

Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific

ASIA-3010 (3 credits)

South Korea: International Relations and Security

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

Focusing on the Indo-Pacific as a dynamic strategic arena, this course investigates how South Korea engages with regional institutions and partners to promote stability and economic growth. Students analyze multilateral frameworks such as ASEAN Plus Three, the Quad, and AUKUS (Australia, UK, and US) alongside Korea's independent and cooperative security initiatives. The course examines competing visions for regional order—including the US Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy, ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and China's Belt and Road Initiative—while investigating major power strategies, ASEAN's contested centrality, and how middle powers like India, Australia, Indonesia, and Vietnam navigate great power competition through various hedging strategies.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- **Analyze** competing visions of the Indo-Pacific region and evaluate their implications for Korean foreign policy and regional stability
- **Assess** the evolution of regional security architecture from Cold War alliances to contemporary frameworks and Korea's positioning within these structures
- **Evaluate** maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific and their impact on Korean economic and security interests
- **Demonstrate** understanding of how major powers (US, China, Japan, India) and middle powers (ASEAN states, Australia) shape regional dynamics
- **Design** evidence-based policy recommendations for Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy using stakeholder analysis and strategic planning frameworks
- **Demonstrate** cross-cultural communication skills and reflexivity through respectful engagement with diverse regional perspectives on contested security issues

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Instructional Methods

This course is designed around the principle that learning is an active, holistic process that extends well beyond the classroom. Seminars introduce key concepts and interpretive frameworks that are then examined, complicated, and enriched through direct engagement with people, places, and contexts — field visits, expert briefings, guided observation, and community-based learning. Field-based learning is integrated into course design rather than treated as enrichment: faculty prepare students for each engagement, guide interpretation on location, and facilitate the reflection that connects experience to course themes. Students move through cycles of experience, observation, and analysis, progressively taking greater ownership of their own inquiry. This process is not always linear, and that is by design — developing the capacity to learn from unpredictable, context-dependent situations is itself a transferable skill and a foundation for lifelong learning.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Evaluation is based on successful completion of multiple components designed to build analytical, strategic thinking, and communication skills progressively throughout the program. Assignments combine fieldwork observation, strategic analysis, and policy simulation to develop well-rounded international security practitioners.

1. In-Class Participation and Field Engagement (10%)

Active participation is essential for learning in this course. Students are expected to engage meaningfully in class discussions, field activities, and interactions with guest speakers from diplomatic missions, think tanks, and defense organizations. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their contributions, critical thinking skills, respectful engagement with diverse perspectives, and ability to connect field experiences to theoretical concepts. This includes coming prepared with completed readings, asking thoughtful questions of guest lecturers and diplomats, and participating constructively in simulations and strategic planning exercises.

2. Indo-Pacific Security Mapping Project (25%)

Students will create a comprehensive visual and analytical mapping of Indo-Pacific security architecture, demonstrating how Korea fits within competing regional frameworks. This project combines research, visual communication, and strategic analysis to understand multilayered regional security dynamics.

Requirements:

- Create a multi-layered visual map (digital or poster format) showing:
 - Bilateral alliances and security partnerships
 - Minilateral groupings (Quad, AUKUS, Korea-US-Japan trilateral, etc.)
 - ASEAN-centered multilateral mechanisms (ARF, ADMM+, EAS)
 - Economic frameworks with security implications (RCEP, IPEF, CPTPP)
 - Major territorial disputes and maritime flashpoints
- Use different colors, symbols, or layers to distinguish types of relationships

- Include 8-10 text boxes (150-200 words each) analyzing specific nodes or relationships
- Write analytical annotations connecting to course concepts: hedging, balancing, strategic ambiguity, minilateralism
- Create a 2-page companion analysis identifying where Korea has most/least influence and strategic opportunities or vulnerabilities
- Present your map to the class in a 7-minute presentation with 3 minutes for Q&A

Focus Areas to Consider:

- Where does Korea appear multiple times (overlapping memberships)?
- Which frameworks exclude Korea and why does this matter?
- How do competing visions (US FOIP vs. ASEAN Outlook vs. Chinese BRI) overlap or conflict?
- What security gaps exist in current architecture?

3. Regional Security News Analysis Portfolio (25%)

Students will create a portfolio tracking major security developments in the Indo-Pacific throughout the semester, analyzing how events unfold and connect to course theories about regional order, alliance politics, and great power competition.

Requirements:

- Weekly collection of 2-3 news articles from regional and international media on Indo-Pacific security developments (US-China tensions, maritime incidents, diplomatic summits, military exercises, alliance developments)
- Write 300-400 word analysis for each week applying course concepts to current events. What theoretical framework helps explain this development? Which actors are involved? How might Korea respond?
- Maintain a visual timeline of major security events throughout the semester with brief explanations (can be digital or physical poster)
- Submit mid-semester progress report (Week 5, 2 pages) identifying emerging patterns and trends
- Final portfolio includes 1,200-1,500 word synthesis essay connecting the semester's events to major course themes (great power competition, minilateralism, ASEAN centrality, Korean strategic choices, etc.)

Topics to Watch:

- US-China strategic competition (Taiwan Strait tensions, technology restrictions, military posturing)
- Quad summits and joint exercises
- AUKUS developments and regional reactions
- South China Sea incidents and ASEAN responses

- Korea's participation in regional forums (EAS, ARF, ADMM+)
- Japan-Australia-India-Korea quadrilateral developments
- Chinese Belt and Road projects in Southeast Asia
- Korean NSP/Indo-Pacific strategy implementation

Grading criteria: Quality and diversity of sources (20%), weekly analysis depth (35%), mid-semester report (15%), synthesis essay (25%), timeline visual quality (5%)

4. Strategic Simulation and Policy Brief (40%)

Working in small teams, students will participate in a two-day strategic simulation where they role-play key stakeholders navigating a contemporary Indo-Pacific security crisis. Following the simulation, each student writes an individual policy brief analyzing the experience and proposing strategic recommendations.

Simulation Scenario (one of the following):

- Managing escalating Taiwan Strait tensions: Regional response options
- South China Sea freedom of navigation crisis involving multiple claimants
- Coordinating regional response to North Korean provocation
- Quad summit negotiating expanded membership or deepened cooperation
- ASEAN summit addressing great power competition and centrality concerns

Student Roles (examples):

- Korean Blue House/NSC officials
- US State Department and INDOPACOM representatives
- Chinese Foreign Ministry officials
- Japanese Cabinet officials
- ASEAN chair country diplomats
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs
- Indian Ministry of External Affairs
- Vietnamese or Indonesian foreign policy officials

Assignment Components:

- **Preparation (Week 7):** Each team researches their stakeholder position and prepares a 3-page briefing memo outlining national interests, strategic constraints, alliance commitments, and negotiation goals
- **Day 1 Simulation:** Crisis scenario introduction, stakeholder consultations, initial position statements, bilateral/minilateral negotiations

- **Day 2 Simulation:** Multilateral negotiations, drafting joint statements or agreements, press conferences, debrief session
- **Individual Policy Brief (Week 9, 2,000 words):** Analyze the crisis from Korea's perspective, evaluate outcomes, and propose alternative strategies

Policy Brief Should Address:

- How did your role's interests and constraints shape strategic choices?
- What surprised you about the negotiation dynamics and coalition-building?
- Connect simulation outcomes to at least 4 course readings/theories
- What would you recommend for Korean policymakers facing similar real-world scenarios?
- How effectively did existing regional architecture manage the crisis?
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Grading criteria: Preparation memo quality (15%), simulation participation and strategic thinking (25%), policy brief analysis and recommendations (40%), theoretical integration (15%), professional writing quality (5%)

Assignment Overview

- In-Class Participation and Field Engagement: **10%**
- Indo-Pacific Security Mapping Project: **25%**
- Regional Security News Analysis Portfolio: **25%**
- Strategic Simulation and Policy Brief: **40%**

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	74-76%	C
90-93%	A-	70-73%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
84-86%	B	64-66%	D
80-83%	B-	Below 64	F
77-79%	C+		

Note on Attendance and Participation: Consistent participation in classes, site visits, and required program activities is essential to the academic experience. Students are expected to participate fully and may not opt out of required components, as these activities are integral to

course learning and collective discussion. If circumstances such as illness affect attendance, students must communicate promptly with the Center Director or a designated staff member. Absences may affect academic performance and course grades, and repeated or unexcused absences may result in additional academic or programmatic consequences. When absences are unavoidable, alternative academic work may be required.

Program Expectations

To support a respectful, engaging, and academically rigorous learning environment, students are expected to approach this program with professionalism, preparation, and openness. Because this is an intensive, field-based program, individual conduct directly shapes the quality of the shared academic experience.

- **Learning Community:** Students are expected to engage respectfully with differing perspectives, including those of classmates, guest speakers, and local partners. Agreement is not required, but attentive listening, intellectual openness, and respectful dialogue are essential.
- **Content Considerations:** Course materials and activities may engage sensitive or challenging topics. The classroom is a space for thoughtful, respectful engagement with complex ideas. When possible, faculty will flag particularly intense content in advance. Students who find that course content affects their ability to participate or keep up with coursework are encouraged to communicate with faculty and seek appropriate support.
- **Participation and Engagement:** Students are expected to come prepared and to engage actively in classes, discussions, and site-based learning. This includes contributing thoughtfully to discussion, asking questions, and engaging respectfully with faculty, peers, and guest speakers. Meaningful participation supports collective learning and is an essential part of the program experience.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Because this is a multi-country, field-based program, schedules and activities may change in response to local conditions or logistical realities. Students are expected to approach such adjustments with flexibility and professionalism. Adaptability is considered part of meaningful engagement in the program.
- **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to complete all work honestly and ethically, in accordance with academic integrity standards outlined in course and program policies.
- **Managing Academic Work:** Students are responsible for maintaining reliable access to their academic work by keeping multiple copies using secure storage methods (e.g., cloud-based platforms or the learning management system). Technical issues such as lost files or device failures do not excuse late or missing work.
- **Personal Technology Use:** Personal devices may be used for note-taking and course-related activities. Off-task use is not acceptable, particularly during discussions, site visits, or guest presentations, as it detracts from collective engagement.
- **Course Communication:** Course materials, assignments, and updates will be posted on Canvas. While the course calendar provides a general structure, adjustments may

occur based on program flow or site-based learning opportunities. Students are responsible for checking the course site regularly and communicating promptly about access issues.

- **Recording Policy:** To support open discussion, recording of classes or program activities is not permitted without prior written approval from the instructor. Approved recordings are for personal academic use only. Documented academic accommodations may supersede this policy.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Credit Hours: SIT adheres to the standard that 1 credit hour equals no less than 45 hours of coursework. The calculation is based on the standard 50-minute academic hour. The number of credits each course carries determines how many total hours each course involves in a semester. Of the 45-hours for 1-credit hour, one third is designated for direct faculty instruction. Direct faculty instruction includes all learning activities led by the faculty whether in the classroom or in the field — lectures, guest speakers, site visits, hands-on field activities, etc.

Note on Late Assignments: Because this program integrates classroom learning with site visits and debriefs, assignments are designed to build on one another and connect directly to learning on location. *Timely submission is therefore important for maintaining continuity and full participation in the academic experience.* Extensions may be granted *in limited circumstances and on a case-by-case basis* with approval from the Program Director or a designated staff member. Requests should be made in writing as early as possible and no later than 12 hours before the posted due date. Students are expected to communicate proactively if challenges arise. Work submitted after an approved extension period may receive a reduced or failing grade, depending on the circumstances.

Note on the Use of Generative AI Tools: In this course, students may use generative AI tools only in ways that support their own intellectual work. Acceptable uses may include brainstorming questions, organizing notes, clarifying concepts, or supporting revision at the sentence or structure level. Students may not use AI tools to generate substantive analysis,

strategic arguments, written sections, or oral responses that are presented as their own work. Because assignments emphasize applied reasoning, comparative judgment, and place-based analysis, students are expected to remain the primary source of ideas, interpretation, and decision-making.

Expectations for AI use may vary by assignment and will be discussed explicitly with faculty. In some cases, students and faculty may collaboratively establish guidelines for appropriate AI use for a particular task. Students are responsible for following the agreed-upon expectations and for seeking clarification if boundaries are unclear.

When generative AI tools are used in the preparation of an assignment, students are expected to acknowledge their use clearly and transparently, noting the tool used and the nature of its contribution (e.g., brainstorming, outlining, or language revision). This acknowledgment supports academic transparency and does not, on its own, imply inappropriate use. Policies on AI use may differ across courses and instructors within the program. Students should attend carefully to course-specific guidance and understand that responsible AI use is defined at the course level.

Sample AI Acknowledgment Statement: I used [tool name] for [purpose, e.g., brainstorming or sentence-level revision]. All analysis, interpretation, and conclusions are my own.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Conceptualizing the Indo-Pacific and Major Power Strategies

This opening module establishes the conceptual and geographic foundations of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic region, then examines how the United States, China, and Japan—the three largest economies and military powers in the region—are shaping Indo-Pacific security dynamics. Students will examine how the shift from "Asia-Pacific" to "Indo-Pacific" reflects changing power dynamics, explore competing national visions for regional order, and analyze alliance structures, military modernization, economic statecraft, and competing strategic narratives. Field activities may include visits to think tanks specializing in regional security, meetings with diplomats representing diverse Indo-Pacific perspectives, the US Embassy, defense ministry briefings, and meetings with security studies centers.

Session 1: Introduction—Evolution from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific

Possible topics covered:

- Historical evolution: Why "Indo-Pacific" replaced "Asia-Pacific"

- Geographic scope and strategic significance
- Competing definitions and their political implications
- US Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy\

Required Readings:

- Kim, S.-M. (2016). South Korea's middle-power diplomacy: Changes and challenges (Research Paper). Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org>
- Lee, J., & Ko, Y. (2025, November 13). Korea's new ASEAN policy: Pragmatic partnership for a shared future. FULCRUM: Analysis on Southeast Asia. ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. <https://fulcrum.sg/aseanfocus/koreas-new-asean-policy-pragmatic-partnership-for-a-shared-future/>

Session 2: US Strategy, Alliance Architecture, and Minilateral Frameworks

Possible topics covered:

- Evolution of US alliance system: hub-and-spokes to networked security
- US Indo-Pacific Command structure and forward presence
- Extended deterrence and security guarantees
- Korea's role within US regional strategy
- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (US, Japan, India, Australia) development and activities
- AUKUS and its regional implications

Required Readings:

- Snyder, S. (2023). The United States-South Korea-North Korea strategic triangle in the Indo-Pacific. Korea Policy, 2023, 94-109.
- Freeman, C., Galic, M., Markey, D., & Singh, V. (2024). Two years later, what has the Indo-Pacific strategy achieved? United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/02/two-years-later-what-has-indo-pacific-strategy-achieved>

Session 3: China's Rise and Regional Strategy

Possible topics covered:

- Belt and Road Initiative in Indo-Pacific context
- Military modernization: PLA Navy expansion, A2/AD strategies
- Economic statecraft and infrastructure diplomacy
- Regional responses: balancing, hedging, bandwagoning
- South China Sea disputes—competing claims, international law, and great power involvement

Required Readings:

- da Silva Viana, T., Camoça Gonçalves de Oliveira, A., & Silveira Nummer, M. (2025). South Korea's leaders' perceptions and the decision of hedging: Assessing China, the US and North Korea's role. *Oasis*, 41, 43–67. <https://doi.org/10.18601/16577558.n41.04>
- Shambaugh, D. (2018). US-China rivalry in Southeast Asia: power shift or competitive coexistence?. *International Security*, 42(4), 85-127.
- Walt, S. M. (2025). Hedging on hegemony: the realist debate over how to respond to China. *International Security*, 49(4), 37-70.
- Colby, E. A. (2021). Chapter 2. In *The strategy of denial: American defense in an age of great power conflict*. Yale University Press.

Session 4: Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Regional Role

Possible topics covered:

- Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision
- Security normalization and "proactive pacifism"
- Japan's leadership in Quad and CPTPP
- Implications for Korea-Japan security cooperation
- Historical reconciliation challenges and their impact on security cooperation

Required Readings:

- Shin, J. (2024). Practical understanding of U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy: Analysis of USINDOPACOM and implications for U.S. allies and partners. *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. Activity: Role-play trilateral security dialogue (US-Japan-Korea) negotiating cooperation on shared security challenge
- Koga, K. (2023). Struggle for coalition-building: Japan, South Korea, and the Indo-Pacific. *Asian Politics and Policy*, 15(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12679>
- Cha, V. D. (2000). Abandonment, entrapment, and neoclassical realism in Asia: the United States, Japan, and Korea. *International studies quarterly*, 44(2), 261-291.
- Tatsuya Terazawa. (2025, June 6). How Japan—and Other U.S. Allies—Can Work Around America. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/japan/how-japan-and-other-us-allies-can-work-around-america>

Module 2: ASEAN, Middle Powers, and Security Dimensions

This module shifts focus to ASEAN's central role in regional security architecture and examines how middle powers navigate great power competition. Students will explore ASEAN-

led mechanisms, the concept of ASEAN centrality, and case studies of other middle powers' strategies. The module then examines two interconnected dimensions of Indo-Pacific security: maritime domain challenges and economic security concerns. Students will analyze territorial disputes, freedom of navigation issues, supply chain vulnerabilities, and the intersection of economics and security. Field activities may include meetings at ASEAN embassies in Seoul, presentations from Southeast Asian diplomats, visits to maritime policy institutes, and briefings from trade and economic security officials.

Session 5: ASEAN Centrality and Middle Power Strategies

Possible topics covered:

- ASEAN's role in regional security architecture
- ASEAN-led mechanisms: ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+), East Asia Summit (EAS)
- ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and strategic autonomy
- Challenges to ASEAN unity and centrality
- India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific engagement
- Australia's Indo-Pacific strategy and AUKUS role
- Indonesia's strategic hedging and regional leadership ambitions
- Vietnam's balancing between US and China

Required Readings:

- Chang, F. (2023). ASEAN's centrality in Southeast Asian affairs: Miles to go. Foreign Policy Research Institute. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/12/aseans-centrality-in-southeast-asian-affairs-miles-to-go/>
- Chubb, A., & Hoffman, S. (2023). With ASEAN paralyzed, Southeast Asia seeks new security ties. RAND Corporation/Foreign Policy. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/09/with-asean-paralyzed-southeast-asia-seeks-new-security.html>

Session 6: Maritime Security Challenges

Possible topics covered:

- Freedom of navigation and UNCLOS legal framework
- Territorial disputes: East China Sea, South China Sea
- Korean maritime interests and vulnerabilities
- Regional maritime cooperation mechanisms

Required Readings:

- Song, A. M. (2015). Pawns, pirates or peacemakers: Fishing boats in the inter-Korean maritime boundary dispute and ambivalent governmentality. *Political Geography*, 48, 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2015.06.002>
- Mastro, O. S. (2023). The next flashpoint? China, the Republic of Korea, and the yellow Sea. *asia policy*, 18(1), 67-93.
- Cha, V. (2025, December 9). *Creeping Sovereignty? China's Maritime Structures in the Yellow Sea (West Sea)*. Beyond Parallel. <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/creeping-sovereignty-chinas-maritime-structures-in-the-yellow-sea-west-sea/>
- Hall, T. (2019). More significance than value: explaining developments in the Sino-Japanese contest over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. *Texas National Security Review*, 2(4), 10-37.
- Beckley, M. (2017). The emerging military balance in east asia: How china's neighbors can check chinese naval expansion. *International Security*, 42(2), 78-119.

Session 7: Economic Security in the Indo-Pacific

Possible topics covered:

- Trade agreements and their strategic dimensions: RCEP, CPTPP, IPEF
- Technology competition and export controls
- Supply chain security and critical mineral dependencies
- Economic coercion as foreign policy tool
- THAAD deployment crisis as example of economic-security trade-offs

Required Readings:

- Tiberghien, Y. (2024). Lessons from the frontline: The burgeoning security and economic race in the Indo-Pacific. *International Journal*, 79(3), 465–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207020241276099>
- Cha, V. D. (2023). Collective resilience: Deterring China's weaponization of economic interdependence. *International Security*, 48(1), 91-124.
- Gilli, A., & Gilli, M. (2018). Why China has not caught up yet: Military-technological superiority and the limits of imitation, reverse engineering, and cyber espionage. *International Security*, 43(3), 141-189.

Module 3: Korean Strategic Choices and Future Scenarios

This final module synthesizes course themes to examine Korea's strategic options in the Indo-Pacific. Students will evaluate different strategic postures, analyze how Korea's New Southern Policy fits into broader regional strategy, and develop policy recommendations. The module culminates in a strategic simulation exercise and student presentations of their policy briefs.

Session 8: Korean Strategic Options—Strategic Clarity vs. Ambiguity

Possible topics covered:

- Hedging strategies: benefits and limitations
- Strategic clarity vs. strategic ambiguity
- Integrating bilateral alliances with multilateral engagement
- Balancing security commitments with economic interests
- New Southern Policy as component of Indo-Pacific strategy

Required Reading:

- Bowers, I., & Hiim, H. S. (2020). Conventional Counterforce Dilemmas: South Korea's Deterrence Strategy and Stability on the Korean Peninsula. *International Security*, 45(3), 7-39.
- Kim, M. H. (2023). Hedging between the United States and China? South Korea's ideology-driven behavior and its implications for national security. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 23(1), 129-158.

Sessions 9 & 10: Indo-Pacific Security Crisis Simulation and Course Synthesis

Possible topics covered:

- Morning: Press conferences, final simulation outcomes, structured debrief and analysis session
- Afternoon: Student presentations—Policy brief findings and strategic recommendations for Korean government
- Synthesizing course themes: What is the future of the Indo-Pacific order?
- Korea's optimal path forward
- Remaining questions and areas for future study
- Course evaluation and closing

Final Discussion: Synthesizing course themes: What is the future of the Indo-Pacific order? What are the most promising opportunities and significant challenges? How can Korea navigate great power competition while maintaining strategic autonomy?