Article

MIKTA and the Global Projection of Middle Powers: Toward a Summit of Their Own?

Andrew F. Cooper*

Department of Political Science and Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo.

Middle powers have long been excluded from global summits. The elevation of the G20 to the leaders' level in the context of the 2008 financial crisis marks a significant turning point for Middle Power activity in global governance. Although most of the attention in the G20 was targeted on the relationship between the old G7 establishment and the large "emerging" market states, middle powers have been major beneficiaries of this self-selective G20 forum. Yet, despite their lead roles within the G20 as hosts and policy entrepreneurs, middle powers remain distinctive currently by not having a summit process of their own. This article examines the prospect of MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Australia) acting as a platform for such a summit. Formed as a dialogue process, MIKTA remains at an early stage of its development with a cautious club culture. Nonetheless, as demonstrated by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and India–Brazil–South Africa, the rationale to create a distinct summit process can overcome serious constraints. As a means not only to amplify their roles with respect to the new Informalism of the twenty-first century, but also to ensure that their presence in the hub of global governance is maintained, there is logic to creating a MIKTA summit.

A new forum came into being on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 25, 2013. This was the first gathering of foreign ministers of the Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA) countries. Yet, the impact of this gathering remains unclear. As a forum constituting foreign ministers of five countries, with little in the way of shared experiences beyond their common membership in the G20, suggests modest expectations. While it represents another sign of the ascendancy of "the Rise of the Informals" in global politics (Alexandroff 2014), with respect to MIKTA, most commentators have suggested the prospect of dialogue among its members as opposed to any specific instrumental purpose.

Notwithstanding the identified limitation, MIKTA has a potential beyond the parameters of its initial modest design. A robust start up, by which leaders explicitly delegate ministers to set up a new institution, as demonstrated by the creation of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum in 2003, is possible but remains unlikely. The common path of these organizations favors a gradualist approach, with operation at the ministerial level moving to a leaders' summit in time and often with a specific catalyst. Indeed, it is this step by step model that describes the progress of not only the G20, but the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) as well. A cautious and limited approach at the outset of such a forum is,

Send correspondence to Andrew F. Cooper, Department of Political Science, Rm 305, Hagey Hall, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, N2L 3G1, Canada, Tel: +519-888-4567, Email: acooper@uwaterloo.ca.

therefore, not a predictor of what type of institution will ultimately emerge. Ambitions and expectations can change through different modes of agency and various sets of circumstances.

The ascendancy of informality signals a turn in global politics that rewards a wider set of actors at the apex of power, most notably opening up representation beyond the old western establishment in the form by the G7. It is also a shift that provides enhanced institutional space for another cluster of countries positioned at another layer within the global order. These countries are most commonly — albeit with a degree of contestation — labeled "middle powers" in international relations literature. To be sure, on both conceptual and operational grounds, MIKTA strains the concept of middle powers as understood traditionally (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal 1993). Although all of the members of MIKTA are referred to analytically as middle powers, there is a huge amount of variation in the form of treatment. On one side, the depiction of Mexico and Turkey in the literature as middle powers is predicated on a bridging or liminal role. These roles go hand in hand with a connotation over where they are situated geographically in the world. On the other side, the Republic of Korea (Korea) and Indonesia are categorized as nontraditional middle powers largely situated in the North. Only Australia is treated as a country with a deeply embedded, although possibly waning, traditional middle power persona. Moreover, while the middle power identity of these countries is given some privileged treatment, it has not been at the exclusion of other types of identification, whether as regional powers or as countries with some distinctive normative trait in terms of their constructive or responsible ability.

MIKTA is not only salient as a guide to the trajectory of diplomatic practice in the twenty-first century, it serves as a benchmark for how inclusive the nature of Informality has become. In past eras, secondary actors had to exercise their diplomatic skills largely outside the traditional great power centers. These middle powers operated as critics or followers of the systemically important countries. With the formation of the G20 leaders' summit, some degree of an "insider's role" has been allowed. To leverage this opening, though, MIKTA has to pass a number of tests. In conceptual terms, a more coherent construction of a collective identity is necessary. The transition of the BRICS from an understated diplomatic forum to a high-profile stand-alone summit process has been predicated, not only on frustrations over aspects of the global order, but also on a self-image by its membership that they are all systematically important emerging countries that deserve greater recognition in the system.

If MIKTA and its members are to take advantage of the upgraded institutional positioning, MIKTA must position itself as a forum that is held together by a sense of like-mindedness. Accentuating a collective middle power identity, whatever the nuances between the individual MIKTA members, has considerable value. Although the normative appeal of this construction can be overblown, a middle power role is the common reference point that binds MIKTA together that no other conceptualization possesses. The image of the MIKTA countries located in the middle between the G7 and BRICS in the G20 context underscores this point, with the opportunities available in terms of agency being able to leverage this diplomatic space countering traditional images of structural constraint.

Such a recalibration meshes well with Robert Cox's notion that "the middle power role is not a fixed universal," but a concept and set of practices

that continually evolve in search of different forms of actorness (Cox 1996). That being said, MIKTA has created some tangible value added, and so answers the question about why this forum has merit as an agent of change. Indeed, this is a test for all the new Informals. Although making a robust start as an institution, the IBSA Dialogue Forum has found it difficult to meet this test. By way of contrast, the BRICS has been able to make this leap by taking up—after a protracted period of consultation—the initiative of the New Development Bank (NDB). Locating a functional niche for MIKTA will not be an easy task. Yet, there is some considerable incentive to do so if the members want to prove that it can deliver concrete benefits in the context of global governance.

MIKTA is, therefore, both more and less than it appears to be by a simple reference to its performance as a dialogue forum. As will be reviewed in the first section of the article, the inclusion of a cluster of middle powers in the G20 is a decisive break from the past. Middle powers have been traditionally excluded from the forms of diplomatic behavior most commonly associated with global summitry. As such even the possibility of the MIKTA countries leveraging their upgraded position to create an autonomous forum constitutes an advance in terms of the legitimacy, and potentially the efficiency, of global governance. MIKTA remains very much a work in progress. Without a firm agreement about what element of like-mindedness to emphasize, the rationale for the forum's existence continues to be a diffuse blend of domestic attributes (most notably, a shared commitment to democracy) and collective global aspirations (wider global governance). While increasing its visibility, the forum is still searching for club cohesion and operational substance. If the national actors are in place, a well-defined collective script (including building a shared sense of solidarity through the explicit use of a middle power identity) is still lacking.

MIKTA As a Break from the Past in Global Governance

Middle powers have long been outsiders to all forms of global summits. Although states clustered in the middle power category have sought insider status, up until the twenty-first century they have been systematically excluded. At the origins of global summitry, a number of secondary European nations (including the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland) brought delegations to the 1814–1815 Congress of Vienna but they were not admitted to the core group (Elrod 1976; Mitzen 2013). At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, participation by second-tier countries was opened to a widened geographic perspective (specifically Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) but this form of representation was designed for ratification purposes only (MacMillan 2007). The core decisions were held by the great powers—the Big Four of the United States (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), France, and Italy. Although middle powers made their voices heard at the next global summit—through the creation of the new universal organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Bretton Woods institutions—middle powers were explicitly excluded from the key informal great power meetings at Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam. It was at these meetings that the shape of the geopolitical architecture of the post-1945 world was hammered out by the leaders of the great powers (Ikenberry 2001).

Faced with these obstacles, middle powers advanced a number of alternative strategies to deal with the built-in privileges of the great powers. One

action by these middle powers was to organize themselves into flexible caucuses of like-minded groups. In the Cold War era, middle power activity was centered on informal organizations such as Canada–Australia–New Zealand (CANZ) or the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) integrated into the UN system (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal 1993). Subsequently, middle power activities of this type have widened out to encompass a wider constellation of countries. These efforts have pushed specific functional or "niche" initiatives (Cooper 1997). Campaigns such as those against antipersonnel land mines and to establish the International Criminal Court fit into this category. Another approach for middle powers has been to position themselves in central roles with respect to UN world summits, including taking on the hosting role of major conferences on environment, human rights, women's rights, and social development (Cooper 2005).

But exclusion continued. Middle powers found themselves again faced at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the ascendancy of a new wave of self-selective forums in the early 1970s—these around the Gx summits. The juxtaposition between the status of the inner circle of established powers and outsiders was sharply drawn by the formation of the G6 (USA, UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy) amid a series of economic shocks. And although this situation was ameliorated to some extent by the inclusion of Canada into the G7 in 1976, this was the exception to the rule. Though Russia was eventually brought into the summit process, hence the creation of the G7/8 in 1998 at the Birmingham Summit (Russia was kept out of the G7 Finance—hence the G7/8), this was the extent of the enlargement process. Notwithstanding backing from Japan, Australia was denied entry. Although Spain had some support as a replacement for either Canada or Italy, which some economic analysts pointed out were economically too small, it also was not invited into the G7/8.

What is more, the barriers placed on insider status stretched from the bulk of the traditional middle power across to the nontraditional cluster. Whereas the big emerging states, notably China, India, and Brazil, were targeted as possible new members of the G7/8, countries below this top-tier group were never seriously considered (Alexandroff and Cooper 2010).

Such a distinction between the top tier and an important, but lesser, middle group of states was reinforced by the different narratives offered by Goldman Sachs and other investment banks/consultants in their comparative portraits of BRIC versus MIST (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey) or CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa). In the first category were the dominant up and coming countries led by China, the massive C in BRIC (on the differences between China and BRIC see Allison 2013). In the other groupings were countries deemed to have huge potential—at least in the economic sphere—but not with the range of influence of those states in the BRIC (Wilson and Purushothman 2003; see also Goldman Sachs. 2007).

Still, no less than the middle powers, the big emerging states possessed multiple identities. While India, Brazil, and South Africa were willing to go along with the BRICS initiative, they also wanted to differentiate themselves from the other members. Unlike China (as a one-party authoritarian state) and Russia (increasingly authoritarian with a managed democracy), these three countries maintained robust democratic political systems and extensive civil society communities. The existence of such a mixed identity was reinforced further by the fact that each of India, Brazil, and South Africa

possessed some former legacy of being characterized as middle powers themselves, extending back to the years preceding their "emergence." In terms of diplomatic practice, it is significant from this perspective that Brazil, India, and South Africa entered into some components of informal summit activity in association with China and Russia while pursuing other summit activity as a narrower subset.

While it is the BRICS associative process that is most visible in terms of relationships outside the West, it is a valuable corrective to note the mode of operation associated with IBSA Dialogue Forum (Alden and Vieira 2005). Whereas the BRICS demonstrated that a diffuse sense of identity was enough to mobilize initially at the level of foreign ministers and subsequently at the level of leaders, IBSA signaled that a group with little knowledge of each other could, over time, embrace a summit process. Created on the instructions by leaders through an initial meeting of foreign ministers in 2003, the first official summit was held in 2006. At the same time, though, IBSA reveals the problems of sustaining momentum in an informal group when the original catalyst (a shared interest in securing permanent UN Security Council status) dissipates. After five summits, IBSA has not met at the leaders' level since 2011.

Clearly then there are risks as well as opportunities attached to this process, with a diversity of outcomes in the "Rise of the Informals." In all cases, the evolution from ministerial meetings to a summit process takes time. As illustrated by the BRICS, momentum can be built where a culture of cooperation takes hold (notwithstanding different diplomatic cultures). In the case of IBSA, the glue is not strong enough to maintain a strong group identity at the leaders' level, especially with the dominant commitment to BRICS. Unlike the IBSA members, MIKTA is the only choice for the non-G7 and non-BRICS to catch the wave of Informalism. As such, the stakes for the MIKTA countries are higher. Still, without a single issue that connects the membership, the future of MIKTA depends on forging a sense of solidarity through a shared identity.

Enhanced Space for Middle Powers in the "Rise of the Informals"

What is different in the post–global financial crisis era is that for the first time in global governance, middle powers have been brought into global summitry with a presumed equality to the great powers. To be sure, the extent of this transition did not stand out at the creation of the G20. The instinctive interpretation at the time of establishment was that the G20 possessed the full imprint of an older form of concert of great powers (Åslund 2009; for more contextualized nuance from the experience of the G20 Finance see Beeson and Bell 2009). Certainly the old establishment powers grabbed initial control of the summit process in terms of both procedure and agenda. In the period from November 2008 to September 2009, it was the G7 countries—and especially the USA with support from the "Anglosphere"—that used this new Informal to cushion the shocks that hit them hardest (Paulson 2010). The USA hosted both the first and third summits, with the UK hosting the second. Moreover, it was France, not the "emerging" states, which proved to be the most energetic actor with an alternative design—namely the concept of some G12/13 that explicitly privileged a relationship between the G7/8 and the BRICS/IBSA countries in an

emergent multipolar world, but not a relationship with a wider set of "middle" powers.

Most critically, it was the importance of "bringing in" China, India, and Brazil—and the methods in doing so—that took the spotlight. One line of thought focused on a separate track between the pivotal state of the old establishment (the USA) and the biggest and most powerful of the rising states (China) in a de facto G2 at the core of the G20 (Garrett 2010). Another form of analysis argued for the need to accept concessions to the BRICS/IBSA, as a way to bring important reform to the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (Woods 2010).

Still, over time it has been the unanticipated ability of middle powers to use the enhanced space allowed them in the G20 that has become a defining feature of the summit process. Notwithstanding the predictions that the global financial crisis would serve as a conduit for the advent of a multipolar world, what is most striking about the turn in global governance is the degree of diffuseness and fragmentation. Indeed, in terms of the "Rise of the Informals" (Alexandroff 2014. See also Cooper 2014), the world looks more similar to polycentric organization. After the first three G20 summits, it has been the middle powers that have dominated the hosting function. Korea hosted the G20 summit in November 2010, and served as cohost with Canada in June 2010. Mexico hosted the G20 in Los Cabos in 2012. Australia hosted the G20 in Brisbane in 2014. Also, Turkey will host the G20 in Antalya in 2015.

In terms of policy innovation, Korea has seemingly had the greatest impact on the G20, shifting the focus from the global financial crisis alone to a wider agenda that includes international development. Korea provided a differentiated agenda on development that focused on self-sustaining growth through capacity development, which was fundamentally different from unilateral provision of aid to the recipient. Korea also argued that to achieve the ultimate goal of G20, sustainable and balanced development, global economic inequality must be reduced significantly. Mexico also was ambitious in widening the ambit of attention on issues such as "green growth" and youth employment. Although Australia wanted to keep to a "back to basics" agenda, the Brisbane Summit became embroiled in a much wider array of issues, including climate change and the status of Russia. The Turkish Summit points to a return to an ambitious agenda under the theme of "inclusiveness."

From all of this discussion, a reformulated image can be created: the middle powers have been the unintended main beneficiaries of the G20. Whereas in previous summit processes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, middle powers were subordinated to the great powers, in the twenty-first century—at least in the institutional fabric of the G20—they have achieved status equality.

If the G20 showcased the ability of middle powers to elevate their status, however, this group of countries continued to be placed at some disadvantage because of their lack of a summit of their own. Although the G20 took on some of the features of a concert hub, it did not exist in isolation, with the process of consolidation going hand-in-hand with various aspects of fragmentation. After being viewed as a potential casualty of the elevation of the G20 to the leaders' level, the G7 has been reinvigorated as a likeminded security-oriented club. What is more, the BRICS—and to a lesser extent, IBSA—demonstrated an ability to build some impressive cohesion. From its

early manifestation as a meeting of foreign ministers, BRICS has moved to a forum of leaders with the capacity to go through a cycle of summits. In term of membership, BRICS has been able to expand beyond its original core, with the addition of South Africa. In terms of an extended mode of operation, BRICS has developed a set of ancillary connections including the establishment of a business, civil society, academic, and think tank forums. In terms of output, BRICS has mitigated concerns that it only acted as a talk shop by implementing plans to create a BRICS Development Bank or NDB.

The MIKTA initiative suggests that this cluster of countries is open to the possibility of leveraging the advantages open to them through the rise of Informalism in the global order. Although moves to go beyond the caution exhibited so far is highly speculative (and out in front of actual practice), it must be showcased that every other forum of this nature has eventually moved to the leaders' level. This has been true of BRICS and IBSA, but it has been equally true of the Gx summits. Replicating the model pioneered by the G7 in the 1970s, the G20 was elevated from a forum of finance ministers and central bank governors to the leaders' level amid the shocks of the 2008 global financial crisis.

In each of these other examples, serious constraints existed about this transition, not the least because meeting at the ministerial level reduced the level of risk attached to the initiatives. Yet, inexorably the logic of elevation to the leaders' level trumped these concerns. In looking at the future of MIKTA, one needs to be reminded of this logic.

Each of the G20, BRICS, IBSA, and MIKTA has a globally based profile (Flake and Douglas 2014). MIKTA has an extensive geographic reach, with its membership coming from the Asia Pacific, the Middle East, and the Americas. It also has countries that straddle the divide between the North and the global South, with some members having close links to the old establishment (Turkey as a NATO member, and Australia and Korea as alliance partners with the USA on a bilateral basis), along with a country that have eschewed formal alliances (Mexico) and a country with a long legacy as a member of the nonaligned movement (Indonesia).

MIKTA has also moved away from other models. Above all it has separated itself from the older middle power approach that links initiatives to the UN system. Unlike CANZ or WEOG, it is a caucus group not formally connected with the UN system. MIKTA has—and will continue to meet on the sidelines of the UN, but it has—and will also meet in other settings as well. In some cases, this takes on the model of meetings on the sidelines of the G20. In other cases, MIKTA meets as a freestanding process of foreign ministers (Oliver 2013).

Akin to the G20, BRICS, and IBSA as well, MIKTA has an explicit club orientation, as featured by such activities as the release of communiqués and the publication of joint Op-Eds for media outlets. Equally, however, there are signs of some network component being put into place, as illustrated by the move to consult academics on the role of MIKTA (although this process remains behind the concerted work by think tanks such as the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and Brookings institution on the L20/G20 in the early 2000s (English, Thakur, and Cooper 2005).

That being said, the conceptual and operational debate about MIKTA is only just starting. Despite the trajectory of the G20, BRICS, and IBSA meetings at the level of foreign ministers, it is no guarantee in itself that MIKTA can be elevated to a summit process at the leaders' level. There are a

multitude of other informal groups of foreign ministers that have not evolved in the same way as the new Informals, including the Global Governance Group or 3G, an initiative of small countries in the context of the G20. In that initiative, meetings took place between some foreign ministers and other state officials with a concerted instrumental (the disciplining of offshore financial centers) and symbolic (the image of bigger countries dominating global governance) purpose without elevation to the leaders' level (Cooper and Momani 2014).

What differentiates MIKTA from both the 3G initiative and other middle power coalitions of an earlier era is G20 inclusiveness. Unlike the 3G coalition, which gained only consultative status with the G20, MIKTA countries have permanent seats at the "High Table" of global governance—the G20. From this perspective, the MIKTA countries are no longer status-deprived as, of course, are others in the much wider body of the "Rest" (Zakaria 2008. See also Payne 2010; Wade and Vestergaard 2010). With this distinction in mind, the starting point of the MIKTA initiative is quite different, in that it comes not only with distinctive capabilities of agency but with a common window of structural presence in the global system.

Beyond "Multipolarism"

Up to the time of the global financial crisis, the image of transformation centered on the creation of a multipolar world as opposed to a unipolar system commonly associated with the post–Cold War era, and the need to accommodate the rise of the large emerging powers that eventually formed the BRICS along with IBSA. Ideationally, the scenarios offered by leading think tanks kept to this script. Moving toward a multipolar, interdependent, globalized world meant bringing in the big "new power centers" and "power brokers" into the pivotal seats of power (Subacchi 2008). Operationally John Lipsky, the deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, reinforced this point at the time of the September 2009 Pittsburgh G20 summit. He said, "You can't talk about the global economy without having the major dynamic emerging economies at the table" (*Gulf Daily News* 2009).

Yet, notwithstanding the expectation that in the post-crisis order would be an exclusive one, middle powers were in fact brought into the mix. In part, this enlarged design was due to the "off the shelf" nature of the G20 architecture (Beattie 2010). Rather than deviating from the model developed at the time of the Asian financial crisis, with its emphasis on global and regional reach, the elevation of the G20 to the leaders' level embedded this earlier format. In doing so alternative models suggested by the French president Nicholas Sarkozy and others for a restricted G2/13/14 were rejected (Baruah 2008. See also Ash 2008 and Cooper and Antkiewicz 2008).

This more inclusive approach, in geopolitical terms, played to some calculations of U.S. interests. Exclusivity, while parsimonious, highlighted a model that put onus on the relationship between the G7/8 and BRICS/IBSA. Such a concentrated focus raised the risks, potentially backsliding into the "us and them" atmosphere of the earlier era with an embedded polarization between the old established powers from the North and the global South (on the earlier debate about the Third World challenge see Ruggie and Bhagwati 1984; Krasner 1985), as opposed to a focus on problem solving.

Adding a cluster of middle powers held several advantages for the USA in an era of ebbing primacy (On this debate see Brooks and Wohlforth 2008;

Kagan 2013; Jones 2014) in that many, if not all of these countries were American allies. These countries were also committed to the G20. By contrast to the BRICS' cautious wait-and-see attitude, several of the middle powers openly campaigned for a seat at the top table. This enthusiasm was especially noticeable from Korea and Australia, signified by the personal lobbying efforts taken on by the then leaders Kevin Rudd and Lee Myung-bak (Lee and Rudd 2009).

Standing back from these opportunistic advantages, however, the emphasis on a more inclusive design made some sense in capturing the needs of global governance. Given the hesitation of the BRICS/IBSA states to take initiative in the context of the G20, the space allowed for the middle powers was salient for the expansion of the G20's agenda. At the same time, the addition of middle powers contributed to the closing of the legitimacy gap so problematic to the operations of the entire span of Gx activities. Representation beyond the G7 and the BRICS contradicted the image of the G20 as a tightly drawn concert.

If the USA was the original backer of inclusion, the sense of polycentrism attendant to the operational practice of this model contributed to a backlash from American commentators. Richard Haass, the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, showcased the overall messy nature of twenty-first century diplomacy (Haass 2010). And a variety of other U.S.-based commentators went further in describing and also decrying a G zero system—a world where nobody would rule (Patrick 2010; Bremmer and Roubini 2011; Bremmer 2012; Kupchan 2012). Instead of a process that privileged order and stability through the familiar pattern of concert power, the G20 was viewed as the manifestation of an awkward diffusion—and loss—of authority.

From a middle power perspective, the process of opening up the G20, far from a problem, was a triumph. Instead of a G7/8 or a G12/13/14—or certainly an informal G2 or G3—the G20 model placed middle powers as insiders in a forum that focuses on areas of their strengths—whether economic or social policy—not their weaknesses in the geostrategic arena (albeit specific middle states such as Turkey have some substantive military capabilities). The hold of systemic exclusion as featured in 1814–1815, 1919, and 1945 no longer existed.

The concept of polarity as traditionally crafted by international relations specialists implies states being attracted to a pole with a powerful state (and distanced from the other) and then remaining allied to it (and its values) in different and competing groupings (or in the polarized language of the Cold War, different "blocs"). The constellation of the G20 breaks through this mode of operation, as it signifies that groupings (and attractions) could become increasingly defined in issue-specific contexts. Through a perspective that subordinates hard security capacity to economic and social attributes, middle powers have not only added some influence on an issue-specific basis, but also the ability to project their commitment to the global order in a more generalized manner.

Parallel Activities

Due to the inclusive nature of the G20, the G20 middle powers have remained strong supporters—and beneficiaries—of the forum. But with the division of global governance some disadvantages for middle powers arose

through this growing fragmentation. Even though initially with the emergence of the Leaders' Summit, it looked as though the G7/8 would wither away, the older summit process regained momentum. Benefiting from an embedded culture of like-mindedness and the reoccurrence of geopolitical challenges, especially with the Russian intrusions into Crimea and Ukraine, the G7, at least, returned. Suspending the Russian Federation, the G7/8 again became the G7.

The major source of sustained innovation came from the actions of the BRICS and their determination to create a summit process of their own. In a gradual progression the BRICS evolved from its early sounding out meetings of foreign ministers to a highly visible summit of leaders. Signaling its capacity for functional influence on a global basis, the BRICS now have apparently solidified their forum through the establishment of the NDB. The BRICs expanded its membership to embrace South Africa to become the BRICS.

In terms of global projections, the MIKTA countries do not have a similar range of options. They could not revert to a "legacy" summit along the lines of the G7. Nor apparently are they being entertained as candidates for either the BRICS or IBSA. Nor for that matter did MIKTA have other alternative options in terms of raising their status in the global system. Not only are their members not included in the P5 of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council), none are likely in the near term to be candidates for an enlarged UNSC. Moreover, even their ability to win nonpermanent seats at the UNSC is not assured: witness the failure of Turkey to gain a UNSC seat in 2014.

The alternative choice for the MIKTA countries for "going big" on their G20 membership is "going home"—emphasizing their regional status. Indeed, this has been the separate track for all the MIKTA countries. Mexico pressed to build organizations beyond NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), notably the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Pacific Alliance (with Chile, Colombia, and Peru). The core institutional connections for Indonesia and Korea continue to be ASEAN and ASEAN + 3, supplemented by other initiatives such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative in the case of Korea. Australia has demonstrated bursts of leadership in the regional context, although as illustrated by Kevin Rudd's ambitious Asia Pacific Community initiative, with no guarantee of success. Turkey has extended its ties with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The G20 changed the nature of the game with regard to global projection. Not only does the G20 give the MIKTA countries entry to the premier forum dealing with global economic cooperation, but also it allows the MIKTA members to secure de facto delegative power over international financial institutions. The G20 also tasks the formal international organizations such as the IMF, OECD, and the new Financial Stability Board and reviews reports that they submit to the G20 ministers, working groups, and leaders for approval. G20 membership allows them also to have a privileged position on select security issues, for example, on Syria at the 2013 St. Petersburg G20.

With these incentives, the support for the G20 among middle states is strongly evident. The case of Korea remains the most compelling illustration of the deep commitment by middle powers to the workings of the G20. The creation of the G20 provided Korea with new possibilities in terms of

convening power unobtainable before the 2008 global financial crisis. Notwithstanding an economic ranking below that of not only China but also Japan and India, Korea raced ahead to grab the right to host the first G20 outside the "Anglo" world. In doing so, Korea could accentuate its distinctive capacity in terms of lessons learned in its evolution from a developing country to a developed (OECD) power.

Unlike the BRICS, there was no sense of hedging by Korea. Nor were there any explicit recriminations about the causes of the crisis that led to the creation of the G20. In declaratory gestures, the BRICS blamed the European and U.S. central banks for compounding the crisis by generating "excessive liquidity" and fostering "excessive capital flows and commodity prices." In contradistinction, notwithstanding their own traumatic experiences with previous financial crises, none of the MIKTA countries stood out as a vehement critic of U.S. behavior, preferring to emphasize their own recent stellar track records in terms of financial regulation. Australia and Mexico have been success stories by having regulatory systems in the banking sector that held up successfully through the financial crisis, with little or no impairment of bank assets. From 1999, Indonesia embarked on a robust reform process in the banking system with wide-scale restructuring and closures combined with a recapitalization process. Korea launched an impressive Bank Recapitalization Fund together with the purchase of bank-impaired assets through a Restructuring Fund. Turkey, although scarred by earlier crises, retains an importance in terms for lesson learned vis-à-vis financial regulation.

As Charles Grant argues (2012), China and Russia are instinctively suspicious of the very notion of global governance as a self-serving Western concept. These countries are still strongly resistant to international interference in internal affairs. The other BRICS share the sentiment that many of the established "rules of the game" are essentially unequal and unfair. These countries also have the capacity to engage in far more ambitious forms of parallel activities either individually or as a grouping (Barma, Ratner, and Weber 2007). For the middle powers, by way of departure, the G20 did not present challenges in terms of putting pressure on them to act as "responsible stakeholders" (on the view that BRICS are difficult as a group to fit into the global system, see the view of Patrick 2010. See also Casañeda 2010). Rather, the G20 is the glue that animates diplomatic activity, embracing this form of institutional reform provides an opportunity to demonstrate they could act responsibly.

Korea, as the host for the November 2010 G20 Summit, emphasized in some detail the need for the forum to move to the stage where there could be a coordinated exit plan. At the same time, though, Seoul sent out a number of signals that it was contemplating going beyond the established agenda for the G20. In various "outreach" efforts, Korea placed high emphasis on efforts to solidify the G20's role not only as the "premier forum" for crisis management, but also for action collective with respect to sustained economic cooperation. On top of follow-ups to Pittsburgh on recovery and exit strategies, a framework for sustainable and balanced growth, and the reform of international financial institutions, other issues such as trade, food and energy security, and climate financing were highlighted.

In acting as a middle power, however, at this stage Korea did not operate in tandem with other countries clustered in the same category (Lee Sook Jong 2012). Outside of a few specific episodes such as the joint Op-Ed with the leaders of Australia and Korea, Kevin Rudd and Lee Myung-bak, the

middle powers have operated on parallel but largely separate tracks on their G20 diplomacy (on Rudd's role, see Franklin 2008). If there was any thinking about middle powers coalescing together, it was in a largely artificial construct, KIA, linking Korea with Indonesia and Australia (Parello-Plesner 2009. See also Grenville and Thirlwell 2010).

Despite a lack of tangible actions, there were shared characteristics that pointed to the ability of the MIKTA countries to work together. Following the lead of Korea, Mexico pushed for the 2012 Los Cabos G20 Summit to go beyond dealing with the immediate effects of the global financial crisis. In substantive terms, Mexico placed considerable onus on initiatives dealing with financial inclusion as well as green growth. In representative terms, Mexico consolidated expanded outreach to nonmembers, albeit inviting some countries that Mexico placed particular high value on in its bilateral relations—Spain and Chile (Cho 2010).

The most dramatic area of shared innovation, though, was on the linkage of the G20 to nonstate actors. In shifting the emphasis of the G20 from a crisis committee to a steering committee, Korea expanded access to many civil society organizations (CSOs). Approximately 150 representatives from civil society met via a Civil20 in Incheon, Korea on October 14–15, 2010, an organized forum very different from the ad hoc processes of engagement witnessed in the first four leaders' summits. The salience of this meeting as a procedural breakthrough was underscored by the participation of many sherpas and sous-sherpas at this meeting, including those from Indonesia and Mexico (but significantly not China or Brazil) (MacDonald 2010). This dynamic was replicated in large part at Los Cabos. CSOs not only had ample access to the media center, but were also consulted in an unprecedented fashion with daily briefings by the Mexican sherpa office during the Summit. Nonetheless, the major breakthrough at Los Cabos came with the process of interaction with the Business or B20 (which presented a consolidated list of seven recommendations) and a Labour or L20.

Advances Toward Collective Action via MIKTA

As elaborated upon in an earlier work (Cooper and Mo 2013), there has been a "missing middle" in terms of the countries that belong to neither the G7 nor the BRICS. Given this tendency of other members of the G20 to act in a dualistic fashion (belonging to the G20 but to an autonomous forum as well), the lack of any form of collective effort by middle powers sets them apart. In making this possible leap to a new middle power forum, their shared identity comes to the fore. Just as countries such as Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Mexico were excluded both from IBSA and the BRICS because they did not fit the criteria of being big emerging states with recognition issues with the global system, there was a degree of exclusion in MIKTA. While Argentina and Saudi Arabia were brought into the G20, they were not brought into MIKTA. Such exclusion highlights that MIKTA was not simply a group of the non-G7 or BRICS countries within the G20. It was a forum with some distinctive criteria of self-selective membership, with a sense of shared identity. Although this image was reinforced by normative considerations, in that unlike the MIKTA countries neither Argentina nor Saudi Arabia has shown any interest in hosting and/or taking forms of issue-specific leadership within the context of the G20 (including building engagement with domestic CSOs). The decision not to include these countries

in MIKTA (despite the attraction of bigger numbers in terms of member-ship), therefore, appears not to be simply because of the different profiles Saudi Arabia and Argentina present in the G20, but because of a divergence with any middle power identity.

The decision to initiate MIKTA on the sidelines of the UNGA at the for-eign ministerial level was a direct replication of the manner by which BRICS came into being. The difference was that MIKTA lacked any plan for turning the dialogue forum into a summit process. Though lacking explicit ambitions, the members reduced risk. After all, even with an initial nudge by leaders, it took IBSA from 2003 to 2006 to institutionalize a summit process. Moving slowly provided advantages. Moving beyond the sounding out stage in September 2013 the first official meeting of MIKTA was in turn held in Mexico City in April 2014, with a communiqué that signaled not the formation of a grouping, but rather the initiation of a "dialogue" process.

In terms of national leadership, the cautious style attributed to MIKTA was reinforced when Mexico—not Korea—took on the immediate conven-ing role. After all, it was Korea that had done most of the running in terms of reenergizing the middle power concept with special reference to the G20. Ideationally, a wide number of Korean think tanks and research centers had advocated the relevance of middle power status for Korea to gain the advan-tages of network diplomacy and polycentric trends in the global system. Korea was far more ambitious in projecting a middle power profile. While Mexico continued to prefer the use of bridging analogies, President Lee-Myung-bak resorted to the language of middle powers to the heart of Korean diplomacy.

On many counts, the MIKTA approach can be justified on quantitative data about the location of the five countries in the global hierarchy. Unlike the BRICS, the MIKTA countries are not concentrated at the top of the global system in terms of nominal GDP. Rather, they are clustered in the second tier, as the twelfth-, thirteenth-, fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and eighteenth-ranked countries, in terms of nominal GDP (IMF 2015).

- Australia—1,444,189 (millions of USD)
- South Korea—1,416,949
- Mexico—1,282,725
- Indonesia—888, 648
- Turkey—806,108

However, the identity of MIKTA is not founded just on economic ranking. There is an underlying political component as well that shapes the opportu-nities and costs of global big globally as opposed to staying "home." A strik-ing feature about the BRICS is their willingness (and ability) to move beyond their immediate neighborhood. The MIKTA counties are far more constrained in adopting such an approach. Although the MIKTA countries all appear to want to go global, there are symbolic and material barriers to doing so. The crucial concerns for each relates to local issues, whether mi-gration in the case of Mexico, security in the case of Turkey, building ASEAN community values in the case of Indonesia, balancing the relation-ship with China in the case of Australia, or dealing with peninsular issues in the case of Korea.

By its proximity to the USA, with a long and highly sensitive border, Mexico stands out as the most limited in its mix of global and regional

locations. Motivated by the political and moral imperatives of looking after Mexican migrants to the USA, Mexico had developed an impressive, albeit, costly set of consulates across the USA.

Under these conditions, Mexico had a great incentive to show that it could take the lead in an initiative beyond North America, or for that matter the Americas. Because of the effort and cost in managing the stresses of its bilateral relationship with the USA, however, Mexico only had limited space to take on the burden of such an initiative. Caution of design and purpose, therefore, is a perquisite for the undertaking of MIKTA.

Still, even a cautious approach does not avoid risks. As in the case of BRICS, gradualism takes the pressure off collective action and favors a process of trust building. In substance, some degree of a club culture can be built up with a minimization of difference and maximization of commonalities. Through a replica of this model, it is possible—and indeed likely—that MIKTA can maintain its incremental approach for a number of years. Adopting a low profile, and meeting largely on the edges of the annual UNGA opening or at the G20, MIKTA can "stay below the radar" of global debate.

Still, over time, this cautious approach will become more difficult. If it does very little because of the restrained style, MIKTA will become the target of criticism for being a talk shop. Moreover, if in declaratory statements MIKTA indicates that it is willing to subordinate global issues to specific regional issues of special interest to one member then it will be evident MIKTA serves only as a platform of convenience—leveraging attention on separate issues by individual members. Alternatively, if declarations on particular issues are not agreed on collectively—whether IFI reform or on human rights—this nonaction constitutes a signal that MIKTA is unable to forge a viable club culture.

Operating for a protracted period of time exclusively as a dialog process or consultative mechanism, furthermore, emphasizes the foreign ministry ownership of MIKTA. Notwithstanding the strengths of this approach, there is the risk that the relationship will still be defined in narrow restrictive terms, not only about different national interests but also with respect to bureaucratic ownership.

An advance beyond this initial cautious trust building stage is most likely to be taken on a niche or functional issue-specific basis (Cooper 1997). As telegraphed in a joint Op-Ed written by the MIKTA foreign ministers in November 2014 (*Daily Sabah* 2014), there are a number of scenarios in terms of policy targeting that are under consideration. One is the promotion of post-2015 development cooperation, with particular respect to infrastructure promotion. Another is a focus on health governance. The third is an emphasis on disaster risk management and humanitarian assistance.

Infrastructure promotion fits very well with the Korean initiative at the 2010 Seoul G20, a push that was not only substantively important, but also contained huge symbolic importance. Whereas the first stage of the G20 dealt exclusively with crisis management of the global financial crisis, with the hosting functions performed by members of the traditional establishment, the Seoul Summit opened up the process both in terms of "actorness" and agenda. The health agenda gained some prominence at the third meeting of MIKTA foreign ministers on the sidelines of the UNGA in September 2014 with a joint statement expressing concern over the spread of the Ebola virus (*Daily Sabah* 2014).

The problem with any of these choices, however, is one of comparative advantage. Both development and health governance are crowded areas with a large amount of overlap and competition. Whatever the ideational and material resources available to middle powers in the area of development, they remain in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the BRICS. Not only are the BRICS well positioned in terms of financial safety nets (Chin 2010) through the creation of the NDB, but they have also demonstrated a capacity to take ambitious initiatives in the development/infrastructural domain. In the area of health governance, the MIKTA countries have to locate their initiatives next to the G7 (as in the case of the Muskoka initiative on maternal health). To carve out significant niches for MIKTA in these areas, therefore, is a formidable challenge.

Disaster risk management and humanitarian assistance appears to be more viable. All of the MIKTA countries have experience in this functional arena. Mexico assumed a high profile in the aftermath of the Katrina hurricane; Turkey and Korea mobilized impressive relief efforts in the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan, as did Australia in the context of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.

The big question that remains is whether locating some significant niche will act as the defining mark on MIKTA. In terms of the distribution of global public goods, MIKTA's embrace of this functional approach has some considerable attractiveness. Unlike either the G7 or the BRICS, there is no sensitivity about MIKTA projecting its collective effort to impose discipline or to challenge the status quo on a global basis.

Under these circumstances, will MIKTA be content to remain organizationally different from the G7 and BRICS? Or will there be a desire to move along the same path as the G7 and BRICS toward a summit of their own? To be sure, the attraction of this shift could increase whether or not there is a consolidation of the functional approach. The projection of the niche approach on a selected issue such as disaster relief will likely need the coordinating dynamics solely held by leaders.

But the logic of a MIKTA stand-alone leaders' summit goes beyond entrepreneurial level, with normative connotations about being responsible or constructive states. The identity of the middle powers in MIKTA is not related to these countries being members of loose coalitions, as in the past; the identity is connected to them being pivotal members of the G20. Consequently the elevation of the MIKTA to a summit process is directly linked to the hub role of the G20, amid the problems of gridlock, in global governance (Hale, Held, and Young 2013).

Akin to the BRICS, there is a strong logic for a MIKTA meeting at the leaders level in the context of the G20 summit process, either to mobilize support for components of the G20 summit before the meeting or in a mode of "friends of G20" after the summit. Such activities do not move into the domain as constituting a G20 secretariat. The meetings are by way of contrast an extension of the informal modes of operation, that in some ways replicate what the BRICS has done since 2011 (with antecedents going back further to 2008 in the context of the Toyako G8). Such meetings are also consistent with how MIKTA has evolved up to the present time, as illustrated by the meeting of foreign ministers on the sidelines of the Brisbane G20 Summit on November 15, 2014.

The risks are magnified through a ratcheting up process with MIKTA moving from being a meeting of foreign ministers to a meeting of leaders. These

risks can be mitigated, however, through the utilization of an IBSA and BRICS hybrid model. Akin to BRICS, MIKTA started through a foreign minister track. Yet unlike the BRICS, there does not seem to be a straightforward path to "move up" from meetings at the foreign minister level to a summit of leaders. The more likely means of transition is to follow the IBSA model, by which President Thabo Mbeki made the plea for a new summit process and then sold the idea to the other leaders of the countries at bilateral meetings.

In terms of this scenario, the ingredient absent in MIKTA is a single global issue that binds the members together. In the case of IBSA, this was the desire of Brazil, India, and South Africa to join the UNSC. Hence, the catalyst for a MIKTA summit will have to come via other means. If it takes place on a functional basis—as the G20 was precipitated because of the 2008 global financial crisis—it will be because an issue-specific crisis such as disaster relief cries out for collective action. The alternative is because of profound systemic crisis that hints at their status as members of the top table, especially a shared concern that the G20 has become stalled as a hub forum. This type of crisis will emphasize, not their technical skills, but their broader entrepreneurial and managerial capacity.

Through the lens of IBSA, MIKTA does not look like it is an artificial construct (Stuenkel 2015). No less than IBSA, the MIKTA countries are democracies both old and new, with robust if uneven civil society cultures. No less than IBSA, they all highly globalized. But without a tangible purpose, such as UNSC reform as in the case of IBSA, this may be too far a stretch to facilitate a shift to create a MIKTA summit. The only tangible purpose of an equivalent nature is the organizational maintenance of the G20, and the maintenance of their role in this forum.

It is only the concern about collective failure in the G20 that overcomes the constraints to the global projection of collective middle power identity. Under such conditions, being in the middle of the G20 has immense value. Although the strength of the overall middle power identity varies among the MIKTA members, the use of this identity to reinvigorate the G20 provides a common script to an effort that has is vitally important to all these countries. Furthermore, the difference among the countries about their intensity of middle power identity does not interfere with a move to go big on a summit. Above all a MIKTA summit does not contradict membership in another forum as in the case of the overlap between IBSA and BRICS countries. The choice is only sensitive in signaling that these middle powers want to project a more robust global profile as opposed to a regional identity in the case of Indonesia through ASEAN, or Mexico through CELAC and the Pacific Alliance, and Turkey through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Korea though the building or new forms of cooperation with China and Japan on a trilateral basis, or through ASEAN + 3. Such sensitivity about this type of choice even extends to Australia, where there are some ideological/political forces that argue that a middle power identity sells the country short in terms of its pivotal status. A summit that is directly tied to the sustainability of the G20's hub role (and Australia's own standing at the high table) is complementary, not contradictory, to this standing.

Conclusion

The middle power concept has always had a sense that it is about actors in search of a common script. For individual states the narrative has been

compelling with a wide number of countries being depicted (and depicting themselves) in this fashion. Far from fading away, it is the sustained and adaptive nature of this narrative that stands out. On a collective basis, in contradistinction, it is the lack of collective action among this cluster of middle powers that stands out. Although loose middle power coalitions have come into being on a functional basis, no autonomous middle power summit process or even caucus has come into being.

The evolution of the G20 has changed the nature of global politics. Brought into an enhanced global architecture, partly a result of their diplomatic actions but also because these countries were viewed as committed supporters of the global system, middle powers have focused on the G20 as the hub of the new Informalism. As the G20 has matured, however, the operational calculus has changed. Instead of running ahead with individual agendas leveraged from G20 membership, the collective benefits of working together in a more cohesive fashion surfaces. This shift reflects in many ways a set of positive attributes, above all an embedded commitment to the workings of the G20. But it also signals frustration. Having hosted the G20, it will be a long wait for Korea or Mexico—and ultimately Australia and Turkey—to be the actor of influence again. Beyond immediate self-interest, there is the larger danger that the G20's hub role will erode, a contraction not amenable to countries that have a large stake in consistency in global rulemaking.

It will not be all that easy for MIKTA to step up to the leader summit level. Although sharing some degree of middle powers identification, it cannot be said that the MIKTA countries know each other well. The BRICS and IBSA lacked strong connection among the constituent countries; however, this condition is in itself not dispositive in determining MIKTA's ability to move up to a leaders' summit. Going global in terms of a middle power summit is an ambitious goal and one that might well stretch the limits of cooperation. Yet, to a greater degree than even the BRICS and IBSA, the logic of such an undertaking is unassailable if the advances in global governance through the hub of G20 are to be maintained. Whereas the big emerging states, akin to the old establishment G7 countries have a range of options before them, the G20 is the main game for middle powers. A MIKTA summit, therefore, is not a substitute for the G20, or designed only to fill functional gaps not open to the G20. Rather a middle power summit is both directly tied to the existence of the G20, and the consequence of the ascendancy of Informalism that has facilitated institutional concentration and fragmentation. Certainly a move by middle powers to create a summit of their own will be a intricate process. But, faced with dangers of backsliding in rulemaking in the global system, this form of elevated activity has an air of inevitably as underpinned by the declaration of the Fifth MIKTA foreign ministers, 2015' meeting in May 2015 concerning consideration of a 'MIKTA leaders' gathering at an appropriate time within this year.

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