



e-ISSN: 3109-6425
p-ISSN: 3109-6433

Proceeding Jakarta Geopolitical Forum

Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional Republik Indonesia (LEMHANNAS RI)

Volume 8 | 2024

WEB : <https://proceeding.lemhannas.com/index.php/jgf>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55960/jgf.v8i1.270>

Conference Paper

MIDDLE POWER GEOPOLITICAL POSITION AND MARITIME WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Melissa Conley Tyler

The Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue, Canberra, Australia

Abstract.

The study analyses how middle powers, particularly Australia and Indonesia, can strengthen their strategic influence through the adoption of a whole-of-nation approach to foreign and security policy. In the context of increasingly complex and interconnected global challenges, including climate change, transnational crime, and geopolitical instability, middle powers need to coordinate across government sectors and involve non-state actors to develop effective responses. Drawing on the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy, and Defence Dialogue framework and empirical examples including MIKTA cooperation and Australia's climate leadership, the study examines how integrated strategies and cross-sectoral coordination enhance national and regional resilience. Using qualitative content analysis, the research reviews official policy documents, public statements, and academic literature to assess the institutionalisation of whole-of-nation practices. The findings emphasise the strategic significance of internal coherence and external partnerships in enabling middle powers to influence global governance and operate effectively in a rapidly evolving international environment.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, middle powers, strategic coordination, whole-of-nation.

Corresponding Author:

Melissa Conley Tyler
Email: melissa.conley.tyler@gmail.com

Article History:

Received : 25-04-2024
Revised : 23-05-2024
Accepted : 28-06-2024

This article, authored by [Melissa Conley Tyler](#), is published under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that proper credit is given to the original author(s), the title of the work, the journal citation, and the corresponding DOI. The selection and peer-review of this article were conducted under the responsibility of the JGF Conference Committee.

OPEN ACCESS



Published by Lemhannas Press.

Introduction

In today's turbulent global landscape, middle powers must assert their influence in tackling complex and interconnected challenges (1). The urgency of the engagement is underscored by the human toll of ongoing crises, for example the civilian casualties in Lebanon (2). These tragic events mirror broader struggles in Ukraine, Russia, Myanmar, Sudan, and Pacific nations grappling with climate-induced displacement (3,4). Together, they highlight the pressing need for comprehensive and coordinated responses to growing global instability. Consequently, countries like Australia and Indonesia face increasing pressure to adopt a "whole-of-nation" approach that integrates all sectors of government and society to respond effectively to multifaceted global issues (5,6).

Literature Review

Theoretical Studies

The Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy, and Defence Dialogue (AP4D) represents a model for integrating diverse elements of statecraft into a cohesive and coordinated policy approach (6). This tripartite initiative draws from the defence, foreign affairs, and development sectors to promote collaboration across traditionally siloed domains. To conceptualize this integration, the "4S" framework, strategy, structure, staff, and society, serves as a guiding theoretical construct (7). The framework provides a basis for analysing how whole-of-government and whole-of-nation coordination can be institutionalized to enhance a state's capacity to tackle complex international challenges. This framework emphasizes the need for strategic alignment, effective institutional arrangements, skilled personnel, and active societal engagement in the formulation and implementation of foreign and security policy.

Empirical Studies

Complex global challenges increasingly span across defence, civil-military coordination, humanitarian crises, and transnational issues like climate change and organized crime (8,9). These overlapping concerns require cross-sectoral collaboration. Australia's experience, with over 20 government agencies involved in maritime security, demonstrates the operational complexity and necessity of inter-agency coordination (10). These empirical cases highlight the need for comprehensive strategies that transcend traditional bureaucratic boundaries and foster integrated, whole-of-nation responses.

Methods

The study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach, defined as a research technique for drawing replicable and valid inferences from texts (11,12). The method enables a systematic examination of speeches, policy statements, institutional documents, and relevant academic literature on middle power diplomacy, whole-of-nation strategies, and cross-sectoral coordination in international relations. The data sources consist of official publications from governmental and intergovernmental bodies, transcripts of public forums, and peer-reviewed articles published within the last ten years. The selection criteria emphasize relevance to foreign policy coordination, strategic partnerships, and multilateral diplomacy involving middle powers, particularly in the Indo-Pacific area. The unit of analysis focuses on the practical implementation of whole-of-nation approaches as articulated in policy discourse and supported by institutional frameworks. The study was conducted over a one-year period, with data credibility ensured through source triangulation and validation against recognized policy initiatives and expert-reviewed analyses.

Results and Discussion

The findings reveal a growing need for an integrated strategic approach in which all branches of government align behind clear and coordinated objectives (6). Middle powers like Australia and Indonesia operate without the dominance of great powers but maintain significant capacity to influence the international system (13). These countries actively work to shape global norms and institutions to serve their strategic interests. Middle powers gain greater leverage when acting collectively, as seen in the collaborative efforts within the MIKTA grouping (Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia) (14). A notable example is the meeting between Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi at the United Nations (6), reflecting diplomatic coordination on shared regional and global concerns .

Despite formal alliances, for example Australia's alignment with the United States, middle powers assert national interests independently (15). Australia's continued commitment to climate action, regardless of possible shifts in U.S. policy to potentially withdraw from the Paris Agreement, illustrates this autonomy. The country's initiative to co-host a climate conference with Pacific Island nations underscores a proactive approach to environmental leadership (6).

In supporting the approach, structural effectiveness depends on robust communication channels across government departments to support comprehensive and agile policy

development (16). Policy actors must also possess the skills to operate across diverse professional cultures and sectors, enabling adaptive responses to complex, cross-cutting issues. At the societal level, non-state actors, comprising of businesses, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and diaspora communities, contribute significantly to international policy formulation and implementation (17–19). Strengthening connections between core international policy agencies and these broader societal stakeholders enhances national capacity to meet both domestic and global objectives.

Evidence of this shift can be seen in the growing acceptance of whole-of-nation concepts in Australian foreign policy, as reflected in the launch of a strategic policy paper by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which advocates for inclusive and coordinated international engagement (20). This coordinated approach proves essential in a world marked by cascading crises and constrained resources. Internal coordination and external partnerships allow middle powers to increase their global impact. These results highlight the importance of strengthening partnerships wherever possible to advance peace, security, and stability.

Conclusion

Middle powers can significantly enhance their global influence by adopting a whole-of-nation approach that integrates unified strategy, effective institutional structures, skilled personnel, and active societal engagement. In a world marked by complex, transboundary challenges, for example climate change, transnational crime, and geopolitical instability, internal coherence and external partnerships become essential. Countries like Australia and Indonesia, though lacking the dominance of great powers, can assert strategic agency by coordinating across government sectors and collaborating with non-state actors, comprising of civil society, academia, and the private sector. As global problems increasingly defy traditional boundaries and bureaucratic divides, middle powers must strengthen internal alignment and build purposeful alliances to promote a more peaceful, secure, and resilient international order.

Acknowledgments

The author extends sincere gratitude to The Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue and Lembaga Ketahanan Republik Indonesia for their invaluable support throughout the various stages of developing this article

References

1. Wright T. Middle Powers and the Multilateral Pivot. In: Jongryn M, editor. MIKTA, Middle Powers, and New Dynamics of Global Governance: The G20's Evolving Agenda. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US; 2015. p. 13–31.

2. Kawa N, Abisaab J, Abiad F, Badr K, El-Kak F, Alameddine M, et al. The Toll of Cascading Crises on Lebanon's Health Workforce. *Lancet Glob Heal*. 2022 Feb 1;10(2):177–8.
3. Mbah RE, Mbah EF, Hultquist L, Repp R. The 2020s Global Crises: A Discussion of How International Institutions are Responding to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Climate Change Crisis. *Adv Soc Sci Res J*. 2023 Apr 13;10(4 SE-Articles):76–98.
4. Falk J, Colwell RR, Behera SK, El-Beltagy AS, Gleick PH, Kennel CF, et al. An urgent Need for COP27: Confronting Converging Crises. *Sustain Sci*. 2023;18(2):1059–63.
5. Brunk D. "Whole-of-society" Peacebuilding: A New Approach for Forgotten Stakeholders. *Int J*. 2015 Nov 23;71(1):62–87.
6. Tyler MC. Jakarta Geopolitical Forum VIII/2024. 2024 [cited 2025 Aug 5]. Middle Power Geopolitical Position and Maritime Whole of Government Approach in the Indo-Pacific Region. Available from:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKp5tBF8usc>
7. de Montigny JG, Desjardins S, Bouchard L. The Fundamentals of Cross-Sector Collaboration for Social Change to Promote Population Health. *Glob Health Promot*. 2017 Aug 14;26(2):41–50.
8. Quayle A, Grosvold J, Chapple L. New Modes of Managing Grand Challenges: Cross-Sector Collaboration and the Refugee Crisis of the Asia Pacific. *Aust J Manag*. 2019 Sep 11;44(4):665–86.
9. Kapucu N, Parkin A, Lumb M, Dippy R. Crisis Coordination in Complex Intergovernmental Systems: The Case of Australia. *Public Adm Rev*. 2024 May 1;84(3):389–99.
10. Wilson B. Models for Maritime Collaboration in the South China Sea: National-level Coordination. In: *Cooperation and Engagement in the Asia-Pacific Region* [Internet]. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Nijhoff; 2019. p. 391–414. Available from:
<https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004412026/BP000026.xml>
11. Saunders M, Lewis P, Thornhill A. Research Methods for Business Students by Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 8th edition. [Internet]. *Research Methods For Business Students*. 2015. 768 p. Available from:
https://www.google.co.id/books/edition/Research_Methods_for_Business_Students/0DHFsgEACAAJ?hl=en
12. Krippendorff K. Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology [Internet]. SAGE Publications; 2018. 472 p. Available from:
<https://methods.sagepub.com/book/mono/content-analysis->

4e/toc

13. Beeson M, Lee W. The Middle Power Moment: A New Basis for Cooperation between Indonesia and Australia? In: Roberts CB, Habir AD, Sebastian LC, editors. *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK; 2015. p. 224–43.
14. Schiavon JA, Domínguez D. Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA): Middle, Regional, and Constructive Powers Providing Global Governance. *Asia Pacific Policy Stud*. 2016 Sep 1;3(3):495–504.
15. Narisya S. Australia's Middle Power Approach Towards Climate Change in Pacific Island. *Transform Glob*. 2021 Jun 30;8(1):1–12.
16. Carey G, Landvogt K, Corrie T. Working the Spaces in between: A Case Study of a Boundary-Spanning Model to Help Facilitate Cross-Sectoral Policy Work. *Aust J Public Adm*. 2018 Sep 1;77(3):500–9.
17. Kadhum O. Diaspora as Non-State Actors in The International System. In: *Routledge Handbook of Peace, Security and Development*. Routledge; 2020. p. 396–406.
18. Menashy F. Understanding the Roles of Non-State Actors in Global Governance: Evidence from the Global Partnership for Education. *J Educ Policy*. 2016 Jan 2;31(1):98–118.
19. House J, Kasper G, Ross S. Misunderstanding in social life: Discourse approaches to problematic talk. *Misunderstanding in Social Life: Discourse Approaches to Problematic Talk*. 2014.
20. McDougall D. Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper: Deconstruction and Critique. *Round Table*. 2018 May 4;107(3):279–90.