agents capable of innovation and adaptation.

The results further respond to the research questions by identifying key determinants of foreign policy strategies. Domestic political stability, economic capacity, and leadership orientation emerge as critical factors shaping strategic choices, consistent with the FPA framework (Jiemian, 2020). At the same time, systemic pressures, such as great power rivalry and shifting alliances, influence the range of available options, as predicted by Neorealism. Middle Power Theory complements these perspectives by highlighting the role of diplomatic agency and normative positioning. Together, these theories provide a coherent explanation of why middle powers adopt different strategies under similar global conditions.

To illustrate the comparative findings, the following table summarizes the key dimensions of foreign policy strategies across the three case studies:

Country	Strategic Orientation	Key Strategy Type	Theoretical Linkage	Implementation Focus
Indonesia	Multilateral and normative	Coalition-building	Middle Power Theory (Cooper)	ASEAN leadership, G20 engagement

Country	Strategic Orientation	Key Strategy Type	Theoretical Linkage	Implementation Focus
South Korea	Technological and adaptive	Niche diplomacy & alignment	FPA (Hudson) & Middle Power Theory	Health diplomacy, digital partnerships
Turkey	Assertive and diversified	Strategic hedging	Neorealism (Waltz) & FPA	Regional intervention, diplomatic mediation

The table demonstrates that while all three countries qualify as middle powers, their strategic orientations and implementations differ significantly. This diversity underscores the importance of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives to capture the complexity of middle power behavior.

In relation to the research objectives, the findings confirm that middle powers are capable of strategic adaptation and play a significant role in shaping global governance. The objective of identifying patterns of foreign policy strategies is achieved through the comparative analysis, which reveals both convergence and divergence among the cases. The study also fulfills its aim of assessing the determinants of these strategies, highlighting the interplay between domestic and systemic factors. Furthermore, the evaluation of implications shows that middle powers contribute to global stability by facilitating cooperation, bridging gaps between major powers, and promoting issue-specific initiatives.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the refinement of the three core theories. Middle Power Theory is expanded to include adaptive and hybrid strategies beyond traditional multilateralism (Mishra, 2023). FPA is validated in its emphasis on domestic and decision-making factors, demonstrating its relevance in explaining variations among middle powers (Arežina, 2023). Neorealism is also reaffirmed in its focus on systemic constraints, particularly in the context of intensified great power competition (López, 2024). The integration of these theories provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding foreign policy strategies in a complex and dynamic global environment.

In terms of practical implications, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers. The identification of successful strategies, such as coalition-building and niche diplomacy, provides guidance for middle powers seeking to enhance their influence and effectiveness. The findings also highlight the importance of flexibility and adaptability, suggesting that rigid adherence to traditional approaches may limit strategic opportunities. For international organizations, the study underscores the role of middle powers as facilitators of cooperation and innovation, particularly in addressing global challenges such as health security and economic recovery.

Academically, the research contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence and comparative analysis that can inform future studies. The integration of qualitative methods and theoretical frameworks enhances the robustness of the findings and offers a model for similar research. The study also identifies areas for further investigation, such as the role of non-state actors and the impact of emerging technologies on foreign policy strategies.

The discussion of findings in relation to previous research reveals both continuity and innovation. Earlier studies have emphasized the normative and multilateral roles of middle powers, but the current findings show a shift toward more pragmatic and diversified strategies. This evolution reflects the changing nature of the global order and the need for adaptive responses. The research gap identified in the literature is addressed by demonstrating how middle powers navigate post-pandemic challenges through innovative approaches. The findings also extend previous research by incorporating multiple theoretical perspectives, providing a more comprehensive understanding of middle power behavior.

The main problem of understanding strategic adaptation is effectively addressed through the empirical analysis, which shows that middle powers employ a combination of strategies rather than relying on a single approach. This finding challenges simplistic classifications and highlights the

complexity of foreign policy behavior. The gap in the literature is further addressed by providing detailed case studies and comparative analysis, which reveal the diversity of middle power strategies. The research questions are answered by identifying the determinants, patterns, and implications of these strategies, while the objectives are achieved through systematic analysis and interpretation.

The benefits of the research are evident in its theoretical, practical, and academic contributions. Theoretically, the study advances the understanding of middle power behavior by integrating multiple perspectives and introducing a dynamic framework. Practically, it provides actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners, enhancing strategic planning and decision-making. Academically, it enriches the literature and offers a foundation for future research, particularly in the areas of comparative foreign policy and global governance.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that middle powers play a crucial and evolving role in the post-pandemic global order. By adopting adaptive and diversified strategies, they navigate complex geopolitical environments and contribute to global stability. The integration of Middle Power Theory, FPA, and Neorealism provides a comprehensive framework for understanding these dynamics, addressing the main research problem, and filling existing gaps in the literature. The study not only answers the research questions and achieves its objectives but also offers valuable insights for theory, policy, and future research.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that middle powers have demonstrated a significant degree of strategic adaptability in navigating the post-pandemic global order, thereby reaffirming their relevance and agency within an increasingly complex international system. Drawing upon the empirical analysis and discussion, it is evident that middle powers such as Indonesia, South Korea, and Turkey no longer rely solely on traditional multilateralism as their primary foreign policy approach. Instead, they have adopted diversified and hybrid strategies that combine coalition-building, niche diplomacy, and strategic hedging. This transformation reflects a broader shift in the nature of global governance, where flexibility, pragmatism, and issue-specific engagement have become essential components of effective foreign policy.

The results of the study indicate that the strategic behavior of middle powers is shaped by the interaction between systemic pressures, domestic conditions, and diplomatic agency. From a neorealist perspective, the intensification of great power competition in the post-pandemic era has constrained the strategic environment, compelling middle powers to carefully balance their relations with major powers. At the same time, Foreign Policy Analysis highlights the importance of internal factors, including leadership preferences, institutional capacity, and economic resilience, in determining how these states respond to external challenges. Middle Power Theory further complements these insights by emphasizing the role of agency, particularly in the form of niche diplomacy and coalition-building. The integration of these theoretical perspectives, as demonstrated in the findings and discussion, provides a comprehensive explanation of the observed variations in foreign policy strategies across the selected cases.

The study also concludes that the post-pandemic context has accelerated the evolution of middle power strategies, pushing them toward more adaptive and innovative forms of engagement. Indonesia's emphasis on multilateral resilience and regional leadership illustrates a continued commitment to normative diplomacy, albeit with greater flexibility in institutional arrangements. South Korea's focus on technological and health diplomacy reflects a strategic alignment with emerging global priorities, enabling it to enhance its international influence through specialized capabilities. Turkey's assertive and diversified approach demonstrates the potential for middle powers to expand their strategic reach, even in the face of systemic constraints. These findings underscore the diversity of middle power behavior and challenge the conventional assumption that middle powers are inherently uniform in their strategic orientation.

In relation to the main research problem, the study successfully addresses the lack of a comprehensive understanding of how middle powers adapt their foreign policy strategies in the post-pandemic global order. The results show that middle powers are not passive actors but active

participants in shaping international outcomes. By employing a combination of strategies, they are able to navigate uncertainty, mitigate risks, and exploit opportunities within a rapidly changing environment. This conclusion is reinforced by the discussion, which highlights the importance of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives to capture the complexity of middle power behavior.

Furthermore, the study identifies that the research gap in the existing literature particularly the limited attention to post-pandemic strategic adaptation has been effectively addressed through the comparative analysis of case studies. The findings extend previous research by demonstrating that middle powers have moved beyond traditional roles and are increasingly engaging in minilateral and issue-specific initiatives. This shift reflects a broader transformation in global governance, where formal institutions are complemented by flexible and informal arrangements. The discussion of these developments provides a deeper understanding of the evolving role of middle powers and contributes to the advancement of theoretical and empirical knowledge.

The research questions guiding this study have been comprehensively answered through the findings and analysis. The study demonstrates how middle powers adapt their strategies, identifies the key determinants of these strategies, and evaluates their implications for global governance. The objectives of the research are thus achieved, as the study provides a systematic and theoretically grounded analysis of middle power behavior in the post-pandemic era. The integration of empirical evidence and theoretical insights ensures that the conclusions are both robust and relevant.

In terms of contributions, the study offers significant theoretical, practical, and academic benefits. Theoretically, it refines existing frameworks by incorporating contemporary developments and emphasizing the dynamic nature of foreign policy strategies. Practically, it provides policymakers with valuable insights into effective strategies for navigating geopolitical uncertainty and enhancing international influence. Academically, it enriches the literature by offering a comparative perspective and identifying areas for future research. These contributions are closely linked to the findings and discussion, which highlight the importance of adaptability, innovation, and strategic diversification.

In conclusion, the study affirms that middle powers play a crucial and evolving role in the post-pandemic global order. Their ability to adopt flexible and context-sensitive strategies enables them to remain relevant and influential despite systemic constraints. By integrating insights from Middle Power Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis, and Neorealism, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of middle power behavior and addresses key gaps in the literature. The conclusions drawn from the findings and discussion not only enhance theoretical understanding but also offer practical guidance for policymakers and scholars, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on international relations in the twenty-first century.

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