

Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA Chairmanship as A Middle Power Foreign Policy: Advancing Multilateralism From A Like-Minded Partnership Standpoint

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Abstract

A sphere of multilateralism is often construed as a prerequisite for a like-minded middle power partnership. It reflects the very nature of middle power partnerships. This paper seeks to explore Indonesia's middle power foreign policy in advancing multilateralism through its MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia) chairmanship in 2023. This paper thus collects relevant data from MIKTA's resources and documents to further scrutinize its middle power agenda. It should be noted that MIKTA's flexibility in organizing its agenda is an indispensable part of itself. Thus, this paper provides in-depth research on geopolitical trends of a middle powers partnership that is like-minded in nature. It then concludes how such trends influence Indonesia's chairmanship in MIKTA. This paper is structured to understand and interpret Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship from the perspective of like-mindedness in foreign policy analysis. For such, the paper will use a foreign policy action analysis with a primary focus on actions conducted by and/or in relation to MIKTA. This paper shows that Indonesia's 2023 chairmanship in MIKTA is a quest to demonstrate Indonesia's middle power foreign policy. This paper recommends for Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship to critically transform MIKTA's minilateralism approach in order to produce concrete deliverables by starting to utilize multilateralism as a means to fulfill Indonesia's interests as a middle power and MIKTA's institutional purposes as a norm-builder in addressing major global issues.

Keywords: middle power, multilateralism, like-minded partnership, MIKT

INTRODUCTION

a. Middle Power as a Foreign Policy

Indonesia's MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia) chairmanship in 2023 will help determine how a middle power foreign policy shapes the global governance structure. As a middle power, Indonesia helps gather like-minded countries of MIKTA to strengthen their collaboration in multilateral fora and expanding areas of cooperation. This chairmanship is a part of Indonesia's diplomacy in actualizing its independent and active policy. Specifically, its 2023 MIKTA chairmanship will utilize the middle power bargaining power to reaffirm and reassert MIKTA's commitment to open societies, democratic values, and multilateralism.

This paper seeks to explore Indonesia's middle power foreign policy in advancing multilateralism through its MIKTA chairmanship in 2023. This paper also attempts to connect Indonesia's middle power interests [as a 2023 MIKTA chairman] with the overall MIKTA's like-minded partnership. It tries to pave a clearer understanding on what constitutes a like-minded partnership, and how middle powers capitalize it for their own interests in the global arena.

However, Indonesia faces several challenges in relation to its 2023

chairmanship in MIKTA (BSKLN & EIP, 2022: 1-2). First, MIKTA addresses a wide variety of issues, thus making its institutional focus not specific. Second, MIKTA is expected to transform itself from a like-minded partnership among G20 second-tier countries into a norm-builder and even an agenda-setter for major international issues.

Nevertheless, the discourses around MIKTA's groundbreaking agenda as a middle power foreign policy for its members tend to contradict with the pressure for it to produce concrete deliverables. Thus, Indonesia's MIKTA chairmanship must address this problem from an angle that is both contributory for Indonesia's interests as a middle power and for MIKTA's institutional settings as a norm-builder in major global issues. For such, this paper first discusses what being a middle power means for Indonesia and how it can relate to MIKTA's policies.

b. Middle Power Definition

Middle powers gather collectively to rise in prominence in a multilateral world. Definition of characteristics of a middle power varies from maintaining a multilateral partnership to balance power politics (Daniel, 2017:2), affecting powerful counterparts' behaviors (Beeson & Higgot, 2014:222), to challenging international orders (Blackwill & Wright, 2020:15). Furthermore, middle powers, as a concept,

has recently been used to anatomize international politics. Robertson (2017:366) argued that middle powers can be defined through various means of interpretation, and that the middle power term itself is heavily influenced due to the evolving nature of schools of thought, political foreign policy narratives, and states' competition for prestige.

The narrative of middle powers seems to provide a different angle on how hegemonic politics are visualized. It may include factors such as gross national product, nuclear capability, and prestige (Cox & Jacobson, 1973:4). This relates to the notion that middle powers are simply those who refuse to participate in great power politics. One scholar, Eduard Jordaan (2017:405), precisely takes note of this middle powers classification and argues that the term is not specifically providing general understanding on where middle powers are in the international arena. In addition, Edström and Westberg (2020:174) categorized middle powers definitions through three approaches: (i) identity approach, (ii) behavioral approach, and (iii) positional approach.

First, for the identity approach, a state may use self-identification. This self-identification is conducted by labeling oneself as a middle power. This approach is done to an extent where a country purposefully conceptualizes a foreign

policy identity executed by middle powers. Hurrell (2000:1–2) further showed that this claim is not by itself legitimate should the members of a like-minded middle power partnership not recognize the status of that claim.

Secondly, from the behavioral approach, a middle power status is defined by observing a state's particular pattern. Cooper (1997:9–10) refers to this specific pattern as a 'statecraft' which can be further analyzed by looking at a state's coalition and cooperation in its multilateral diplomacy. Nonetheless, one drawback from this categorization is the arbitrary approach of a state in referring to itself as a middle power, despite its size and policy. It then affects how multilateralism is defined. This article sees that a constant change of a middle power definition surely triggers instability and, eventually, trust. Trust is necessary to determine the behavior of a state. Hoffman (2002:385) reiterates that, in an international relations system, states enact their discretion-granting policies in an event where states transfer a capacity to decide political outcomes to others. Nonetheless, this paper does not intend to sharpen its focus on discovering the exact location of this trust within MIKTA. As a matter of MIKTA's increasing presence in middle power discourses, this paper then attempts to learn the pattern of middle power diplomacy portrayed by MIKTA, and then connect it with Indonesia's 2023

MIKTA chairmanship. This includes how states' behavior should show an identifiable pattern where certainty rests, which surely involves the clear defining way of a middle power status.

Third, the position approach is rather more factual compared to the former two approaches. It involves quantifiable criteria, such as military expenditures, population size, and gross domestic product (Carr, 2014:71–72). This approach is considered 'natural', as it provides agreeable points of conditions in determining access to power capacities in a hierarchical world order and in enabling middle powers to make initiatives within the credibility and feasibility domains (Gilley & O'Neil, 2014:4).

This article seeks to determine whether a sphere of multilateralism is existent in a partnership of like-minded middle powers. Relations between middle powers and great powers are developing as power politics prevail. This study aims to acknowledge whether multilateralism is a prerequisite in establishing a middle power partnership. By understanding whether multilateralism is a prerequisite, this article hopes to contribute to providing a shade of light in the discourse of like-minded middle power partnerships.

c. Problems Identification

This paper aims to discuss how middle

powers can advance multilateralism as a means through like-minded partnership, such as in the case of Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship. Thus, this paper attempts to trace Indonesia's middle power foreign policy by defining what a middle power status means to a like-minded partnership. Further, the result of such attempt will be connected to the relevance of multilateralism in the context of Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship.

To present a clearer contextual illustration in the analysis, this paper then aims to learn how Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship can contribute its middle power framework into the global governance framework. An analysis of like-minded middle power partnership governance will also be formulated in order to quantify all the relevant aspects in addressing how the partnership should be governed, and how a sphere of multilateralism can be identified.

In order to discuss Indonesia's middle power foreign policy, this paper discovers the relevance of a middle power status for a country as huge as Indonesia. It hopes to connect MIKTA as a middle power group with its broader goals in multilateral for a. Thus, the paper will be structured into the following 3 (three) main ideas.

The first main idea is analysing a like-minded partnership from an international affairs perspective. This part will include the

middle power partnership since the focus is to scrutinize what like-mindedness is all about. Like-mindedness is a normative conception used in a rather distinctive feature of each state's relationship, as it may use terms such as partnership, equality, co-ownership, co-responsibility, and interdependence (Olivier, 2011:59). A like-minded partnership can also be influenced by one of its members aiming to project its role as an interlocutor, facilitator, and norm entrepreneur, such as the case of middle power diplomacy formulated by South Korea (John, 2014), and as a bridge-builder, such as the case of Indonesia's presidency in the 2022 G20 (Ildal, 2022:74). Getting to know the normative aspect and its concrete realization aspect of a like-minded partnership will allow readers to better comprehend Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship, as well as the chairmanship's interests.

The second main idea is on the identification of multilateralism interests in a like-minded middle power partnership. This part will assess how distinct types of like-minded middle power partnership governance structure reacts to multilateralism. Though Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship will be the main lens of analysis in this paper, other cases will be cited as well to provide wider contexts. This second main idea is also tailored to the examination done in the first main idea part, which is to tailor whether a like-minded

partnership structure is generally uniform.

While MIKTA's primary interests of like-mindedness lie upon the uniform global challenges that its members face (MIKTA, 2023), MIKTA itself is deemed as a partnership that is not based around issues. By not basing its partnership on issues, MIKTA may address this by identifying a single global issue that binds its members (Downie, 2017:1505). Further, this one way to address such structure is then applied to Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship. This paper, again, stresses its thesis on the 2023 MIKTA forum chaired by Indonesia and, as necessary, the last five fora of MIKTA.

The third main idea is to analyze how a like-minded middle power partnership seeks to advance multilateralism, as showcased in Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship. Likewise, this part presents its ideas to better study the behavior of middle powers in participating themselves in like-minded middle power partnerships: what caused them, how the partnership benefits its members, and whether the behavior is motivated solely on middle power affairs or whether it will soon be multilateralized.

This paper expects to critically categorize like-minded middle power partnerships in international relations, especially whether it differs with multilateral or regional partnerships, or any other types

of partnerships for that matter. As some experts continue to doubt middle powers' essentialism in international relations, such as the one brought up by Sucu et al. (2021:308), middle powers are considered to have a systematic impact in a small group or through an international institution, particularly through nonalignment claim as a diplomatic innovation arsenal (Keohane, 1969:291).

Even though Keohane (1969:291–292) puts it in a way that small groups and international institution participations are two different illustrations, this paper argues an alternative illustration in studying Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship. This is based on the fact that MIKTA falls neither into a small group definition, as MIKTA members are all G20 members, nor an international institution participation. It may reflect the same characteristics in proto regimes as it is overwhelmingly state driven, not time bound, and not focused on juridically centered outcomes but may influence juridically driven policies (Vasudevan, 2019:107).

As a result, this paper attempts to further examine Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA Chairmanship as its main point of analysis in order to inspect a middle power foreign policy structure and its attempt to advance multilateralism. This paper hopes to answer whether a like-minded middle power partnership should be consistently focused

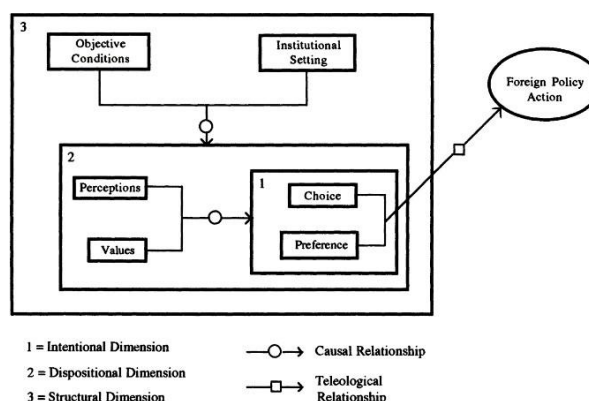
on one single global issue, or whether it should adapt to the dynamic trends discovered in multilateralism. The last parts on conclusion and recommendation are provided at the end.

2. METHODOLOGY

a. Research Method

This paper is structured to understand and interpret Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship from the perspective of like-mindedness in foreign policy analysis. It will also connect the dots of a like-mindedness partnership structure in middle power affairs of MIKTA. For such, the paper will use a foreign policy action analysis with a primary focus on actions conducted by and/or in relation to MIKTA. This paper utilizes a framework of explaining a foreign policy action formulated by Carlsnaes (1992:254), as seen in the following figure.

Figure 1. Foreign policy action explanation framework by Carlsnaes (1992:254)



From **Figure 1** above, this paper will attempt to explain what becomes the choice and preference of Indonesia in

engaging with MIKTA as it assumes the chairmanship. This will become the intentional dimension of Indonesia's foreign policy. Further, the dispositional dimension (or policy dimension) as enshrined in MIKTA's perceptions and values will then shape the causal relationship with Indonesia. Under all of this framework, there is another causal relationship from the objective conditions and institutional settings of MIKTA. The conclusion will focus on the teleological relationship of middle power partnership embraced from a like-mindedness standpoint. Analyzing the actor of the chairmanship, this paper borrows Knudsen (1989:100)'s view of Carlsnaes' framework in which contextual factors become aspects that constrain the actor's choice. This paper then connects the contextual factors in Carlsnaes' framework to the line of reasoning that will be critically inspected further in the first main idea as discussed above. These supposedly contextual factors as such include multilateralism as a factor constraining like-minded middle power partnerships. The case for MIKTA is that it involves different states from different geographical locations of the world. The members possess different interests yet are bound upon one like-minded goal under the MIKTA as the umbrella structure for their middle power partnership. Anything related to the interaction between MIKTA members can then define their foreign

policies (Potter, 1980), which will then be further analyzed here in this paper.

b. Research Objectives

To sum up the methodology, this paper concludes its line of arguments as follows. First, it will try to engage readers with theoretical reviews of like-minded partnerships in international relations. It will provide contexts through case policies in order to understand Indonesia's position in its intentional dimension, particularly on what choices and preferences are available for it to choose in engaging in like-minded middle power partnerships.

Second, the paper will discuss the second main idea under the policy dimension of MIKTA's perceptions and values in creating a partnership that fits all interests of its members. This part will be presented by also taking into account the sphere of multilateralism analysis in a middle power partnership, though it will not be focusing on a specific case of MIKTA. By assessing this part, this paper allows attempts to analyze multilateralism schemes in fulfilling national interests as viewed from a middle power partnership that is like-minded in nature.

Third, and lastly, the objective conditions and institutional settings of MIKTA will serve as a groundbreaking analysis to determine whether a multilateral interest arises. These conditions and

settings under MIKTA will determine and explain the foreign policy action taken by Indonesia as the chair of MIKTA in 2023. After a series of analysis from each main idea, a thorough description of what constitutes like-minded middle power partnerships can then be observed.

c. Research Data

From the analytical research methods above, this paper then collects relevant data from MIKTA's resources and documents to further scrutinize its middle power agenda. It should be noted that MIKTA's flexibility in organizing its agenda is an indispensable part of itself. Thus, this paper seeks to provide in-depth research on geopolitical trends of a middle powers partnership that is like-minded in nature. It thus then concludes how such trends influence Indonesia's chairmanship in MIKTA.

3. DISCUSSION

MIKTA and Like-Minded Middle Power Partnerships in International Affairs

It is often assumed that middle powers are the 'other' category of state power politics in international affairs. This category attempts to fill in the gap for states which meet neither the criteria of a hegemon - perceived as a threat by many, influential states nor small states. As the world goes globalized, challenges, such as the United States' declining capacity as the

only hegemon in the world and the limited capabilities that multilateral institutions possess, force many of the world's middle powers to find an alternative in meeting their own goals while not abandoning the already established global governance. One way to establish this is by forming a like-minded partnership among middle powers.

To begin with, middle powers, as elucidated previously, vary in terms of their definition. Wight (1978:65) defines them as a power with sufficient military prowess, wealth, and strategic advantage that, while it cannot win a war with a great power, it can cause enough damage to that power to outweigh any potential benefits that the great power might expect to receive from attacking it. This definition of middle powers is reduced to the range of military discourses. Stephen (2013) provides a much rather exhaustive scope, by referring to them as States with 'middlepowermanship' behaviors as well as mediocre power capabilities. Initiating a middle power partnership thus requires a set of agreements that bind countries under one membership that is characteristically middle power in nature.

Fulfilling this first step, this paper argues that the way the identity is construed can serve as a definitive approach in binding middle powers under one membership or partnership.

Efstathopoulos (2018:47) explains in a specific manner that associations among middle powers are understood to be a group of non-great powers that include both emerging and established middle powers. MIKTA is also considered as an example of novelty in the middle power scholarship among international relations experts in which the partnership managed to accommodate the interests of middle powers seeking to “maximize their influence through new forms of coalition-building” (Efstathopoulos 2018:47–48).

Another important aspect to note is to exclude the self-claim approach. This might help explain why some scholars refuse to recognize the identity approach where a state labels itself as a middle power. This paper does not try to cherry-pick certain discourses to define what constitutes a legitimate middle power partnership since it is not the focus of this analysis. Nonetheless, this paper argues that, regardless of the approach followed by a certain middle power partnership, one utmost requirement must be that all members of that partnership are in a unanimous agreement on what challenges they need to embrace together as middle powers. Further, the middle power status will then be unnecessary to be debated since the pinpoint of analysis is put on the foreign policy agenda of the partnership. This paper argues that this standpoint will prevail as time goes on since there is a

possibility in which a member might no longer retain their middle power status, but yet is still not considered a great power. As such, this paper echoes Efstathopoulos (2018:50) in which middle power behavior is obvious in both how a specific foreign policy goal is expressed and the methods used to carry it out.

The focus of like-mindedness, therefore, must be placed on the distinctive feature of both the challenges that are faced and the foreign policy agenda that is deployed to address the challenges. This paper sees that the definition of such like-mindedness should go two ways: it must be proven by the behavioral pattern the middle power partnership shows; and it must also be proven by the very distinctive feature of both its agenda and the challenges that the agenda seeks to address. This paper agrees with David and Roussel (1998:135) in which they defined a middle power as a nation with substantial international and global interests that it defends by eschewing the Great Powers' methods of security and foreign policy.

With Indonesia's MIKTA chairmanship to be later analyzed in this paper, this first part of the main idea then continues to the intentional dimension of foreign policy action framework by Carlsnaes (1992). What are the choices and preferences in a like-mindedness? Choices are defined in this paper as the set

of challenges that middle power partnership can pick to form their like-mindedness. On the other hand, preferences are the strategies chosen by each member of the partnership of middle powers, as then echoed further nationally in each member's respective bureaucratic system.

The middle power coalition, according to Öniş and Kutlay (2017:168–169), has two dimensions. First, the coalition's members have historical links to established powers. Second, their multilateralism strategy is possible to be pursued since the partnership has loosened structured-induced factors and flexible coalition-building opportunities. The flexibility widens as the partnership keeps reacting to the multilateral dynamics of the world. Another characteristic of this flexibility is the partnership members' mostly overlapping memberships in other non-middle power partnerships. In the case of MIKTA, while all are G20 members, it is argued that they consist of: the emerging middle powers (Turkey, Indonesia, Mexico), a major middle power (Australia) and an established emerging middle power (South Korea) which simultaneously have their own like-minded partnership (Jongryn, 2014).

Therefore, this paper sees no prohibition in terms of like-minded middle power partnerships being formulated while

its members have overlapping interests. The overlapping situation will impose no effect to the partnership as the primary driver of them grouping into one is a like-mindedness: a uniform, though not always symmetrical, viewpoint on how certain challenges must be addressed through certain strategies.

As such, choices in a foreign policy agenda under MIKTA might be static from time to time. However, the strategies, *in casu* the preferences that are available, may go within the flexibility structure of the partnership itself. A like-minded middle power partnership is a special category in relations among states as it does not necessarily fall in the definition of regionalism, inter-regionalism, and multilateralism.

The founding of MIKTA is considered as a partnership among emerging powers with "injected cross-regionalism as an innovative format of multi-state cooperation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018:12).

Considering such, like-mindedness allows a middle power partnership to grow exponentially without compromising institutional aspects. MIKTA is seen as a partnership with both an informal nature, as it keeps its adaptability, informality, and issue-driven character, as well as holding a methodical and structured approach (Pramono, 2018:13). Further, MIKTA is

institutionally like-minded for their tenacious commitment in addressing many of the global challenges. This is similar to yet another distinguishing characteristic of a like-minded middle power partnership: it is typical in nature but strongly impacted by global trends toward multilateralism. The following part discusses how multilateralism interests are induced in a like-minded middle power partnership, and how middle powers in that regard ought to behave.

Multilateralism Interests in a Like-Minded Middle Power Partnership

This paper also argues that multilateralism cannot be totally erased from a like-minded middle power partnership structure, as the very foundational reasoning of formulation of such a partnership is to address challenges of the world arising from the lack of effective strategies that multilateralism fails to offer. Dal (2019:588) sees multilateralism in such regard as inclusive even within a relative standing of a state's membership. Renshon (2017:33) views status in international relations as a state's ranking with three main attributes: positional, perceptual, and social. Kim (2022:37) even connects the patterns of middle powers' attributes in global governance, giving the comprehension in which middle powers assume roles in global challenges since the end of bipolarity. This is also influenced by

the emergence of new global systems (Cooper & Dal, 2016:516–517). Dal (2018:9) then argues that the attributes of middle powers will be able to allow the promotion of a multilateral pivot.

In this paper, a like-minded middle power partnership is by its definition a conceptual reaction of great power politics failure to address multilateral trends. The absence and vacuum left by great powers allow middle powers to mingle and bind under one membership that is constructed without rigid norms. The partnership itself will always be related to global governance. As Robertson (2017:366–367) argues, a middle power is to be seen as a state that is motivated and equipped (in terms of finances, diplomatic influence, inventiveness, etc.) to actively collaborate with other nations to enhance the institutions for the governance of the global commons. As seen in MIKTA, the primary drivers of a uniform strategy between its members mostly include multilateralism-induced factors. This can be observed even just by looking at MIKTA's annual joint communique.

This paper attempts to analyze each multilateralism-specific clause in each MIKTA's joint communique. This is essential so as to better study what becomes the core multilateralism interests driving the MIKTA members each year. Though generally representing the same

manner of approach, MIKTA's multilateralism interests are categorized into the following specifications as limited to

the last five years, as resembled in **Table 1** below.

Year	Clause Focus	Category
2023	Providing an explicit response towards a challenge that the group wishes to address but not by stressing the need for multilateralism (example: Clause 4).	Challenge-Response Stance with No Explicit Multilateralism Context
2022	Providing an explicit response towards a challenge that the group wishes to address by stressing the need for multilateralism (example: Clause 3).	Challenge-Response Stance with Explicit Multilateralism Context
2021	Providing an explicit response towards a challenge that the group wishes to address but not by stressing the need for multilateralism (example: Clause 3).	Challenge-Response Stance with Explicit Multilateralism Context
2020	Providing an explicit response towards a challenge that the group wishes to address but not by stressing the need for multilateralism (example: Clause 4).	Challenge-Response Stance with Explicit Multilateralism Context
2019	Providing an explicit response towards a challenge that the group wishes to address but not by stressing the need for multilateralism (example: Paragraph 5).	Challenge-Response Stance with Explicit Multilateralism Context

Table 1. MIKTA's last five joint communiqués' multilateralism clause analysis and categorization (Source: MIKTA, as curated by this paper)

Viewing from **Table 1** above, the only time multilateralism is not explicitly mentioned is during the recent 2023 MIKTA foreign ministers' meeting. This paper quantifies this category by determining the result of multilateralism clauses observed in each communique. It turns out surprising that all communiqués follow the same challenge-response stance, which is putting the relevance of MIKTA in its highly necessary coordinated resolve on global challenges.

Nevertheless, **Table 1** here should not be construed as a methodological approach in identifying multilateralism interests in MIKTA, as it focuses solely on patterns found in MIKTA's joint communiqués. Needless to say, these communiqués represent MIKTA's perceptions and values. They shape the causal relationship between Indonesia and MIKTA in its 2023 chairmanship. For such, it is important for the communique to consistently mention the dynamic trends in

multilateralism as well as MIKTA's positional agenda in addressing such challenges under a uniform resolve.

Explicit mention of multilateralism also shapes how MIKTA's concrete agenda best reaffirms its commitment to global relevance. Abbondanza (2021:185–186) stresses that a multilateral approach in international affairs is considered to be an essential component in the formulation of what is perceived as a good international citizen characteristic. MIKTA is also considered, for such, as a result of a marked multilateral approach to global affairs and to regional affairs (Abbondanza 2021:185).

The next part discusses the third main idea: the position of Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship in a like-minded middle power partnership structure. It will also discuss the latest trends of multilateralism as well as what best equips Indonesia in succeeding a like-minded middle power partnership structure. The final part of the discussion answers the pivotal question of whether multilateralism is absolute in a like-minded middle power partnership discourse.

Like-Minded Middle Power Partnership Structure in Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA Chairmanship

From the above-mentioned analysis, this part connects the objective conditions

and institutional settings of MIKTA under Indonesia's 2023 chairmanship with that of a suitable like-minded middle power partnership structure. This paper argues that the structure must involve multilateralism as it is the core of MIKTA's foundational reasoning. It should then be connected to the ideal structure of a like-minded middle power partnership as discussed previously.

Further, the structure must include one notable aspect that is not yet persistently found in MIKTA's communiqués, and that is the clear stance of MIKTA on multilateralism. All of these features define the middle power regime of MIKTA while still maintaining the sphere of multilateralism. Volgy and Gordell (2019:520) best address this concern by not believing that “the pursuit of greater status, or the need to maintain extant status, should automatically equate to status competition and conflict between states. In fact, the conditions and constraints involved for states potentially engaging in status-seeking policies are complex”. Volgy and Gordell (2019:520–521) further draw the conclusion of such status seeking considerations as explained

in the following **Figure 2**.

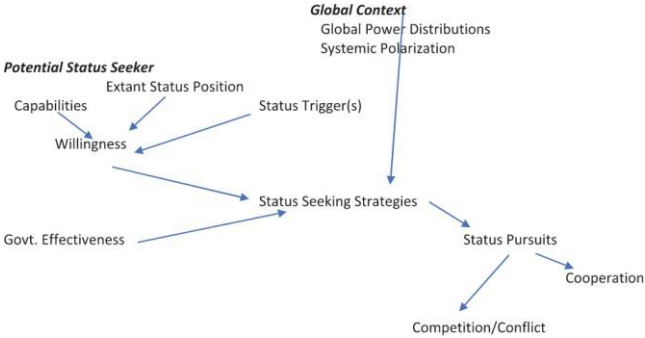


Figure 2. Status seeking considerations by Volgy and Gordell (2019:520–521)

In light of **Figure 2** above, this paper then sees the context of Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship as a status seeking strategy from Indonesia's side, but at the same time, MIKTA as a whole represents a status retaining strategy. This reflects Volgy and Gordell (2019:520)'s arguments where status competitions are not always ubiquitous in status seeking action, as seen in a like-minded middle power partnership that hopes to maximize its shape-shifting foreign policy formulation nature to address the global challenges. This paper attempts to critically analyze first the Indonesia's side by addressing Indonesia's 2023 governmental work plan.

Stated in Indonesia's Regulation of the Minister of National Development Planning/Head of National Development Planning Agency on Governmental Work

Plan Draft of 2023, it is adamantly clear that Indonesia prioritizes the year of 2023 as the year to seek international status by advancing Indonesia's leadership in MIKTA. Indonesia keeps its stance in terms of preparing its foreign policy by correlating it with what the recent geopolitical dynamics hold (Minister of National Development Planning/Head of National Development Planning Agency, 2022:IV.87). In its 2023 work plan, Indonesia also aims to solidify its status as a middle-income country.

In particular, as a middle-income country, Indonesia is in a strategic position to support the transformation of its economy. International development cooperation is directed at: (1) South-South and Triangular Cooperation which promotes an innovation-based economic structure with high added value; and (2) more effective grantmaking to friendly countries. Furthermore, Indonesia's membership in various international forums/organizations is directed to have measurable benefits, by strengthening Indonesia's image and character at the regional and global levels.

This paper again highlights how, from Indonesia's side, the conceptual framework of agenda *en route* to Indonesia's chairmanship is crystallized under the notion of Indonesia's status-seeking ambition in its international leadership. On the other hand, from MIKTA's institutional side, the aim remains the same in the last five years as seen from its communiqués: strengthening of multilateral institutions and international law as key elements of global governance (MIKTA, 2020).

However, the 2023 government work plan is then revised in the recent Presidential Regulation Number 134 of 2022 on Updated Governmental Work Plan of 2023. It adds to Indonesia's extensive role as a "stabilizer in a region". It also adds another key metric of valuing Indonesia's participation in international fora. As MIKTA is categorized as a forum, this key metric applies as well to Indonesia's later chairmanship of MIKTA in 2023.

What can be maximized from Indonesia's chairmanship will set the tone of Indonesia's 2023 success metrics. This goes hand in hand with the status seeking modality of Indonesia as it hopes to synergize its foreign policy ambition with its national development plan. This is also related to MIKTA's claim of being constructive compared to other partnerships such as the minilateralism of BRICS. The following figure obtained from

Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' book on Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship priority agenda best describes the constructive approach nature of MIKTA.

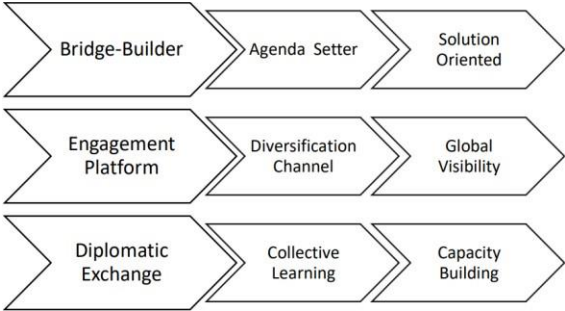


Figure 3. Constructive approach of MIKTA by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2022:13).

As elaborated from **Figure 3** above, MIKTA shall further solidify itself as a like-minded middle power partnership with a structure that is strengthened from the inside out. Indonesia, its current chair, even tailors MIKTA's agenda in its national governmental plan. As this national governmental plan will be cascaded into all ministerial levels, including regional governments, if necessary, the updated 2023 work plan best represents MIKTA's flexibility values itself. Indonesia may even be considered revolutionary for taking this adaptive approach in harmonizing its national development plan to better mimic what is happening in the multilateral trends. The later part will sum up how multilateralism connects with a like-minded

middle power partnership with Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship as the case.

Will Multilateralism Always Prevail?

From the analysis, it can be inferred that Indonesia's chairmanship hopes to maximize its preferences in driving MIKTA by harmonizing the aspects of the available choices in the multilateral trends, values of MIKTA, and the institutional settings of a like-minded middle power partnership under MIKTA. MIKTA is not based on territorial extension, nor does it have ambitions to expand influence or carry the burden of territorial conflicts. On paper, this is a prospective modality for constructive contributions amidst the increasing tension of geopolitical conflicts and territorial expansion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2022:16).

As explained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2022:20), MIKTA needs to develop clearer identity specifications. There is a fundamental difference between identity politics and identity specification. Identity politics is outward oriented, related to efforts to gain recognition for a new, better position; while identity specification is oriented inward and deals more with emphasizing the distinctive criteria or attributes that bind them together. Although not designed as an instrument of identity

struggle, MIKTA in practice develops certain specifications that distinguish it from similar partnership groups.

Echoing from Pramono (2018:20), the existing criteria are still too inclusive, thereby reducing their effectiveness and cohesiveness as a group. This paper argues that such certain specifications should be based on like-mindedness, multilateralism, and middle power status. These three specifications are the key components that make up MIKTA. All three of them work simultaneously to envisage a like-minded partnership among middle powers of MIKTA. To better visualize this, this paper sums up all the endorsed recommendations mentioned herein as illustrated in **Table 2** in the next page.

Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA Chairmanship		
Intentional Dimension	Dispositional/Policy Dimension	Structural Dimension
Indonesia's free and active foreign policy	MIKTA's constructive approach	MIKTA's joint communique
Indonesia's 2023 governmental work plan	MIKTA's multilateralism interests	MIKTA's sideline events
Indonesia's priority agenda in its 2023 MIKTA chairmanship	MIKTA's evaluation on its global challenges priorities from the last five years	MIKTA's joint statements

Table 2. Proposed strategy for Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship

CONCLUSION

a. Key Takeaways

This paper shows that Indonesia's 2023 chairmanship in MIKTA is a quest to demonstrate Indonesia's middle power foreign policy. MIKTA is among the forefront of Indonesia's priority in realizing its national interest as a middle power. Its involvement in MIKTA also demonstrates that a like-minded partnership is pursuable so long as the members of such partnership pursue the same goal. Multilateralism, in this case, is becoming relevant as a means to map the interests of middle powers in the global governance framework of cooperation.

Based on the above-mentioned analysis, multilateralism is relevant in alike-minded middle power partnership, including in MIKTA. Indonesia's MIKTA

chairmanship is best conducted under the presumption of the most basic features in a like-minded middle power partnership structure: it must include certain specifications of like-mindedness, multilateralism, and middle power status. Further, as multilateralism being the core of MIKTA's institutional values, the work plan of Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship must follow the prevailing precedent in which Indonesia manages to adapt and depend on flexibility in arranging its chairmanship. In addition, Indonesia must adhere to the informal nature of MIKTA without compromising its behavioral patterns in addressing its multilateralism interests.

b. Recommendation

This paper recommends for Indonesia's 2023 MIKTA chairmanship to

critically transform MIKTA's minilateralism approach in order to produce concrete deliverables by starting to utilize multilateralism as a means to fulfill Indonesia's interests as a middle power and MIKTA's institutional purposes as a norm-builder in addressing major global issues. As the abovementioned analysis has showcased, this paper thus attempts to answer the problem identified in this paper by recommending Indonesia to define what a middle power status means to MIKTA's like-minded partnership. This can be pursued by stressing Indonesia's middle-power diplomacy through MIKTA. Indonesia's leadership in the Indo-Pacific should also be a bargaining power for MIKTA. To achieve this, Indonesia through its 2023 chairmanship in MIKTA should institutionalize MIKTA's modalities in order to map MIKTA's targeted attempts to address global challenges.

In order to achieve strengthened global governance with MIKTA at the core, Indonesia must carefully anatomize what has become MIKTA's core interests since its inception as well as MIKTA's priority agenda in addressing challenges of global relevance. Indonesia must strategically align its interests both in its capacity as a chair for MIKTA in 2023 and as an emerging middle power in MIKTA itself. This will further harmonize Indonesia's behavioral pattern as a middle power with its foreign policy agenda intact.

The contextual conceptual framework for Indonesia's interests in the 2023 MIKTA chairmanship must portray inclusive leadership. Simply put, this is the concept of involving parties inclusively, choosing to prioritize a collective multilateral approach, and developing a platform that is generally open to dialogue and constructive solutions to problems. As seen from the previous communique, Indonesia must explicitly mention multilateralism and the concept of inclusive leadership in several key documents of MIKTA. Its application has been consistently found in the implementation of Indonesian foreign policy in practice for a long time. Therefore, the same must reemerge in MIKTA while MIKTA still maintains like-mindedness.

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