

REVISITING GLOBAL KOREA.
SOUTH KOREA'S SOFT POWER ASSETS AND THE ROLE
OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

Despite the geopolitical limitations and the prohibitive status of a middle power, during the past few years, the Republic of Korea has started to intensively make use of soft power strategies in order to boost its global image. Its strategy focuses primarily on cultural diplomacy, but also takes into account the international contribution aspects. Therefore, due to its successful development experience, the country tries to export its model through various development assistance policies and become a mentor in this new field. The previous and current administration shifted South Korea's interests and focused not only on cultural diplomacy, but also on international cooperation. Therefore, as a former aid recipient, Korea adopted the same mechanisms previously used by its former donors, concentrating on the concessional loans and tied aid in order to boost the image of the state and increase its desirability towards the foreign public and ultimately play an important role in supporting development in developing countries.

Overall, the paper investigates the aid allocation and offers clarifications of the linkage between the 'Global Korea' strategy and the official development assistance policies (ODA). Thus the study highlights the deficiencies of the current model, and at the same time, advocates for untied aid and a noticeable enhancement of grants allocation. Additionally, bearing in mind the strong regional bias and the obvious contradiction with the objectives of a global strategy, an adjustment concerning the distribution of funds based on regional equity is also mandatory. Therefore, South Korea can stand as a truly Global Korea on the international arena.

Keywords: South Korea, middle power diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, soft power tools, official development assistance.

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