

Mexico's Middle Power Politics through MIKTA Coalition Strategy for Influence in Unequal Global Governance

Oscar Rodrigo Victoria Velasco

Universidad Anáhuac Oaxaca , Blvd. Guadalupe Hinojosa de Murat No. 1100.
San Raymundo Jalpan, Oaxaca, Mexico C.P

*corresponding author E-mail: oscarvictoriamx@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Global governance is increasingly shaped by major power groupings such as the G7, BRICS, and the G20. This structure creates political constraints for middle powers that have diplomatic capacity but limited individual influence in global decision-making. This study examines how Mexico uses Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA) as a coalition strategy to strengthen its political influence in global governance. The study uses a qualitative case study design based on desk research. The analysis relies on official documents, MIKTA statements, government publications, and academic literature on middle powers, role theory, and Mexico's foreign policy. Role theory is used to examine Mexico's agenda-setting, coalition-building, niche diplomacy, institutional engagement, leadership role, and recognition-seeking. Data are analyzed through source triangulation and thematic interpretation to ensure consistency between diplomatic discourse and political role performance. The study finds that Mexico uses MIKTA to expand diplomatic visibility, strengthen coalition-based bargaining, and seek recognition as a global governance actor. Mexico's middle power activism through MIKTA shows that influence is not only produced through material power, but also through role performance, institutional engagement, and coalition politics. This study contributes to political science debates on middle power activism, coalition politics, and the role of secondary powers in unequal global governance structures.

Keywords: Middle Power, Role Theory, Mexico, MIKTA

INTRODUCTION

Global governance has become increasingly shaped by competition among major power groupings (Tyler, 2025). Institutions and forums such as the G7, BRICS, and the G20 influence how global priorities are defined, negotiated, and implemented (Freddy & Thomas, 2023). This structure creates an unequal political environment for states that possess significant capacity but do not belong to the category of great powers (Kinik, 2020). Middle powers

occupy this intermediate position because they have diplomatic resources, economic relevance, and regional influence, yet they cannot easily shape global rules alone (Vuong & Tho, 2023). Mexico represents this type of actor because it combines economic weight, G20 membership, strategic geography, and a long tradition of multilateral diplomacy. Its participation in Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA) therefore deserves attention not only as a diplomatic fact, but as a political strategy (Çolakoğlu, 2016). The central issue is how Mexico uses to strengthen its position within a global order dominated by larger powers.

MIKTA was established as a forum of middle powers that are geographically diverse but politically connected by their shared position outside the core of great-power decision-making. Its members are important G20 economies, but they do not possess the same structural influence as the G7 or major BRICS states (Maihold, 2014). This makes the organization politically relevant because it offers a platform for states that seek influence through cooperation rather than domination. For Mexico, this forum creates an opportunity to act beyond its immediate regional environment and to participate in broader debates on global governance (Alejo & Ulfgard, 2019). Mexico's role cannot be reduced to membership or symbolic participation. It should be understood as part of a wider attempt to project diplomatic relevance, gain recognition, and build coalitions with other middle powers. This makes the impact of Mexico important for understanding how secondary powers respond to unequal global political structures (Schiavon & Domínguez, 2016).

The Mexico's position in MIKTA is often described rather than politically explained. Existing discussions may show that Mexico is a middle power, a G20 member, or an active participant in multilateral forums. However, such descriptions do not fully explain how Mexico transforms these attributes into political influence (López-Vergès et al., 2021). The question is not only whether Mexico has the characteristics of a middle power. The more

important question is how Mexico performs this role through coalition politics. This problem has real-world relevance because middle powers increasingly seek alternative channels to influence global agendas. If global governance remains dominated by powerful blocs, this forums become essential spaces where states such as Mexico can negotiate visibility and relevance (Park, 2022).

Several studies have already explained that middle powers often rely on multilateralism, coalition-building, and niche diplomacy. They do not usually influence world politics through military dominance or unilateral rule-making. Instead, they seek influence by promoting selected issues, supporting institutional cooperation, and working with like-minded states (Zhukova et al., 2021). Mexico's diplomatic tradition fits this pattern because it has historically emphasized non-intervention, peaceful conflict resolution, development, disarmament, and multilateral engagement. Mexico has also sought to present itself as a responsible actor with a role beyond its immediate relationship with the United States (Freddy & Thomas, 2023). This means that Mexico's foreign policy contains both defensive principles and activist ambitions. These known elements provide a basis for analyzing Mexico as a middle power, but they do not yet explain the specific political function in Mexico's strategy.

What remains insufficiently understood is the connection between Mexico's middle power identity and its use of MIKTA as a coalition platform (Torresini, 2021a). Many discussions of focus on the forum as a general grouping of middle powers. Other discussions focus on Mexico's foreign policy traditions or its participation in global institutions. The missing element is the political link between Mexico's search for influence and the institutional opportunity offered. This gap matters because it is not simply another diplomatic forum in Mexico's foreign policy network. It is a space where Mexico can perform a middle power role collectively with other states facing similar limitations. Without examining this connection, Mexico's participation in MIKTA appears descriptive, fragmented, and under-theorized.

There is a lack of explanation regarding how Mexico utilizes the forum to negotiate political influence in global governance (Cooper, 2018; Mehmetcik, 2021a; Morales-Moreno, 2004). The gap is not merely that Mexico has received less attention than Indonesia, Korea, Australia, or Turkey in middle power studies. The deeper gap concerns how Mexico's participation to reveals the politics of recognition, coalition-building, and institutional positioning among middle powers. This shifts the focus from Mexico as an isolated case to Mexico as an example of broader middle power activism. It also shifts the analysis from identity to strategy (Bril-Mascarenhas et al., 2025). Mexico's middle power role becomes meaningful when it is connected to concrete diplomatic practices such as agenda-setting, coalition formation, and institutional engagement. This gap requires attention because it can clarify how middle powers operate within an international order where formal equality often coexists with unequal power.

Mexico occupies a distinctive position in global politics and it is closely tied to North America through trade and geography, but it also has diplomatic links to Latin America and the wider Global South. This creates a complex foreign policy position between dependence, autonomy, and international ambition. MIKTA allows Mexico to diversify its diplomatic identity by cooperating with countries from different regions. Through this cooperation, Mexico can avoid being viewed only through the lens of its relationship with the United States. It can also present itself as a bridge-building actor with relevance in global governance debates. Studying this dynamic helps explain how middle powers seek agency even when they operate under strong structural constraints.

The central research question is: how does Mexico use MIKTA as a middle power coalition strategy to increase its political influence in global governance? This question directs attention to political behavior rather than simple classification. It also allows the article to ask how Mexico constructs its role as a middle power . A related question is how MIKTA helps Mexico

strengthen visibility, legitimacy, and agenda-setting capacity. Another important question is how Mexico's participation reflects broader coalition politics among states outside the great-power core. These questions are designed to move the discussion from description to political analysis. They also help clarify whether Mexico's role represents symbolic diplomacy, strategic coalition-building, or a broader attempt to negotiate status in the international order.

The urgency of this article lies in the changing nature of global governance. As major powers compete and global institutions face fragmentation, middle powers need new ways to maintain relevance. Mexico's participation in MIKTA provides an important case for understanding this transformation. The article can contribute to debates on middle power activism by showing that middle power status is not only about material capacity or diplomatic identity. It is also about how states use coalitions to pursue recognition, agenda-setting, and institutional influence. The article can also contribute to political science by connecting Mexico's foreign policy to wider debates on coalition politics and global governance. This focus makes Mexico as a useful entry point for examining how middle powers seek political space within an unequal international order.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design to examine Mexico's foreign policy role within Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA). A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on political meaning, diplomatic behavior, role performance, and institutional positioning rather than numerical measurement (Creswell W.John, 2014). The design allows the article to analyze how Mexico constructs and performs its middle power role through diplomatic discourse, coalition activity, and engagement in global governance. Role theory is used as the analytical framework because it helps explain how states define their expected roles,

perform those roles in international settings, and seek recognition from other actors. This design works for the research because Mexico's position in MIKTA cannot be understood only through economic indicators or formal membership (Mehmetcik, 2021). It requires interpretation of official statements, diplomatic initiatives, and patterns of participation in multilateral forums. Therefore, the qualitative case-study design enables a focused analysis of how Mexico uses MIKTA as a political strategy within global governance .

The data used in this study consist of secondary sources collected through desk research. The main sources include official documents from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MIKTA joint statements, G20-related documents, government publications, policy documents, and academic literature on middle powers, Mexico's foreign policy, and role theory. The unit of analysis is Mexico's foreign policy role , while the population of documents consists of texts that discuss Mexico's diplomatic position, cooperation, middle power behavior, and global governance participation. Documents are selected purposively based on their relevance to Mexico's multilateral agenda, and the political function of middle power coalitions. The research instrument is a document review matrix used to classify and compare evidence across analytical dimensions. These dimensions include agenda-setting, coalition-building, niche diplomacy, institutional engagement, leadership role, and recognition-seeking. These dimensions guide the analysis of how Mexico's role is represented, performed, and positioned within the forum..

Trustworthiness is ensured through source triangulation, conceptual consistency, and transparent document selection. Official documents are compared with academic literature and policy sources to avoid relying on a single type of evidence. Reliability is strengthened by applying the same analytical dimensions to all selected documents, so that the analysis remains systematic and consistent. Validity is supported by linking each analytical dimension directly to role theory and to the research question about Mexico's use of MIKTA as a middle power coalition strategy. The study also avoids

unsupported claims by limiting the analysis to available documents and established scholarly discussions. Since the research uses publicly available documents and does not involve interviews, surveys, or human participants, informed consent is not required. Confidentiality risks are minimal because no private personal data are collected, and all sources are treated according to academic standards of citation, accuracy, and responsible interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mexico's Political Position as a Middle Power in an Unequal Global Order

Mexico's position in global governance should be understood as a political position, not only as an economic category. It should not be read simply through GDP, trade volume, or formal membership in international forums. The country has economic weight, G20 membership, strategic geography, and a long tradition of multilateral diplomacy (Jongryn, 2015). Yet these resources do not place it among the dominant rule-makers of global politics. Its role is located between great powers that shape institutional agendas and smaller states with more limited access to global forums (Morales-Moreno, 2004). This intermediate position is politically important because it shows how a state with partial capacity seeks influence without controlling the international system (Çolakoğlu, 2016). The key issue is therefore not whether it qualifies as a middle power, but how this status is used to negotiate influence. Such framing moves the article from description toward a political analysis of power, hierarchy, and recognition in global governance.

Its economic and geopolitical profile provides important resources for international engagement. G20 membership gives access to one of the most visible arenas of global economic governance (Cooper, 2015b). Extensive trade networks also strengthen its relevance in international political economy. These assets secure visibility, but they do not automatically produce decisive influence. Access to global forums is different from the ability to shape their priorities. Proximity to the United States gives strategic value, but it can

also narrow external perceptions of the country's role. At the same time, its Latin American identity gives regional legitimacy, but regional legitimacy alone does not guarantee global authority (Salinas et al., 2025). This creates a political condition in which the country is visible, relevant, and active, but still constrained by stronger powers.

The unequal structure of global governance limits its ability to act as an individual agenda-setter. Major power groupings such as the G7, BRICS, and leading actors within the G20 continue to shape many international priorities (Freddy & Thomas, 2023). They have stronger economic resources, greater institutional leverage, and more control over global negotiations. Middle powers may sit inside important forums, but they do not necessarily control decision-making processes. This distinction is central because global governance often appears inclusive at the level of membership while remaining unequal at the level of influence. The country's position reflects this wider political tension. It participates in major institutions, but it must still negotiate space within structures dominated by larger powers (Guerra et al., 2021). This is why its role must be analyzed through hierarchy, bargaining, and institutional access.

This problem explains why the case is politically relevant for middle power debates. The issue is not only that previous studies have given less attention to this actor compared with other MIKTA members. The deeper problem is how a middle power responds to unequal global power structures. It cannot rely on material dominance, but it also cannot remain passive in global governance (López & Alvarado, 2025). It must use diplomacy, coalition-building, institutional engagement, and status-seeking strategies to increase influence. This makes the case useful for understanding the agency of states located between great powers and small states. Middle powers operate through strategic positioning rather than structural dominance. The research gap is therefore both empirical and conceptual because it concerns how intermediate capacity is converted into political action (Baydag & Ulfgard,

2025).

The search for political recognition is central to this argument. A long tradition of multilateral diplomacy shows that the country has consistently tried to participate in international rule-making and global problem-solving. However, recognition as a relevant global actor requires more than formal participation. Other actors must also perceive it as capable of contributing to global governance. This is where middle power politics connects with status-seeking behavior. The country seeks to be viewed not only as a regional actor or as a trade partner of the United States. It also seeks recognition as a responsible and constructive actor in wider international politics. MIKTA becomes important because it provides a collective platform where this identity can be performed with other middle powers.

Table 1. Mikta Position and political policy analysis

Dimension	Position	Political Policy	Projection
Economic capacity	Major economy and G20 member	Provides access to global governance forums	Shows material relevance without dominant power
Geopolitical location	Linked to North America and Latin America	Creates visibility and diplomatic complexity	Explains the search for broader global recognition
Institutional participation	Active in MIKTA, G20, UN, OECD, and other forums	Provides access to decision-making spaces	Shows how institutions are used to project influence
Power limitation	Outside the core of G7 and major BRICS dominance	Limits unilateral agenda-setting capacity	Explains the need for coalition-based strategy
Recognition-seeking	Seeks status as a global actor	Connects middle power status to status politics	Links the case to political science debates

The table shows that the country's middle power position contains both capacity and constraint. Economic size and G20 membership provide access, but access does not remove hierarchy. Geopolitical location creates visibility, yet this visibility is politically ambiguous because it is often interpreted through relations with the United States. Institutional participation gives many channels for engagement, but presence in institutions does not automatically

produce agenda-setting power (Torresini, 2021c). These conditions explain why middle power status should be treated as a political condition rather than a simple label. The country has enough capacity to seek influence, but not enough power to dominate global decision-making alone. Coalition politics therefore becomes necessary because it can transform limited individual power into collective visibility. This is where MIKTA becomes politically meaningful as a platform for recognition, bargaining, and role performance.

This framing makes the case useful for the broader study of global governance and political order. It shows how a middle power negotiates between structural limitation and diplomatic ambition. Its role depends on the ability to use available platforms to increase visibility, legitimacy, and bargaining capacity (Jha & Jomy, 2026). MIKTA should therefore be understood not simply as another diplomatic grouping, but as part of a strategy to manage position in an unequal order. Through this lens, the discussion connects directly to political science questions about hierarchy, recognition, agency, and coalition formation. Middle powers matter not because they dominate global politics, but because they organize, negotiate, and project influence through institutions. To clarify this theoretical logic, the article uses role theory to show how middle-power the interaction among structural position, diplomatic behaviour, and political recognition shapes status (Loera-González, 2023a).

Middle power status requires clearer theoretical operationalization because it cannot be reduced to economic ranking or formal participation in international forums. A role-theoretical perspective treats middle power status as a position supported by auxiliary roles that must be recognized by significant others in the international system. These auxiliary roles function as internal attributes that make the category politically meaningful. In this logic, middle power is the basic-level concept, while its supporting roles operate as secondary-level attributes. Each role must be present for middle power status to become analytically valid. A state therefore cannot be understood as a

middle power only because it claims such an identity or occupies an intermediate material rank. It must also perform recognizable diplomatic roles through institutional engagement, coalition-building, and issue-based contribution. This theoretical logic is illustrated in Figure 1.

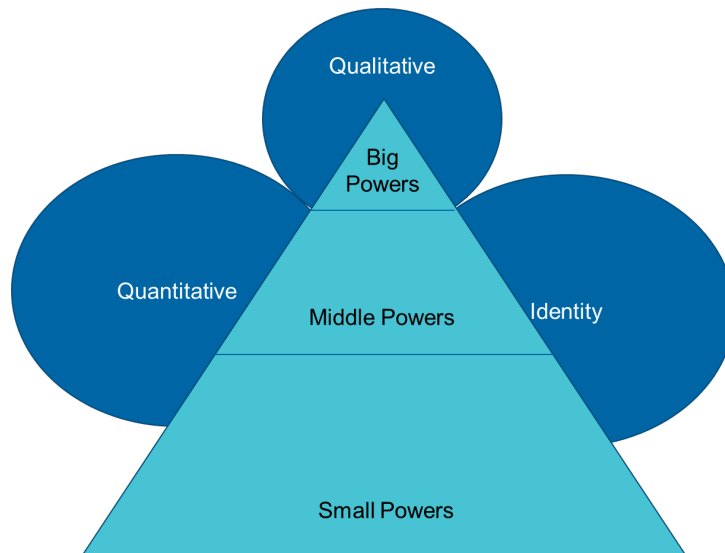


Figure 1. Operationalization of Role Theory for Middle Powers.
Source: Author (2026)

The middle powers are between big powers and small powers, but the figure also shows that hierarchy alone is insufficient to define middle power status. The pyramid reflects the structural ranking of states in the international system, while the surrounding dimensions indicate the roles that sustain middle power identity (Ifdal, 2023a). The quantitative or hierarchical dimension refers to economic, military, social, and developmental indicators that locate a state within the global hierarchy. The functional dimension refers to the capacity to pursue niche diplomacy by concentrating resources on selected issues where diplomatic returns are more achievable. The behavioral dimension refers to practices such as supporting multilateralism, acting as a facilitator, building coalitions, and contributing to international order. The identity dimension refers to how a state defines its international role and how that role is acknowledged by others. Middle power status therefore emerges from the interaction between material position, diplomatic function, political

behavior, and recognition.

This framework is useful for reading Mexico's position in MIKTA because the country possesses the structural basis of a middle power but still operates under clear limits of influence (Ulfgard & Villanueva, 2019). Economic relevance, G20 membership, strategic geography, and multilateral experience provide access to global governance, yet they do not automatically generate agenda-setting power. The dominance of the G7, BRICS, and leading G20 actors means that middle powers often participate in global forums without controlling their political direction. Under these conditions, influence must be constructed through roles rather than assumed from capacity alone. MIKTA becomes significant because it provides a collective arena where those auxiliary roles can be performed (Rimmer, 2018). Through this platform, Mexico can strengthen coalition-building, support selected global agendas, and project a more visible diplomatic identity. The political phenomenon is therefore not simply participation in MIKTA, but the use of MIKTA to perform middle power status within an unequal global order.

The middle power status represents a form of negotiated power. Influence does not always appear through domination, coercion, or superior material capacity. It can also emerge through recognition, institutional presence, agenda-setting, and coalition formation. This is especially relevant for states positioned below great powers but above small powers. Mexico's participation in MIKTA reflects this form of politics because it allows limited individual capacity to be translated into collective visibility. The forum creates a space where middle powers can coordinate positions, reinforce legitimacy, and reduce dependence on great-power-centered arenas. In this sense, MIKTA functions as a political instrument for managing hierarchy rather than merely a diplomatic network. Mexico's role within it shows how middle powers seek influence by performing recognized roles inside institutions and coalitions.

MIKTA as Mexico's Coalition Politics Strategy

MIKTA can be read as a political coalition among middle powers rather

than only as a diplomatic forum. Its members share a similar structural position: they are active in the G20, but they are not located at the center of great-power decision-making. This shared position creates a basis for collective action among states that have capacity, but limited unilateral influence (Chapa & Sánchez, 2025). For Mexico, the forum offers a way to enlarge diplomatic reach beyond what it could achieve individually. Acting through MIKTA allows it to connect national foreign policy interests with a broader middle power agenda. The coalition does not replace larger institutions, but it creates an additional layer of political coordination inside global governance. Through this mechanism, limited individual power can be translated into collective visibility and bargaining capacity (Ciuk & Tavarez, 2024). MIKTA therefore functions as a strategy for operating within, rather than outside, an unequal international order.

Coalition-building becomes a rational response to institutional power inequality. Formal membership in forums such as the G20 or the United Nations does not automatically give all states the same ability to shape agendas. Major powers still have greater resources, stronger bargaining positions, and more influence over the direction of negotiations (Cooper, 2015a). Middle powers therefore face a condition of partial inclusion: they are present in decision-making arenas, but often remain secondary in defining outcomes. MIKTA responds to this condition by providing a collective platform for states that want to increase influence without directly confronting great powers. For Mexico, coalition-building helps reduce the limits of acting alone in forums dominated by stronger actors. The strategy depends less on coercive power and more on coordination, agenda alignment, and repeated institutional presence. In this sense, MIKTA works as a mechanism for negotiating power inside existing global governance structures (Nagy & Ping, 2025).

The cross-regional character of MIKTA expands Mexico's political space beyond its usual diplomatic geography. The grouping connects countries from

Latin America, Southeast Asia, East Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania. This structure allows Mexico to avoid being positioned only through its relationship with the United States or its regional role in Latin America (Garcia & Ugalde, 2025). Through MIKTA, it can perform a broader global identity with other states that also occupy intermediate positions in the international system. The forum gives Mexico access to a wider network of political coordination across regions. This cross-regional setting also supports a form of middle power agency that is not tied to one regional bloc. Mexico can therefore present itself as part of a wider coalition of states seeking greater room in global governance. MIKTA becomes a platform through which diplomatic identity is extended from regional relevance to global participation (Alejo, 2019).

From the perspective of institutional power, MIKTA helps Mexico manage the limits of its bargaining position. It does not provide the material strength of the G7 or BRICS, but it gives members a way to coordinate positions and enter global debates with a clearer collective profile. This collective profile can strengthen the ability of middle powers to raise issues, support shared agendas, and maintain visibility in larger forums. For Mexico, this reduces dependence on bilateral diplomacy or region-based positioning. The country can use MIKTA to participate in global governance through association with other middle powers facing similar constraints. Coalition politics therefore works as a form of institutional positioning. It does not eliminate hierarchy, but it gives middle powers a way to operate more strategically within it. The political value of MIKTA lies in this capacity to turn fragmented middle power voices into a more organized diplomatic presence.

MIKTA also supports Mexico's search for recognition as a global governance actor. Recognition is not produced only by economic size, G20 membership, or formal participation in international institutions. It is produced through repeated role performance, visible diplomatic contribution, and acceptance by other actors. Through MIKTA, Mexico can present itself as a constructive middle power that contributes to multilateral cooperation. This

performance helps shift its image from a state defined mainly by North American trade and proximity to the United States toward a state with wider global agency (Shlykov, 2017). The forum allows Mexico to demonstrate that it can participate in agenda formation, coalition-building, and institutional negotiation. Recognition here is not symbolic alone. It becomes part of the political process through which a middle power strengthens legitimacy and bargaining space.

MIKTA's diverse membership also opens a space for Global South and cross-regional agency, although the forum itself is not purely a Global South bloc. Its members have different regional locations, political identities, and development trajectories (Torresini, 2021b). This diversity gives Mexico a flexible platform for building relations outside traditional geographic and ideological boundaries. It can connect Latin American diplomatic experience with wider debates among emerging and middle powers. This reduces the risk of being treated only as an object of great-power influence. Through coalition activity, it appears as an actor capable of organizing partnerships and contributing to institutional debates. MIKTA therefore enables agency through networked diplomacy rather than through material dominance. The forum becomes a space where middle powers can act collectively despite their unequal position in global governance (Konovalova & Kheifets, 2024).

At the same time, MIKTA also reveals the limits of middle power coalition politics. The forum remains informal, relatively low-profile, and institutionally weaker than major global organizations. Its members do not always share the same priorities, regional concerns, or strategic interests. These differences can limit the consistency of collective action. The coalition also lacks the binding mechanisms needed to transform all diplomatic statements into concrete policy outcomes (Torresini, 2021d). For Mexico, this means that MIKTA increases visibility and coordination, but does not automatically produce decisive influence. Its usefulness depends on how consistently the country uses the forum for agenda-setting, coalition-building,

and institutional engagement. MIKTA should therefore be seen as a political instrument with enabling and limiting effects at the same time.

Mexico's Middle Power Activism and Political Role Performance

Middle power activism is visible when a state uses diplomacy to shape issues, build coalitions, and maintain institutional presence despite limited structural power. In this sense, Mexico's role in MIKTA should be read through political performance rather than formal membership alone. Its activism depends on the ability to convert diplomatic tradition into practical influence within global governance (Aydın, 2019). The country does not possess the coercive power of great powers, but it can still influence political agendas through issue selection and coalition work. This is where role theory becomes useful because it connects identity, behavior, and recognition. A middle power role must be performed repeatedly through visible diplomatic practices. MIKTA provides one arena where such performance can be organized collectively (Ifdal, 2023).

Agenda-setting is one of the clearest expressions of political influence for middle powers. It allows a state to shape which problems are discussed, which values are promoted, and which policy areas receive attention. For Mexico, issues such as development, disarmament, migration, human rights, gender equality, and the 2030 Agenda provide diplomatic spaces where influence can be pursued without relying on material dominance (Gök & Karadeniz, 2019). These issues are not neutral technical concerns because they reflect struggles over priorities in global governance. When a state helps place certain issues on the international agenda, it participates in defining the meaning of collective responsibility. This makes agenda-setting a form of political power. It does not control the whole system, but it can influence how the system frames problems (Kim et al., 2018).

The country's agenda-setting role is connected to its diplomatic identity. Its foreign policy has long emphasized peaceful conflict resolution,

non-intervention, multilateralism, and development. These principles create a basis for claiming credibility in selected global debates (Fleckenstein & Lee, 2016). The value of niche diplomacy lies in concentrating limited resources on areas where diplomatic legitimacy is stronger. Rather than attempting to compete with great powers across all policy fields, a middle power can focus on issues where it has experience, reputation, or normative consistency. This allows diplomatic activism to become more targeted. MIKTA strengthens this strategy by connecting national priorities with a wider middle power platform. Through this process, issue-based diplomacy becomes part of a broader struggle for political visibility (Gök & Karadeniz, 2018).

Institutional engagement also functions as a strategy of bargaining power. Participation in MIKTA, the G20, the United Nations, the OECD, and other multilateral forums gives the country repeated access to political arenas where rules, agendas, and partnerships are formed (Jongryn, 2014). Access does not automatically produce influence, but it creates opportunities for negotiation. The more consistently a middle power appears in institutional spaces, the greater its ability to build networks and maintain diplomatic relevance. Institutional engagement therefore works as a long-term strategy of positioning. It allows the country to connect different forums and present itself as a reliable participant in global governance. This role performance helps transform formal membership into political leverage.

MIKTA adds a coalition dimension to this institutional strategy. Acting alone, a middle power can raise issues, but its voice may remain limited in forums dominated by larger actors (Maihold, 2016). Acting through a coalition increases the chance that its agenda will be heard as part of a broader political position. This is especially relevant in global governance, where agenda-setting often depends on repeated support from multiple actors. MIKTA enables coordination among states that share the problem of limited unilateral influence. It gives them a collective identity without requiring full ideological similarity. For Mexico, this makes the forum useful as a bridge between

national diplomatic priorities and wider institutional bargaining.

Table 2. Mexico's Middle Power Role Performance in Global Governance

Dimension of Role Performance	Political Practice	Function in Global Governance	Limitation
Agenda-setting	Promoting development, disarmament, migration, human rights, gender equality, and the 2030 Agenda	Shapes which issues receive political attention	Influence depends on acceptance by other actors
Niche diplomacy	Concentrating diplomacy on selected issues	Converts limited resources into targeted influence	May remain issue-specific and fragmented
Institutional engagement	Participating in MIKTA, G20, UN, OECD, and other forums	Expands access to negotiation spaces	Access does not guarantee decision-making power
Coalition-building	Working with other middle powers through MIKTA	Amplifies diplomatic voice and visibility	Collective action may be limited by different national interests
Recognition-seeking	Performing the role of a constructive global actor	Strengthens legitimacy and status	Recognition must be sustained through repeated action

The table shows that middle power activism operates through multiple but connected political practices. Agenda-setting allows the country to influence the substance of global debates, while niche diplomacy narrows its focus to areas where credibility can be built. Institutional engagement provides access to negotiation arenas, but access remains incomplete without coalition support. Coalition-building then helps transform individual diplomatic activity into a wider political signal. Recognition-seeking connects these practices to status politics because a middle power role depends on how others perceive and accept its contribution. These dimensions show that activism is not a single action, but a repeated pattern of role performance. They also show that influence remains conditional because every dimension depends on response from other actors.

The limits of this activism must also be acknowledged. MIKTA remains informal and does not possess the institutional authority of larger

organizations. It does not have binding decision-making mechanisms or the structural power held by major blocs. Its members also differ in geography, strategic priorities, political identity, and regional commitments (Loera-González, 2023b). These differences can restrict the depth and consistency of collective action. As a result, the forum can strengthen visibility more easily than it can produce concrete policy outcomes. For Mexico, this means MIKTA is useful for political positioning, but not sufficient as a source of decisive global influence. The coalition creates opportunity, but it does not remove hierarchy.

This limitation prevents a romantic view of middle power activism. A middle power can promote agendas, build coalitions, and participate in institutions, but it still operates within a system shaped by unequal power. Its influence depends on timing, issue relevance, diplomatic consistency, and recognition by stronger actors. MIKTA can support these processes, but it cannot fully compensate for the absence of great-power resources (Mehmetcik, 2021a). The country's activism therefore works best as a strategy of gradual influence rather than direct rule-making. It can shape debate, create partnerships, and sustain visibility, but it cannot unilaterally determine global governance outcomes. This makes the analysis more political because it treats activism as constrained agency. Middle powers act, but they act within limits.

Role performance through MIKTA therefore reveals both the promise and tension of middle power politics. Agenda-setting allows the country to define selected priorities in global governance. Institutional engagement gives it access to repeated bargaining spaces. Coalition-building helps enlarge its diplomatic voice beyond individual capacity (Cooper, 2015b). Recognition-seeking allows the performance of a global role that goes beyond regional or bilateral identity. Yet these practices remain dependent on institutional openness, coalition coherence, and the willingness of other actors to acknowledge the role being performed. MIKTA becomes a political arena where middle power activism is expressed, tested, and constrained at the same

time.

CONCLUSION

Mexico's participation in MIKTA represents a middle power strategy for negotiating influence within an unequal global governance order. Economic capacity, G20 membership, strategic geography, and a strong multilateral tradition provide access to global forums, but they do not automatically produce agenda-setting power in structures dominated by the G7, BRICS, and leading G20 actors. MIKTA gives Mexico a coalition platform to enlarge diplomatic visibility, coordinate with other middle powers, and seek recognition beyond its regional and North American positioning. Middle power status is therefore not only an economic category, but a political role performed through agenda-setting, coalition-building, institutional engagement, and recognition-seeking. However, MIKTA's informal and low-profile character limits its ability to produce binding influence or directly reshape global governance structures. Mexico's activism through MIKTA reflects constrained agency because it creates political space for influence while remaining shaped by institutional hierarchy and great-power dominance.

The contribution to political science lies in reframing Mexico's role in MIKTA as a question of power, bargaining, and institutional positioning. Middle power status becomes more analytically useful when treated as a role that must be performed through recognizable diplomatic practices and acknowledged by other actors. This perspective contributes to debates on middle power activism by explaining how states with limited structural power convert diplomatic capacity into political relevance. It also contributes to coalition politics by showing how cross-regional forums such as MIKTA can function as mechanisms for collective visibility among states outside the great-power core. For global governance studies, Mexico's case clarifies how unequal institutional structures encourage middle powers to seek alternative platforms of coordination. The discussion connects MIKTA to broader

questions of hierarchy, recognition, bargaining power, and the politics of international order.

Future research should compare Mexico's role performance with Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia to assess whether MIKTA produces a shared middle power strategy or remains a flexible forum shaped by national priorities. Comparative analysis would help clarify the extent to which coalition politics operates similarly across different regional and political contexts. Further research could also focus on specific policy areas such as migration, development, disarmament, gender equality, or the 2030 Agenda to examine how agenda-setting works in practice. Interviews with diplomats, policymakers, or officials involved in MIKTA would provide deeper insight into the internal logic of coalition-building and institutional engagement. Future studies may also assess the concrete outcomes of MIKTA initiatives to determine whether the forum generates policy influence beyond symbolic visibility. These directions would strengthen middle power research by linking role performance with observable political effects in global governance.

Authors' Biographies : Oscar Rodrigo Victoria Velasco is an Independent Researcher and Founder of Mestizo, a Jakarta-based startup venture. He obtained his graduate degree from Universidad Anáhuac Oaxaca, Mexico, and his Master's degree from Universitas Indonesia in 2024. His research interests include political economy, democracy and human rights, and cross-cultural relations. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2943-5620>; Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=MNvv0SkAAAAJ&hl=en>.

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