

Title	China's Rise and the Strategic Landscape of Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Challenges for The New Southern Policy of the Republic of Korea
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Executive summary

This project aims to examine the challenges and opportunities to the foreign policy of the Republic of Korea (ROK), permeating from China's rise and the implementation of Belt and Road Initiatives in Southeast Asia, amidst simultaneous launches of several strategic initiatives by other major and middle powers. This research also looks at how ROK's New Southern Policy (NSP) fits into ASEAN's ability to cope with geopolitical and geoeconomic competitions. ROK's introduction of NSP comes at the time when China's ever-growing presence and influence in Southeast Asia combined with strategic uncertainties created by United States (US) under Trump's administration raised the question of whether it could be well-received by ASEAN and its member states. It is likely that the Trump administration will want to forge a soft coalition on the Indo-Pacific to counter China's advancing influence, by bringing in Indo-Pacific partners like Japan and India, making Southeast Asia "crowded" with various powers and influences. This strategic context of Southeast Asia is therefore enormously important for the Republic of Korea's government in formulating and implementing its New Southern Policy. Thus, South Korea risks losing out if it does not position itself well in engaging with the region. The outcome of this research will provide an analytical and empirical assessment of the strategic landscape of Southeast Asia, which will be significant for the ROK's foreign policy, especially the New Southern Policy. It could be theoretically relevant too, as it could contribute to the theoretical literature of small state's foreign policy, middle power's initiatives, and major powers' competition.

Publication: