

South Africa as a Middle Power at the WTO

- Brokering African Interests?

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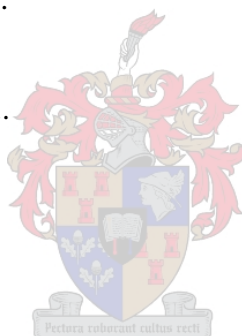
March 2007

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Abstract

Post-apartheid foreign policy has witnessed a fundamental shift in South African foreign policy objectives and strategies as the country has aimed to move from a pariah to a participant in the international community. Since 1994, South Africa has become an active player in the international system and has assumed an increasingly active role in international organisations. One distinct strand of South African foreign policy which has emerged is a commitment to the use and support of multilateralism. Yet, as the country has become increasingly active in multilateral fora, so too, it is argued, has it been torn between the promotion of its own interests and those of its African peers. At times South Africa is seen to vociferously champion African interests, and at others to sideline the interests of its African partners and the notion of the African Renaissance, in favour of its own interests.

Yet, whilst inconsistencies in South African multilateral foreign policy exist, this study argues that overall, South Africa has actively and consciously attempted to establish itself as an African middle power within the international system, and to create a distinct niche for itself as “the voice of Africa” in multilateral fora. Employing a Middle Power approach and utilising the concept of niche-building diplomacy this study investigates first, South Africa’s middle power niche in the international system at large, before, secondly, investigating South Africa’s role at the World Trade Organisation.

The study concludes that, while South Africa has continually attempted to establish itself as “the voice of Africa” in a range of multilateral fora and has acted in a manner consistent with this stated objective, it has acted contrary to its established niche at the World Trade Organisation since joining this organisation in 1994. Indeed, this study finds that whereas in other multilateral fora South Africa has acted as the standard-bearer of African interests, in the World Trade Organisation it has acted contrary to African interests time and again. The findings indicate that the Middle Power concept in international relations itself needs to be revisited, that South Africa’s role as a middle power in the international system requires greater investigation, and that further research is required on the roles played by other middle powers at the World Trade Organisation.

Opsomming

Suid-Afrika se post-apartheid buitelandse beleid het 'n fundamentele verskuiwing in terme van doelwitte en strategie ondergaan, soos die land gepoog het om te beweeg van 'n pariah na 'n volle deelnemer in die internasionale gemeenskap. Sedert 1994, het Suid Afrika 'n aktiewe deelnemer in die internasionale stelsel geword en 'n toenemende aktiewe rol in internasionale organisasies begin speel. Een kenmerkende aspek van Suid-Afrikaanse buitelandse beleid wat na vore getree het, is 'n bereidwilligheid om multilateralisme te gebruik en te ondersteun. Nietemin, soos die land toenemend aktief betrokke geraak het in multilaterale forums, so ook, word geargumenteer, het daar 'n tweespalk ontstaan tussen sy eie belange en die belange van sy Afrika eweknie-lande. Soms, ondersteun Suid-Afrika entoesiasies Afrika se belange, en soms, stel dit die belange van sy Afrika vennote en die Afrika Renaissance tersyde, ten gunste van sy eie belange.

Terwyl daar onreëlmatighede in Suid-Afrika se multilaterale buitelandse beleid bestaan, argumenteer die studie dat oor die algemeen, die land aktief en doelbewus gepoog het om sigself as 'n Afrika middel-moondheid binne die internasionale stelsel te vestig. Verder, dat die land ook gepoog het om 'n nis vir sigself op te bou as “die stem van Afrika” in multilaterale forums. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n Middel Moondheid-benadering en die konsep van “nis-bou” diplomatie, ondersoek die studie eerstens, Suid-Afrika se middel-moondheid nis binne die internasionale stelsel en tweedens, Suid-Afrika se rol binne die Wêreld Handels Organisasie (WHO). Die studie kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat, Suid-Afrika voortdurend poog om sigself as die “stem van Afrika” binne multilaterale forums te vestig en opgetree het in ooreenstemming met hierdie verklaarde beleid. Nietemin, word bevind dat die land se optrede binne die WHO sedert 1994, teenstrydig is met die “nis-bou” komponent van sy buitelandse beleid. Tewens, die studie bevind dat terwyl Suid-Afrika binne ander multilaterale forums die vaandeldraer vir Afrika se belange was, dit telke male teenstrydig met hierdie belange binne die WHO opgetree het. Die studie dui aan dat die Middel Moondheid konsep in internasionale betrekkinge her-evalueer moet word, dat Suid-Afrika se rol as 'n middel moondheid meer nagevors moet word, en dat verdere navorsing onderneem moet word oor die rol van ander middel moondhede in die WHO.

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Chapter 1

Aim, Scope and Method

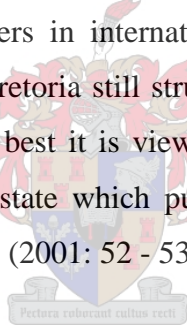
1.1 Introduction to the Study

Post-apartheid foreign policy has witnessed a fundamental shift in South African foreign policy objectives and strategies as the country has aimed to move from pariah to participant in the international community. South African foreign policy has over the last decade or so to a large degree encompassed both the development and use of multilateral fora, and South Africa has increasingly become an active role-player in international organizations such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union and the World Trade Organisation. Increasingly, for good or bad, South Africa has come to be seen as a mouthpiece for the interests of the global South, as well as spokesperson for the African continent at large. Yet as the country has become increasingly active in multilateral fora, so too, it is argued, has it been torn between the promotion of its own interests and those of its African peers. At times South Africa is seen to vociferously champion African interests, for example through the promotion of the African Renaissance and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), and at others to sideline the interests of its African partners and the notion of the African Renaissance in favour of its own interests and of a South African Renaissance, such as for example through the conclusion of the Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement (TDCA) with the European Union, which, it is largely agreed, sidelined the interests of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and indeed served more to damage SACU member interests than to advance them. (Hurt, 2006)

This ambiguity has led some commentators to proclaim that South Africa can be envisaged as a stooge of the West, acting in the interests of developed nations and advancing the liberal paradigm and the Washington consensus by pushing for economic and financial reform, free market capitalism, the liberalisation of fiscal and monetary constraints and the institutionalisation of democratic norms and accountability both in South Africa and across the African continent. As James Hamill and Donna Lee write,

South Africa has been depicted “not as a crusader for the cause of Africa or the South more generally – or even an honest broker on development issues – but as a surrogate for the dominant powers within the global economy.” (2001 : 50)

Concomitant with these developments has come the advance of South African hegemony, political and economic, throughout the African continent. Other commentators will argue conversely that whilst South Africa has become increasingly comfortable with the developed world and its now permanent seat at the expanded Group of Eight consultations, South Africa can be seen to be using its expanding diplomatic clout and participation in international fora to slowly but surely entrench the African continent and African interests in multilateral institutions, and to be utilising these multilateral institutions to advance the interests of its African partners. This has led to a situation where South Africa is viewed as being torn between the promotion of its own interests and the interests of its African peers in international relations and multilateral fora. Again, as Hamill and Lee argue, “Pretoria still struggles to convince African states that its intentions are wholly benign: at best it is viewed as a state which seeks to be first among equals, and, at worst, as a state which pursues its own interest with a casual indifference to African sensitivities.” (2001: 52 - 53)

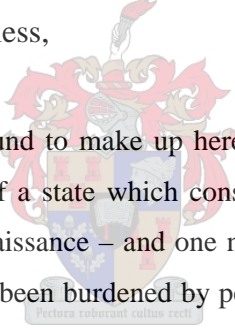


1.2 Problem Statement

This perceived tension between the national interests of South Africa and the interests of its African peers has led to increasing levels of debate, and increasingly released public statements by South African governmental departments as to the nature of South Africa’s engagement with other nations at multilateral fora and the interests which South Africa and her diplomats advance. Yet whilst South Africa increasingly makes concerted efforts to promote itself as a benevolent African ambassador acting in the interests of all African nations and peoples, and has increasingly become skilled in the language, perhaps at times even the rhetoric, of the African Renaissance, it has not been established whether South Africa indeed consistently and reliably acts in the manner which it has publicly prescribed for itself, or whether, when push comes to shove, South Africa drops the

language of African interests and acts according to its own perceived national interest. Whilst an analysis of South African foreign policy and of bilateral relations and policy choices would yield a degree of insight into the matter, it is an analysis of South African behaviour in multilateral fora which proves particularly insightful on the matter. Particularly, an analysis of South African behaviour, both public and behind closed doors, at multilateral institution such as the United Nations and its various agencies, the World Trade Organisation, the Group of Eight countries, the Non-Aligned Movement or any other rules-based organisation proves interesting for analysis as South African behaviour could be analysed in terms of policy choices, bargaining coalitions, public statements and actual conduct, and alignment of like-minded nations, and contrasted with similar conduct by other African nations or groupings.

Whilst some such studies have been conducted by scholars, with varying conclusions, Hamill and Lee argue that, nonetheless,



Pretoria has considerable ground to make up here and it is supremely ironic that since 1994 the African initiatives of a state which considers itself to be one of the principal catalysts for a continental renaissance – and one now led by a President with an overtly ‘Africanist’ reputation – have been burdened by perceptions formed in the apartheid era; namely that South Africa is a domineering state whose most intimate foreign policy connections are with the West/North and whose African identity still remains weak and underdeveloped. (2001 : 53)

This study will attempt to provide insight into South African conduct at one such international institution and multilateral forum: the World Trade Organisation. Utilising middle power theory and its facet of “niche-building diplomacy” this study will attempt first to argue that South Africa has since 1994 actively and consciously attempted to established itself as a middle power through “niche-building” diplomacy and constructed an internationally recognised position for itself as the “voice of the African continent” or of being broadly representative of African interests in international relations and in multilateral fora, and secondly, to provide insight into how, utilising this fashioned position, it has conducted itself at the World Trade Organisation. Whilst middle power

theory and approaches to middle powers remain controversial and disputed by scholars of international relations, the approach nonetheless remains valuable when analysing South Africa's use of multilateralism since 1994. Furthermore, it will be argued, the concept of niche-building diplomacy can adequately be applied to explain South Africa's increasingly prominent role as a generally recognised and accepted "voice of Africa" in international relations.

In addition, according to the understanding of niche-building as it will be advanced in this study, it can be assumed that if South Africa has consistently promoted itself as a broker of African interests in multilateral fora, and has actively generated an image of being representative of and championing African interests in multilateral fora, then similar behaviour should be identified in South Africa's engagements at the World Trade Organisation. This is in line with the argument advanced by John Ravenhill, who asserts that one of the defining criteria of middle powers, and by extension of the niche-building concept, is the credibility dimension; the need for consistency in the policies advocated and pursued by middle powers. (1998 : 310 - 313) This is to say, if South Africa has actively constructed an image of being representative of African interests in international relations and multilateral fora, and has indeed acted in a manner in accordance with such a position, then an analysis of South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation should find that South Africa has similarly represented and bargained in favour of African interests at the World Trade Organisation.

Thus, utilising middle power theory and the concept of niche-building diplomacy, this study aims to provide insight into whether or not South Africa has been acting in accordance with its stated and recognised role as being representative of and bargaining for African interests at the World Trade Organisation. Furthermore, this study will attempt through an analysis of middle power theory and the concept of "niche-building diplomacy" and the application of this approach to the example of South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation to generate insight into the usefulness of the middle power approach.

1.3 Motivation for Selection of the World Trade Organisation

The World Trade Organisation and South Africa's interaction at and with this multilateral institution has been selected for several reasons, all of which aim to give this study the academic robustness which it requires.

The World Trade Organisation has been selected as a case study of South African conduct and interaction with other states within a multilateral institution due to, primarily, the rules-based system of trade negotiations which it embodies. This particular nature of the World Trade Organisation translates into a system where trade concessions are either reached, and made accessible to all members of the World Trade Organisation, or are not reached and cannot be implemented. This notion of reciprocity in trade negotiations means that trade agreements must be amenable to all member states, as decisions on trade negotiations must be reached by consensus. Due to the sensitive nature of trade negotiations and their resulting implications, particularly across the developed / developing world line, national interests often come to the forefront of trade negotiations and concomitantly form the primary causes for the stalling or indeed the failure of trade talks.

It is precisely due to this nature of the World Trade Organisation and of its rules-based system of trade negotiations that it lends itself so well as a case study for the purposes of this particular analysis, and to provide insight into the conduct of South African trade negotiators and policy-makers as opposed to those of other African states, and to ascertain which policy positions and bargaining choices South Africa adopted and acted upon complementary to and opposing those of its African peers. A further reason for the selection of the World Trade Organisation is its increasing centrality in the development of the African continent. Distorted trade relations and regulations appear to be one of the most publicised reasons for the continued stagnancy of the African continent and a rallying point for anti-globalisation movements, and the World Trade Organisation appears to have become the battleground of developed and developing nations. "The Battle for Seattle" occurred both in the streets between protesters and security personnel, and in the conference halls between trade representatives and ministers from the

developed and the developing world. The negligible outcome of the Seattle Trade Ministerial, of the Cancun Ministerial, and now the suspension of the Doha Round of trade negotiations cannot be ascribed to the protestors in the streets, but to the failure of trade negotiators to reach consensus. Bearing the above in mind, an analysis of South African engagement with other states, and particularly with its African peers, at the World Trade Organisation and its conduct at Seattle, in Cancun and in Hong Kong becomes even more interesting and pertinent.

1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is primarily to gauge whether or not South Africa has actively been matching its rhetoric as a middle power pushing the African agenda at the World Trade Organisation with conduct conducive to such a position, and if so to which degree. Whilst this study will aim to investigate South Africa's engagement as a middle power and its created "niche" of promoting African interests only within the context of the World Trade Organisation and the concomitant multilateral trade negotiations, the outcomes of this study will contribute to broader analyses of South African foreign policy and of South African multilateralism, and will also provide an indication of the future direction and form of South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation. The purpose of this study is thus to conduct a historical and contemporary study of South African engagement with the World Trade Organisation in terms of the promotion of national self-interest and the broader interests of its African peers, and to gain insight into the future of South Africa's engagement with the World Trade Organisation and of its self-proclaimed role as representative of African interests.

The significance of this study is twofold. First, this study aims to provide an overview of the process in which South Africa has been engaging in multilateralist initiatives and of how South Africa, through the process of niche-building diplomacy, has positioned itself as the quintessential African middle power promoting African interests. Second, this study aims to provide an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of South African engagement with the World Trade Organisation, and of the manner in which South Africa

has balanced and / or traded national interest and what can be encompassed as African interests. Whilst limited studies have been conducted in all of the above research areas, the significance of this study can be found in the manner in which it will combine this research and go beyond it through the application of this research and its outcomes to the case study of the World Trade Organisation. In this manner it is anticipated that the seriousness with which South African policy-makers take the rhetoric of the “Africanist Agenda” and the “African Renaissance” within the framework of the World Trade Organisation can be gauged, and the possible future role of South Africa at the World Trade Organisation can be postulated upon. Furthermore, insight will be generated into the utility of the middle power approach for the study conducted.

1.5 Methodology

This study will be of a qualitative nature and will be a descriptive study, as opposed to an exploratory or explanatory study. The study will make use of information available, thus its descriptive nature, but will not attempt to delve into the underlying reasons for certain actions, policy choices or bargaining positions of the South African government. However, having noted this, it must be stated that explanations for certain policy decisions taken, taking into account policy options available at the time, cannot be avoided altogether, and will be included in this study where relevant. Nonetheless, this study by no means attempts to be explanatory by nature.

This analysis will make use primarily of secondary sources and, where possible, of primary sources, which will be in the form of public documents released by the World Trade Organisation, by the South African Department of Trade and Industry and the South African Department of Foreign Affairs. Use will also be made of public statements and media interviews where relevant, as it is not feasible to conduct personal interviews as necessary so as to obtain the information required for this study. The study will primarily analyse documented policy choices, public statements by relevant representatives, bargaining positions and other forms of behaviour by South African representatives in comparison with its African peers at the World Trade Organisation so

as to ascertain whether or not South Africa has been acting in unison, or at least in harmony, with other African states within the setting of the World Trade Organisation, or not.

1.6 Limitations

Due to time constraints, financial constraints and the practical constraints placed on this study in terms of its length, the analysis presented in the following chapters will limit itself in several ways. First, this study places focus only on the policy choices and bargaining activities of the South African government, and where necessary illustrated comparisons of these with the actions of other African states, these being either complementary or opposing. Furthermore, whilst a plethora of specific situations of South African behaviour at the World Trade Organisation lend themselves to analysis for the purposes of this study, it is only the most illustrative of situations which will be presented and analysed, due again to the spatial constraints imposed.

A second limitation is in the form of publicly accessible information. Primary sources are limited to those which are publicly available from the agencies, departments and organisations concerned, and certain information simply is not publicly accessible. This constraint will be counterbalanced through the use of extensive secondary sources. A further constraint exists in the form of the limited material available with regards to South Africa's role at the World Trade Organisation. Whilst scholars have attempted to analyse South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation, such material is limited in nature and in scope, and poses constraints on resources which can be utilised for a study of this nature. This limits the number of cases which lend themselves to analysis for this study to those on which adequate and reliable information can be obtained.

A further limitation placed on this study is in terms of its scope. Whilst an analysis of South African policy choices and bargaining positions may well be made with respect to multilateral fora such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and in terms of South African trade policy with the rest of the African continent and with

non-African states, and such an analysis would prove both interesting and insightful, it is beyond the scope of this particular study and will not be conducted, unless of particular relevance to a certain case. Thus, this study will limit itself to the World Trade Organisation as the primary forum for a rules-based system of international trade, making use of external cases only as and when relevant.

A fourth limitation placed upon this study relates to the time dimension considered. This study will only investigate South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation since its coming into existence on the 1st of January 1995, and will not analyse prior engagement under the Generalised Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Furthermore, this study will only analyse South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation from 1995 up to and including the suspension of the Doha Round of trade negotiations in July 2006.

A final limitation placed on this study is of a theoretical nature. It is readily acknowledged that an analysis of foreign policy without an analysis of the origins of such foreign policy, or better, of the sources of influencing factors on foreign policy choices, does limit the value of an analysis of foreign policy behaviour. It is furthermore accepted that domestic considerations, among other factors, certainly do affect the foreign policy choices state representatives make. However, the sources of policy decisions, and the manner in which policy decisions were crafted, will not be addressed in this study. Ian Taylor (2000) addresses the correlation between domestic considerations and foreign policy choices in South Africa at length, whilst Peter Vale (1997) and Paul-Henri Bischoff (2003) expertly address the dualistic nature of foreign policy-making with regards to the South African case.

This study, whilst readily acknowledging that domestic sources of foreign policy may be considered equally as important as external considerations, will not address the domestic sources of policy choices with regards to South African interaction with and at the World Trade Organisation. Rather, it is emphasised, this study aims to analyse South Africa's actions as a middle power at the World Trade Organisation in terms of its created "niche"

in the international system, and to generate insight into South Africa's stated positions, the actions it has undertaken, and the manner in which this can be compared to the positions adopted and the actions taken by its African peers. How these policies were arrived at will not be investigated in this study as such.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 has identified the context within which this research will be conducted, has identified the research questions which will guide the research throughout the remainder of this work, has delineated the areas of interest within which the research will be conducted, and has explored the purpose and the value of this study. Chapter 2 will attempt to provide greater insight into middle power theory at large through an analysis of seminal and contemporary writing on the matter, and will in greater depth explore the notion of “niche-building” middlepowermanship as a particular facet of middle power theory.

Once a theoretical basis sufficient for further exploration in this study has been established in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 will trace broad trends and developments in South African foreign policy and diplomatic initiatives since 1994. This will be done for two reasons, both central to this study. First, it must be established that South Africa can indeed be considered a middle power if middle power theory is to be applied successfully in this study. Second, it will be established that South Africa, as a middle power, has since the advent of democracy in 1994 consciously been establishing itself as a middle power through the use of multilateralism and actively been engaging in so-called “niche-building” diplomacy. It will be shown that the niche which South Africa has actively been carving for itself in international relations, primarily through the use of multilateralism, has been one that positions South Africa as the “voice of Africa” in international relations.

This “niche-building” diplomacy includes, among others, particular initiatives such as the African Renaissance, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the African Peer

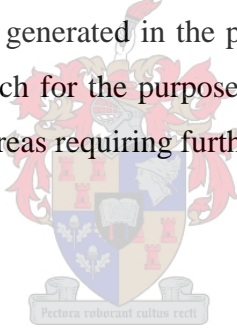
Review Mechanism, and South Africa's central role or participation in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Ottawa and Kimberley Processes, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Conference Against Racism, South Africa's continued participation in the Group of Eight discussions, and various attempts at conflict resolution on the African continent. All of these initiatives, both multilateral, and in the case of conflict resolution in Africa, bilateral, it will be argued, were deliberate attempts at creating a certain "niche" for South Africa as a middle power in international relations, and that this "niche-building" diplomacy gave South Africa the image of possessing the voice of the African continent, and of being broadly representative of African nations in multilateral fora. Directly associated with this it will be established that South Africa has continuously branded itself as acting in and for African interests, and in the interests of those African states which are not able to represent themselves adequately in multilateral fora.

Indeed, such a middle power position for South Africa was already outlined by Nelson Mandela in his now seminal "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy", when he wrote that a central pillar of South African foreign policy was to be "that the concerns and interests of the continent of Africa should be reflected in our [South African] foreign-policy choices." (1993 : 87) Mandela went on to write that democratic South Africa would resist any pressure or temptation to pursue its own interests at the expense of the sub-continent, and that South Africa considered itself prepared to shoulder its share of responsibility for the entire southern African region, "not in the spirit of paternalism or dominance but mutual co-operation and respect." (1993 : 91, 97)

Once it has been established that South Africa can be considered a middle power, and that it has been engaging in niche-building diplomacy and been branding itself as representative of the African continent and of African interests at large, Chapter 4 will provide an in-depth analysis of South African "behaviour" at the World Trade Organisation. This analysis will include South African participation in regional groupings and in issue-based groupings, bargaining tactics and diplomatic actions at Ministerial meetings, and particularly South African behaviour in the now frozen Doha Development

Round of trade negotiations. This analysis will be carried out in an attempt to establish, broadly, whether or not South Africa has been acting in accordance with its middle power status and its middle power niche. In other words the analysis will be conducted in an attempt to establish whether or not South Africa, broadly, has been acting in favour of African interests at the World Trade Organisation, as it professes it does, or whether South Africa has been acting in a self-serving manner, pushing the Africanist agenda as and when this is politically beneficial, but jettisoning African interests when South Africa itself stands to benefit, perhaps even at the expense of the interests of other African nations.

Finally, Chapter 5 will briefly synthesise the analyses conducted and conclusions reached in the preceding chapters, and on the basis of these will attempt to postulate on the future role which South Africa could play at the World Trade Organisation. Furthermore, this chapter will, based on the insights generated in the preceding chapters, comment on the utility of the middle power approach for the purposes of the type of analysis conducted throughout the study and identify areas requiring further research.



Chapter 2

Middle Power Theory

2.1 The Notion of Middle Powers

Whilst research on the concept of middle powers has only gained prominence since the end of the Cold War, attempts to classify countries according to their power capabilities, and hence to ascertain some mechanism of distinguishing between states of varying sizes and power capabilities, have a much longer history, and have been prevalent in writings on international relations for several centuries. Thomas Aquinas has been credited with being one of the first authors to attempt to categorise states according to their power, and Giovanni Botero, the 16th century archbishop of Milan and Renaissance philosopher, is reputed as having been the first author to use the idea of middle or medium powers. The modern notion and the common understanding of middle powers utilised today, however, has been attributed to Jan Smuts' 1918 publication "The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion". Ravenhill points out that whilst writings on the notion of middle powers have endured for centuries, it was only the persistent Canadian claims to middle power status post-Second World War that served to popularise the concept among scholars of international relations. (Ravenhill, 1998 : 309; Welsh, 2004 : 585)

Carsten Holbraad notes that whilst the activities of certain nations following the Second World War certainly served to entrench the notion of middle powers in the international system,

... most of the small number of symposia and articles about the role of such powers that in the 1960s and 1970s appeared in various countries, including Canada, West Germany and India, were quite limited in scope, often focusing on a narrow range of current issues and sometimes propounding particular ideas of foreign policy. This has been true also of some of the earlier literature on the subject, for example of certain German writings of the early nineteenth century equally limited in relevance and linked with a political programme. Though much [had] been written about the problems and policies of

individual middle-sized powers, little work of substance [had] been done on the nature of these states as a group or a class of the international system. (Holbraad, 1984 : 2)

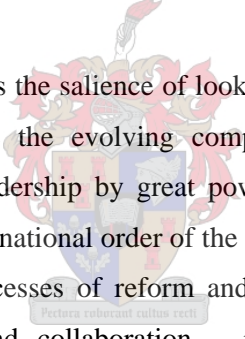
Yet the activities of two accredited middle powers, Canada and Australia, in the period immediately following the Second World War, but in particular in the period of rising tensions during the Cold War, lent credence to the notion of, and a more concentrated focus on, “middlepowermanship”, and the work of Andrew Cooper, Richard Higgot and Kim Nossal (1994), “Relocating Middle Powers”, focusing on the distinct foreign policy behaviour of these two countries in the post-Cold War setting of the early 1990s revived the notion of the middle power. Whilst Cooper, Higgot and Nossal’s work appeared in the early 1990s, Andrew Cooper (1997) wrote again on the subject matter in the later 1990s, taking into account the changing dynamics of the international system of the time, and more distinctly delineating the concept of middle powers, and in particular the facet of “niche diplomacy” so closely associated with the theory of middle powers.

The middle power approach furthermore gained the interest of scholars in the post-Cold War setting of the early 1990s due to the limitations displayed by traditional theoretical approaches to international relations in terms of accounting for an international system shifting from bipolarity to one entailing the dominance of a single hegemon, the United States of America, whilst simultaneously one which witnessed a dramatic surge of multilateralism and the increasing use of multilateral institutions by almost all nations of the world, and a simultaneous increase in the concentration and scope of issues being dealt with in or through multilateral fora. Particularly the works of Keohane (1990), Ruggie (1993) and Carporoso (1993) on multilateralism and multilateral institutions served to provide theoretical foundations for a revived understanding of middle powers in the contemporary world order. Yet traditional theoretical approaches to international relations provided little room for new understandings of middle powers in the international system.

As Richard Higgot noted, a prominent fault of international relations theories of the time, both of realist and neo-liberal persuasions, was the singular lack of regard given to the behaviour of middle powers and smaller states, and a continued emphasis on large

powers and the use of “hard power” by such. Higgot notes that writers such as Waltz maintained that “Denmark doesn’t matter” and Krasner advocated “Sure people in Luxembourg have good ideas, but who gives a damn? Luxembourg ain’t hegemonic.” (Higgott, 1997 : 35) Yet as Higgot correctly points out, across a range of international relations issue areas middle powers and smaller states could and did matter, and increasingly came to affect outcomes. Much to the consternation of Waltz, one would imagine, Higgot points out that Denmark in fact proved that it could matter when it derailed the ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. (1997 : 35)

Cooper presents a similar argument as to the shortcomings in dominant international relations theory and the insufficient or simply absent consideration of middle powers when he argues that a need to stretch the parameters of scholarly attention away from the restrictive confines of the dominant approaches exists.



At the core of this argument is the salience of looking at alternative sources of agency in order to more fully capture the evolving complexity in global affairs. While not suggesting that structural leadership by great powers is no longer the most important source of initiative in the international order of the 1990s, the introduction of a wider lens is deemed crucial if the processes of reform and change – especially those requiring considerable co-operation and collaboration – in a variety of issue areas on the international agenda for the 1990s is to be fully understood. (Cooper, 1997 : 1)

Cooper argues further that an increasingly important function has been played by middle-sized powers since the end of the Cold War, and, whilst “... readily acknowledging that the term ‘middle powers’ is problematic both in terms of conceptual clarity and operational coherence, this category of countries does appear to have some accentuated space for diplomatic manoeuvre on a segmented basis in the post-Cold War era.” (Cooper, 1997 : 1) Whilst the call by Cooper for a reinvigorated analysis of middle powers was seemingly taken up in the international relations literature, little consensus has been reached in research focusing on the classification and role of middle powers. Indeed, the increasing amount of research on the matter at times has served more to obfuscate than to clarify the notion of middle powers in international relations.

2.2 Middle Powers in International Relations

Whilst notions of middlepowermanship have been vigorously debated, both by practitioners and scholars of international relations, the notion of middle powers remains far from unproblematic, and both practitioners in and scholars of the international system fail to agree on even a common definition of what the term “middle power” does and does not encompass. As Ian Taylor notes, even trying to define middle powers is highly problematic. (2000 : 68)

Martin Wight, for instance, defined middle powers as “... a power with such military strength, resources and strategic positions that in peacetime, the great powers bid for its support, and [in] wartime, while it has no hopes of winning a war against a great power, it can hope to inflict costs on a great power out of proportion to what the great power can hope to gain by attacking it.” (in Evans and Newnham, 1998 : 323) This definition, placing emphasis squarely on military capabilities, appears to be wholly outdated and indeed of little value when analysing contemporary middle powers. However, what this conceptualisation of middle powers does establish is that the term middle power denotes a ranking of states relative to one another, and that a middle power can be ranked in terms of power or capability in international relations (although such a ranking should not be envisioned purely on a military basis) relative to greater and lesser powers. This understanding of middle powers had also been advanced in an address to the United Nations in 1947 by R.G. Riddell, a Canadian official, when he stated that middle powers were those which, by reason of their size, their material resources, their willingness and ability to accept responsibility, their influence and their stability were close to being great powers. (in Holbraad, 1984 : 68 - 69)

Carsten Holbraad, duly noting the difficulties of measuring the strength of states and drawing dividing lines in a list powers arranged according to the force at their disposal, offered a conceptualisation of middle powers as states “that are weaker than the great powers in the system but significantly stronger than the minor powers and small states with which they normally interact.” (1984 : 4) Furthermore, Holbraad argued that by surveying and analysing the behaviour of middle powers in characteristic forms of

interaction in the international system “it may be possible to detect certain tendencies in their international conduct which, when related to the process of the systems to which they belong, may point to their typical roles in international relations.” (1984 : 4) Whilst the conceptualisation advanced by Holbraad remains focused on the notion of force, and the use of such force by states against one another, Holbraad’s notion of middle powers does serve to highlight that the manner in which middle powers interact with other powers in the international system is a central facet of the analysis and relevance of middle powers, and that the analysis of middle powers may point to the typical roles which they fulfil in international relations. This understanding of middle powers is an important one, as the capability of middle powers alone reveals little of their relevance in international relations. Rather, it is what middle powers do with certain capabilities, and thereby, if it is possible to identify such tendencies, the roles which middle powers typically fulfil in international relations, which is of interest. This point will be explored in greater depth at a later stage. At this point in time, the notion, agreed upon by Wight and Holbraad, of middle powers slotting into a ranked understanding of power, or occupying a position in a global hierarchy of states, must be further explored.

Throughout the previous decades the notion of middle powers in international relations, and of ranking countries’ positions in international relations relative to one another, has resulted in typologies which suggest various categories of state power, among them a typical delineation between superpowers, great powers, middle powers and small powers. Yet, as John Ravenhill points out, the utility of such typologies is open to debate, as of the four categories, only that of superpower has remained relatively uncontested. Yet even here, it has been disputed whether, in an era when questions of an economic nature appear to dominate the international agenda, a distinction should be made between military and economic superpowers. To date, nonetheless, Kenneth Waltz’s argument that a superpower is to be distinguished by its superiority in the economic, military and technological domains seems to have remained fairly intact. However, whilst it may be agreed upon that at present only the United States of America can be counted as a superpower, this leaves analysts of international relations with the daunting task of

separating the remaining 200 odd countries of the world into two or three categories, each uniquely distinct from one another. (Ravenhill, 1998 : 309 - 310)

The utility of the middle power concept in terms of a global hierarchy of states is also doubted by observers of the international system. As Ravenhill notes:

Where countries are placed into these two categories may be of more concern to the governments of the countries concerned – no doubt many would view placement in the small power group as an insult – than of any analytical consequence. With candidates for middle power status ranging from Australia to France, [and] Canada to China, intra-category variation on indicators such as economic strength, geographical location, size and capabilities of the diplomatic and military establishments, or cultural heritage are likely to vitiate the utility of the category for making any predictions about the states' likely foreign policy behaviours. Even the addition of a category of 'major' power – to encompass the non-superpower permanent members of the UN Security Council, and aspirants to this status such as Germany, India and Japan – would still leave an enormous number and variety of countries vying for middle power status. (1998 : 310)

Whilst little if any consensus can be established as to the precise definition of middle powers, the concept has gained popularity in international relations literature, and a range of studies have been conducted employing the middle power approach to account for the foreign policy behaviour and foreign policy choices of a range of identified middle powers. Middle powers do seem to matter, and increasingly so, in international relations.

Yet problems of definition and identification of middle powers and middle power status persist. Some conceptual clarity is offered by Jordaan, who writes succinctly that middle powers are states that are neither great nor small in international power, capacity and influence, and that demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system. (2003 : 165) This definition is of importance, as it not only provides some form of criteria by which middle powers can be identified, but also accounts for what middle powers *do* in the international system, or better, which purpose they are thought to serve. According to Jordaan, middle powers promote cohesion and stability in the world system. Expanding on this, Jordaan writes that middle power states typically adopt an

activist foreign policy agenda, involving themselves in issues beyond their “immediate concern”, and selectively and functionally display leadership in certain issue areas, whilst remaining firmly committed to “orderliness and security in the world system”. (2003 : 167 - 169)

Middle powers furthermore are conceptualised as being supporters of, and making use of and engaging in, multilateralism as an organising principle in international affairs, as international multilateral organisations proffer middle powers with a forum in and through which to affect structural global change, lacking the ability to affect such change outside of multilateral fora due to limits of their own power in international relations. For this reason, it is argued, middle powers direct their foreign policy efforts at the international level, “for which multilateral arrangements are ideally suited.” (Jordaan, 2003 : 169) Furthermore, due to the inability of middle powers to single-handedly affect global outcomes in any direct manner, and the consequent use by middle powers of international organisations and multilateralism, middle powers serve to act as supporters of multilateralism, and to legitimise multilateralism and institutionalised international multilateral fora. (Jordaan, 2003 : 169)

The conceptualisation of middle powers offered by Jordaan is an important one, as it places emphasis squarely on the nature of the relationship between middle powers and multilateralism in the international system. The line of argumentation advanced builds particularly on the works of Keohane (1990), Ruggie (1993) and Carporoso (1993). As has been argued, middle powers, due to their limited capabilities relative to great powers and superpowers and the concomitant limitations placed on the outcomes middle powers can affect in the international system through their interactions with other states, make use of multilateralism so as to maximise the desired affect of the policy initiatives they embark upon. This is an aspect of middlepowermanship addressed by Robert Cox when commenting on the leverage available to middle powers concerning specific policy issues on the current agenda. (in Müftüler and Yüksel, 1997 : 185)

David Black traces the linkage between middle powers and multilateralism to the post-Second World War era, in which foreign policy-makers in middle power states arrived at the conclusion that in a world system dominated by two rival superpowers the best chances for policy success, and indeed for survival, lay in inhibiting and forestalling to the greatest extent possible international conflicts which risked escalation into larger confrontations.

The best vehicles for doing this were the complex of international political and strategic organisations developed in this era, the UN, NATO, the CSCE and so on; and certain policy techniques or instruments, such as mediation and peacekeeping. This tendency to focus on international organisation-building can be clearly traced to the present day and is the area in which traditional conceptions of ‘middlepowermanship’ were most often identified. (Black, 1997 : 102)

In addition, as Peter Katzenstein has argued, middle power states, at least some Western ones, had entrenched interests in supporting the norms and institutions associated with the Bretton Woods arrangements and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and this interest in the maintenance of a relatively open, liberal and stable (or predictable) international economy furthermore contributed to the development of internationalist interests and behavioural patterns among middle powers, displayed through the active support for and participation in the multilateral institutions. (in Black, 1997 : 102 - 103)

As the scope and range of the items on the international agenda increased, particularly with the ending of the Cold War and the increase in the number of issue-areas dealt with at the international level in multilateral organisations, so too did the use of multilateral fora by middle powers as the terrain in which foreign policy agendas could be driven increase.

Middle powers, well aware that policy goals and desired outcomes cannot be achieved without co-ordinated multilateral action and the support of other powers in the international system, it is argued, make use of multilateralism for three primary reasons; these being indivisibility, generalised principles of conduct, and diffuse reciprocity. Indivisibility can be conceptualised as the scope, both geographic and functional, over

which costs and benefits of certain policy actions are spread, given an action that is initiated in or among component units. (Carporoso, 1993 : 53 - 54) Generalised principles of conduct, inherent in multilateral fora, typically are enshrined in norms upholding general modes of interaction between states, as opposed to differentiating relations on a case by case basis of individual preferences, situational exigencies or a priori particularistic grounds. (Carporoso, 1993 : 54) Diffuse reciprocity refers to the nature of multilateral arrangements whereby it is expected by members party to that arrangement that a rough equivalence of benefits will be yielded in the aggregate and over time. (Ruggie, 1993 : 11) In other words, “diffuse reciprocity adjusts the utilitarian lenses for the long view, emphasising that actors expect to benefit in the long run and over many issues, rather than every time on every issue.” (Carporoso, 1993 : 54)

For these reasons, middle powers make use of multilateralism as a means to generate maximum political benefit with limited political resources. Furthermore, multilateralism allows for the institutionalisation and regulation of the established order within which middle powers must operate, and simultaneously as the locus of interactions for the transformation of the existing order so as to most benefit middle powers, (Cox, 1992[a] : 496 - 497) Useful insights are generated by world systems theory at this juncture. World systems theory conceptualises states in the international system as falling into the typology of core, semi-periphery and periphery states. Whilst world systems theory is based primarily on argumentation of an economic nature, the theory approaches world order in roughly the following manner: “Core economies are dominant over peripheral economies; they determine the conditions in which peripheral economies produce and they extract surplus from peripheral production for the enhancement of the core. Thus, the core produces underdevelopment in the periphery through the economic relations linking the two. Semi-periphery economies are strong enough to protect themselves from this kind of exploitation, and they struggle to attain core status.” (Cox, 1992[a] : 510)

Whilst the merits and demerits of the world systems approach could be discussed at length at this stage, the contribution of this approach to middle power theory lies in its understanding of multilateralism. As Robert Cox notes, multilateralism serves as an

instrument for the institutionalisation of the core - semi-periphery - periphery relations. “Further, multilateralism is seen as a terrain of struggle between core and periphery, a terrain in which the grievances of the periphery can be aggregated into collective demands upon the core for structural change in the world economy.” (1992[a] : 512) Whilst a (con)fusion of the middle power and world systems theories may be extending the line of argumentation taken here somewhat too far, the notion of multilateral institutions serving as the terrain in which lesser powers can collectively air their grievances against greater powers is a valuable one. Asserting that middle powers collectively represent the semi-periphery, or represent exceptional states in the periphery, would equate to a misreading of world systems theory. However, it would appear conceptually difficult to place middle powers in the core category of world systems theory. Thus, as periphery (and semi-periphery?) states utilise multilateralism and multilateral fora so as to maximise their limited power resources in world systems theory, so too do middle powers utilise multilateralism so as to maximise the potential for attaining their policy objectives under middle power theory.

Ruggie correctly points out that multilateralism is indeed a demanding organisational form. “It requires its participants to renounce temporary advantages and the temptation to define their interests narrowly and in terms of national interests, and it also requires them to forgo ad hoc coalitions and to avoid policies based on situational exigencies and momentary constellations of interests.” (Carpodoro, 1993 : 56) However, while multilateralism may indeed be a demanding organisational form in the international system, it is an organisational form which middle powers have learned to utilise to their own benefit, and the successful use of multilateralism to generate desired outcomes is one of the hallmark features of middle powers, perhaps precisely because middle powers are so reliant on multilateralism as a means of both demonstrating and expanding their power.

If little agreement can be found in international relations literature on a general conceptualisation of middle powers and middlepowermanship, even less can be established in terms of theoretical approaches to middlepowermanship. Whilst it appears

clear that middle powers make strategic use of multilateralism so as to maximise the limited resources they possess, identifying middle powers remains contentious. Indeed, identifying middle powers in international relations is the source of much debate and contention, and a central part of the reason as to why little consensus can be established as to a precise definition of middle powers. Whilst Wight conceptualised middle powers in terms of military capacity, for example, and Holbraad focused on the notions of power and interaction among states as defining characteristics of middle powers, other scholars have focused on a plethora of differing theoretical approaches of identifying and analysing middle powers. Two broad trends, however, in theoretical approaches to middle powers may be discerned.

2.3 Identifying and Analysing Middle Powers

As James Hamill and Donna Lee point out, middle power states are usually identified in one of two ways. The traditional, and most common, means of identifying middle powers is to aggregate “critical and material criteria” so as to rank nations according to their relative capabilities. As the capabilities of states differ, it is argued, it is possible on the basis of aggregation to categorise states as superpowers, great powers, middle powers or small powers. However, utilising an approach employed by Cooper, Higgot and Nossal, it is also possible to distinguish middle powers on the basis of their foreign policy behaviour, as middle powers “carve out a niche for themselves by pursuing a narrow range and particular types of foreign policy interests.” (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 34) Both approaches are controversial and entail inherent analytical weaknesses, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

2.3.1 The Aggregate Approach

The aggregate approach, sometimes referred to as the traditional approach, to middle powers was utilised predominantly in the analysis of middle powers and middle power behaviour following the Second World War and throughout the course of the Cold War. According to the aggregate or criteria approach countries are ranked in the international

system according to various sets of measurable criteria whereby the position of each country is ranked relative to that of others. The criteria employed for measurement include, but are not limited to, economic indicators, gross national product and military capacity, as well as physical attributes such as population size, geographic position and strategic location. This approach, popular with several researchers of middle powers, does however contain inherent difficulties. As Hamill and Lee point out:

While it has been easy to differentiate middle powers from superpowers using such criteria, it has proven very difficult if not impossible to produce ranking systems that clearly and consistently differentiate middle powers from small powers. This is because definitions of the lower limits of middle powers have proved far more difficult than definitions of the higher limits. Identifying middle powers by aggregating material and physical attributes has proved most controversial because of the variance in criteria used, as well as the discordant results this method produces. In sum, this research has produced an incoherent set of lists. (2001 : 34)

Indeed, the use of varying criteria produces sets of varying numbers of states which could be considered middle powers, and it is argued that it appears highly unlikely that meaningful generalisations about middle powers and middle power diplomacy can be reached utilising the aggregate approach due to the significant variance in the actual foreign policy behaviour and interests of the countries ranked together under this approach. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 34) In an attempt to rectify such problems of classification, and to “rescue the concept from increasing vagueness”, Eduard Jordaan draws a distinction between traditional middle powers (such as Australia, Canada and Norway), and emerging middle powers (such as Argentina and South Africa), and argues that traditional and emerging middle powers can be distinguished on the basis of their mutually-influencing constitutive and behavioural differences. (2003 : 165 - 166)

Traditional middle powers, goes the argument, constitutively are wealthy, stable, egalitarian, social democratic states which are not regionally influential, whilst behaviourally they exhibit weak and ambivalent regional orientation, constructing identities, which are distinct from the powerful states in their regions, and offer appealing

concessions to pressures for global reform. Emerging middle powers, on the other hand, constitutively are semi-peripheral, materially inequalitarian, recently democratised states which demonstrate a degree of regional influence and self-association, whilst behaviourally opting for reformist and not radical global change and exhibiting a strong regional orientation favouring regional integration whilst seeking to construct identities distinct from the weak states in their region. (Jordaan, 2003 : 165) Jordaan therefore attempts to account for the varying constitutive and behavioural aspects of middle powers, and notes that traditional middle powers came to prominence during the Cold War, whereas emerging middle powers rose to assume their internationalist postures only after the Cold War had ended, particularly through means of assuming leadership positions in South-dominated international organisations. (Jordaan, 2003 : 169 - 178)

Whilst Jordaan attempts to present a typology for identifying and differentiating between so-called “traditional” and “emerging” middle powers and accounting for the differences in their behavioural aspects on the basis of constitutive differences, the typology still remains firmly entrenched in the aggregate approach to middlepowermanship and the concomitant system of ranking states in order of their power capabilities, and then selecting those in the middle and adorning them with the title of “middle powers”. Whilst the typology offered by Jordaan does go some way in combining aspects of the aggregate approach with the behavioural approach (discussed below), the typology remains dependent on constitutive features of middle powers. As Cox points out, possessing middle-range capability is indeed a necessary condition of the ability to act as a middle power. It is however not an adequate predictor of a disposition to act as a middle power. Middlepowermanship has nothing to do with size. Rather it defines a conception of a country’s role in the world. (Cox, 1992[b] : 524)

An ability to take a certain distance from direct involvement in major conflicts, a sufficient degree of autonomy in relation to major powers, a commitment to orderliness and security in inter-state relations and to facilitating orderly change in the world system are the critical elements for fulfilment of the middle power role. With apologies to Pirandello, we can say that the middle power is a role in search of an actor. (Cox, 1989 : 244)

As Cox correctly points out, the ability (constitutive attributes) to act as a middle power is but one component of middlepowermanship. The other, perhaps more important, component, is the willingness to act as middle power, and the resultant actions (behavioural attributes) which middle powers undertake which classify them as middle powers in the international system. Based on this understanding of middle powers and middlepowermanship, a different approach to identifying and analysing middle powers developed; namely the behavioural approach.

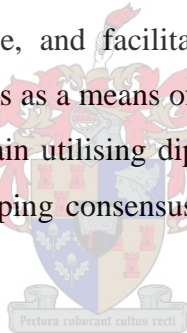
2.3.2 The Behavioural Approach

Whilst the detailed and theoretically sophisticated arguments for revisiting the concept of middle powers made by Cooper, Higgot and Nossal served to revive interest in the concept, the two middle powers they utilised in their studies, Australia and Canada, both appeared to retreat from the diplomatic activism which had characterised their foreign policies throughout the 1980s. As Ravenhill notes, this left the concept of middlepowermanship, and the interpretation of middle power status offered by Cooper, Higgot and Nossal, weakened. (1998 : 310) However, one contribution made by Cooper, Higgot and Nossal which gained credence and served as the basis for the further development of middle power theory was the rejection by these authors of conventional definitions of middle power status that rested on physical attributes such as geographical area, geographical location, population size, military capabilities, gross domestic product or the normative content of foreign policy. Rather, Cooper, Higgot and Nossal identified middle powers by what they did in terms of diplomatic activity and in the manner in which they pursued their foreign policy objectives, as suggested by Cox. (Ravenhill, 1998 : 310)

This shortcoming in the aggregate approach of identifying and analysing middle powers and middle power behaviour has led to increasing use and development of approaches which identify middle powers utilising behavioural criteria, or as Hamill and Lee state, using an approach which dictates that “to be included in the category of middle powers, countries have to act as middle powers.” (2001 : 35) Whilst many states may possess a

range of physical and material capabilities which would seem to categorise them as middle powers, it is the foreign policy behaviour and interests of states which identifies middle powers and separates these from great powers and smaller powers. Furthermore, capabilities, particularly non-structural factors such as diplomatic skill, policy creativity and policy leadership, are taken into consideration; factors which enable middle powers to become “important, and often decisive, players in international relations. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 35)

Cooper, Higgot and Nossal argue that, under a behavioural approach, middle powers typically can be identified in one or more of three forms of foreign policy behaviour. First, middle powers can be catalysts, by which diplomatic skill such as intellectual leadership is used to trigger foreign policy initiatives. Second, middle powers act as facilitators, using diplomatic skill to facilitate the building of coalitions on issues of international or regional importance, and facilitating collaborative action with other countries and utilising such coalitions as a means of leverage in multilateral fora. Finally, middle powers act as managers, again utilising diplomatic skill to build and strengthen institutions and regimes and developing consensus on conventions and norms. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 35)



It should be noted here that what distinguishes middle powers from great powers, or indeed even superpowers, is not diplomatic size or skill, as superpowers will possess equal if not larger levels of diplomatic agency, but instead the agenda, interests and scale of diplomatic activity. According to the behavioural approach, middle powers tend to concentrate their diplomatic resources and skills on a small range of issues or particular issue-set in international relations. “As such, middle powers carve out a diplomatic niche for themselves.” (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 35) The advantages inherent to the behavioural approach to middlepowermanship, as opposed to the aggregate approach, argue Hamill and Lee, are that this approach narrows the range of countries identifiable as middle powers, confining it to those with a proven capacity and willingness for diplomatic action, whilst simultaneously providing a coherent means of considering the range of diplomatic actions available to middle powers. (2001 : 36)

Yet Hamill and Lee concede that the behavioural approach to middle powers does contain a somewhat unavoidable tautological element in terms of the logic it follows. This is due to the notion that, as pointed out by David Black, middle powers are identified by their foreign policy behaviour, "... which leads to the identification of similarities in the constitutive features of middle power states, from whence the circle is completed by explaining middle power foreign policy, as shaped by these compositional features." (Jordaan, 2003 : 166)

Black furthermore argues that middle powers cannot be considered middle powers simply because they tend to operate as catalysts, facilitators and managers. "Rather, some middle-sized states have engaged in these forms of internationalist behaviour, or 'roles', because it has suited their long-term interests vis-à-vis world order, the world economy and the pursuit of dominant societal values and interests, all supported by significant material / technical / bureaucratic capabilities to do so." (Black, 1997 : 103) It must be conceded that the behavioural approach to middle powers does contain an inherently tautological aspect, and Black's understanding that middle powers engage in certain foreign policy actions as these suit their particular interests does have credence.

Indeed, the notion of middle powers engaging in multilateralism in the international system and operating as catalysts, facilitators and managers not out of their own good will but due to their perceived national interests serves to debunk one myth surrounding middle powers which has surfaced in international relations literature; that of middle powers acting as 'good international citizens'. As Cooper writes, characterising middle powers, "that whole grab-bag of countries that verge on collective angelic perfection" as former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, Stephen Lewis, once put it, with good international citizenship is highly prone to distortions, ambiguity and nostalgic mythology. (Cooper, 1997 : 7)

Eduard Jordaan, building on the work of Cox, argues that, whilst characteristically middle powers have indeed engaged in foreign policy beyond the immediacy of geography and self-interest with seeming absence of self-interested foreign policy

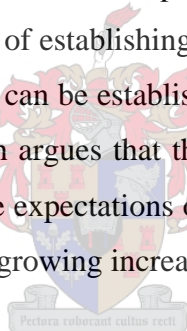
behaviour in which the gains are immediate and clear, interest can nonetheless be located at a deeper and more dispersed level in terms of global stability, controllability and predictability. (166 - 167) Cox would seemingly agree with this understanding of 'good international citizenship' arguing that middle power commitment to orderliness and security in interstate relations and to the facilitation of orderly change in the world system can be located in the pursuit of an environment in which the interests of middle power states and those of their populations can be pursued. (Cooper, 1997 : 8)

Yet, as mentioned earlier, generating insight into the reasoning behind the policy decisions of middle power states is not the purpose of this research, and has been left to others to pursue. Rather, this research aims to ascertain how middle power theory can be utilised to identify middle powers and to track their behaviour at the level of the international system.

The behavioural approach to identifying and analysing middle powers outlined above appears to provide the most useful approach for the purposes of this research, generating a more narrow and precise means of approaching the notion of middle powers in international relations. An analysis solely of the aggregate or constitutive features of middle powers generates only limited insight into middle powers and their precise functions or relevance in the international system. Whilst the behavioural approach at times appears to obfuscate middle powers more than the aggregate approach, and the delimitations for which nations can and cannot be considered middle powers are more flexible and porous than under the aggregate approach, the behavioural approach nonetheless succeeds in generating greater insight into the manner in which middle powers interact with other states in the international system, in generating insight into the common behavioural features of middle powers, and indeed in generating a greater understanding of the roles fulfilled by middle powers in international relations and in international relations theory.

Whilst degrees of conceptual clarity have been offered by scholars, as shown above, the notion of middle powers in international relations remains problematic. As Jennifer Welsh points out, even when utilising a behavioural approach to middle powers, no

objective definition of middle power can be utilised which is not to some degree relational and dependent on great and minor powers as reference points before generating meaning. Furthermore, as argued by Denis Stairs, the very notion of middle powers is underpinned by a problematic premise which assumes that “the place of a given state in the international hierarchy of power is itself a fundamental, if not *the* fundamental determinant of its international behaviour”, and that, by extension, states that fulfil the definition will behave in similar kinds of ways. (Welsh, 2004 : 585) The argument is advanced that little empirical evidence can be found that supports assumptions of similar behaviour, and that the prediction of commonality of substantive positions or roles among middle powers is found wanting. A final analytical hurdle presented by Welsh is the argument that increasingly soft power has become decisive in international relations, and that whilst middle powers have come to utilise soft power in terms of their ability to set the agenda in international institutions and political debate, no adequate means of measuring this soft power, or indeed of establishing a ranking system based on the ability to use soft power by middle powers, can be established. (Welsh, 2004 : 586 - 587) Based on this line of argumentation, Welsh argues that the “middle power mantra is losing its punch”, and that the gap between the expectations of what middle powers should do, and the reality of what they are doing, is growing increasingly wider.



Whilst the theoretical shortcomings of the middle power approach as discussed above must be noted, and the manner in which they undermine the notion of middle powers in international relations and the utility of the middle power approach for generating insight into the behaviour of middle powers in terms of the roles they fulfil and the functions they perform in the international system must be given due consideration, it cannot be argued that middle powers are irrelevant in a world witnessing increasing use of multilateralism and multilateral fora, and a world in which an increasing range of issue-sets are being driven by an increasing variety of middle-powered states. As Richard Higgot argues, those states with the technical and entrepreneurial skills to build coalitions and advance and manage initiatives have shown increasing leadership when this is not forthcoming from the major powers, as the major powers do not always have the same

immediate concerns about a particular issue that needs addressing in a collective manner in international relations. (Higgott, 1997 : 33)

To ignore this phenomenon in international relations appears as short-sighted as discrediting middle power theory due to its to date inherent weaknesses and shortcomings. Whilst the notion of middle powers and of their role in international relations is indeed ambiguous and contested, the existence of middle powers is not, and neither is the demonstrated ability of middle powers to be of decisive influence in the international system. This is due to the fact that, subscribing to the behavioural approach, middle powers have succeeded in carving out “niches” for themselves in international relations.

2.3.3 “Niche-Building” Diplomacy

The concept of niches or niche-building diplomacy has been alluded to above numerous times, however, its central relevance to the behavioural approach to middle power theory - identifying middle powers through their foreign policy actions - warrants an in-depth discussion of this concept. As Andrew Cooper points out, the concept of niche-building diplomacy offers an instrument by which middle power behaviour may be examined more systematically by giving salience to the behaviour of countries in terms of the specific issue areas they target for activity. (1997 : 6)

After a brief disappearance from the 1960s to the 1980s, the concept of niche diplomacy gained new currency in the 1990s. Gareth Evans, the former Australian foreign minister, observed that niche diplomacy involves the concentration of diplomatic resources in identified issue areas deemed best able to generate returns worth having, rather than trying to cover a broad spectrum of issues in international relations. (Cooper, 1997 : 5) In part the concept of niche-building by middle powers, the identification of certain issue areas or an issue-set which a middle power pursues in international relations, has gained new currency as middle powers increasingly have come to carve out niches for themselves through means of deliberate diplomatic actions in the international system as

greater room for middle powers to prompt policy initiatives and responses has arisen in the changing nature of the international system following the Cold War. Increasingly, as the use of multilateralism and multilateral fora has increased, so too has the political space for manoeuvre opened up to middle powers to engage in niche-building activities.

Middle powers, it is argued, increasingly have been looking for ways to assert themselves in the context of the opening political space available to them, and thereby have increasingly been engaging in niche-building diplomatic activity. Cooper, employing a functionalist perspective, notes that the benefits of niche-building were twofold. First, symbolically the approach provided middle powers with enhanced status in the international system (often with tangible spillover benefits in terms of institutional positions), and instrumentally it offered the possibility of building up a constructive role which distinguished the middle powers from the great powers. (Cooper, 1997 : 5)

Middle powers, then, well aware that the policy objectives which can be pursued are limited due to the power constraints imposed upon them, necessarily must prioritise objectives and concentration in those areas which are likely to yield the most political benefit and desired results (Ravenhill, 1998 : 311; Hocking, 1997 : 135), and the concept of niche diplomacy relates to the ability of middle powers to “identify and fill niche space on a selective basis through policy ingenuity and execution.” (Cooper, 1997 : 5) Niche diplomacy thus appears to deal with two problems confronted by middle powers. First, presented with a complex policy agenda, what should a middle powers focus on, and second, how should it order its scarce resources to maximum effect? Niche diplomacy, it is argued, allows middle powers to focus and to manage scarce resources, and to effectively engage in international relations on an issue-specific basis rather than spreading its resources too thinly and “covering the field”, as it were. (Hocking, 1997 : 136)

Utilising the concept of niche-building diplomacy, Hayes, for example, demonstrates how Canada, as a middle power, created a niche for itself in the realm of peacekeeping (1997) whilst Österund argues that in the Palestine–Israel conflict Norway created a niche for itself as “a country without interests”, particularly through means of the Oslo process.

This was, as Österund shows, a niche which Norway had actively carved for itself at the United Nations through its policies relating to the French colonies of North Africa from the mid-1950s on, as well as through its involvement with apartheid South Africa. Through deliberately balancing tensions between internationalist participation and nationalist reservations, Österund argues, Norway was able to display itself as a middle power capable of achieving tactical compromise and bridge-building, and thereby created a unique niche for itself in international relations. (Österund, 1997: 92 - 93)

Another middle power which has been apt at carving niches for itself in the international system has been Australia, as demonstrated by Brian Hocking (1997) and Andrew Cooper (1997). Australia, it is argued, has defined niches for itself both in the functional and in the geographic sense. Functional niches have been attained in terms of key issues on the international agenda relating to the environment, human rights, and the promotion of an open and fair trading regime. Indeed, Australia's launch, support for and involvement in the Cairns Group has certainly helped define Australia and Australian policies in international trade. (Black, 1997 : 115 - 116) In the geographic sense, Australia has displayed middle power leadership and niche-building diplomatic activity centred on the Asia-Pacific region, encapsulated by the phrase frequently heard from Australian government representatives of "middle power diplomacy with an Asia-Pacific orientation." (Hocking, 1997 : 137) For some observers, this definition of Australia's role within its regional setting has been "the most significant and far-reaching dimension of niche diplomacy." (Hocking, 1997 : 137; Cooper, 1997 : 19)

Indeed, regional niche-building endeavours are not limited to the Australian case, as Cooper argues that Sweden has of late been engaging in regional niche-building diplomacy in the Hansa-Baltic area. (1997 : 19) Thus, niches can be conceived of both in functional areas (Canada's role in the Law of the Sea negotiations) or in geographic areas (Sweden's involvement in the Hansa-Baltic area and in Eastern Europe). (Black, 1997 : 115 - 116) Middle powers thus identify and carve out niches for themselves through means of foreign policy initiatives and diplomatic manoeuvrings, and then concentrate effort and resources within these niche-spaces so as to maximise exposure and anticipated benefit to themselves. And the manner in which middle powers engage in niche-building

diplomacy is impressive. Whilst Andrew Cooper notes that whilst the entire range of middle powers studied engaged in some form of niche-building on an issue-specific basis, and fundamental commonalities in the patterns in which this niche-building was undertaken could be identified, the differences in operating procedure among middle powers were striking. (1997 : 9)

Thus, by examining the niches which middle powers carve out for themselves in international relations by means of concentrated diplomatic activity and deliberate foreign policy choices, the behaviour of middle powers may be examined more rigorously and the constraints imposed upon middle powers, the policy choices available to middle powers, and the manner in which middle powers engage with other states, particularly through the use of multilateralism and multilateral fora, in the international system and the outcomes of these engagements, may be better understood. Furthermore, the aspiration that the application of the concept of niche-building to middle power behaviour will result in some form of predictive capacity as to the foreign policy choices of middle powers is also inherent to the concept of niche-building.

2.4 Middle Powers and Niche-Building

As has been shown above, and as Andrew Cooper argues, the middle power concept as a distinctive category of actor in international relations remains far from unproblematic. Whilst an aggregate or a behavioural approach utilising the concept of niche-building may be employed when analysing, identifying and explaining middle powers, each approach is vested with shortcomings and unavoidable theoretical pitfalls. However, middle power theory does provide an approach which attempts to actually reflect reality in its greater complexity. And the behavioural approach to middle powers does serve to recast the concept from an emphasis on generic criteria based on normative qualities and quantitative attributes to a more contoured mode of analysis based on a distinctive mode of statecraft. (Cooper, 1997 : 20 - 21)

It has been demonstrated that middle powers are states that, due to their limited capabilities relative to those of great powers or indeed superpowers, manage to make significant contributions to the international system and serve to ensure stability and predictability in the system as well as legitimisation for the system through the deliberate use of multilateralism and engagement in multilateral fora, and through niche-building diplomatic activity, the deliberate concentration of resources, leadership and skills on an issue-specific basis, attempt to engage with the international system in as productive a manner as possible which simultaneously raises the status of the middle power and generates maximum benefit for the middle power in terms of its perceived interests.

Furthermore, a synthesis of the theoretical facets of the previous and current literature on middle powers presented above reveals that middle powers cannot be considered middle powers solely because they possess the capacity to be middle powers, because they may be willing to act as middle powers, or because they indeed can be conceived as acting as middle powers. Rather, a middle power can only be conceived of as a middle power if it has the capability to be a middle power (be this aggregate capacity, as envisioned by neo-realists, or diplomatic and policy capability, or behavioural capability, as envisioned by neo-liberalists), if it is willing to act as a middle power, and if it is, through the process of niche-building, acting as a middle power in the international system, be this as catalyst, facilitator, manager, bridge-builder, mediator, or actions relevant to any other niche which it has carved for itself. Thus a middle power must have the capability to be a middle power, must be willing to act as a middle power in the international system, and must indeed act as a middle power through the action of niche-building.

Whilst the conceptualisation of middlepowermanship offered above does go some way in clarifying the concept of middle powers in terms of identifying middle powers, analysing their behaviour and role in the international system, and in terms of providing some insight as to what may be expected from middle powers in terms of the foreign policy decisions they would make relevant to the niches they have created for themselves in the international system, this conceptualisation of middlepowermanship still seems to be lacking a critical aspect. In 1984 Carsten Holbraad pointed out that a state was not a great

power, or by extension of the argument, a middle power, based merely on the resources it had at its disposal (thereby weakening the aggregate approach to middlepowermanship) or the manner in which it utilised these resources (thereby weakening the behavioural approach), *but also because it was acknowledged and respected as a great or middle power*. (Holbraad, 1984 : 75) This is a point of critical importance to a thorough understanding and analysis of middle powers in international relations, and an aspect of middlepowermanship which many if not most scholars writing on middle powers to date have seemingly not picked up on.

Use of a constructivist approach at this juncture, as advanced by Alexander Wendt, serves to make lucid this aspect of middle powers in international relations. Wendt argues that in international relations truth conditions for identity claims are communal rather than individual, and that accordingly claims made by states, such as for example to sovereignty in the community of states, are meaningless without recognition of those claims, and the resultant rights, such as for example non-intervention, by other actors of that same community. (1999 : 176 - 182) Wendt later reinforces and expands upon this line of argumentation. “What this means is that in initially forming shared ideas about Self and Other through a learning process, and then in subsequently reinforcing those ideas casually through repeated interaction, Ego and Alter are at each stage jointly defining who each of them is.” (1999 : 335)

Whilst Wendt writes not about middle powers specifically, but rather about states in international politics at large, the applicability of this reasoning to middle powers in particular is quite clear. Middle powers may well have the capability to be middle powers, the willingness to act as middle powers through use of multilateralism, and indeed act as middle powers, but without the *recognition* of their status as middle powers by other states in the international system middlepowermanship is relatively meaningless. Middle powers must be both seen to be acting as middle powers and recognised as middle powers by other states (and indeed by scholars) if the term is to have any relevance.

An example to illustrate this point. Canada well possessed the capability to act as a middle power, was willing to act as a middle power in international affairs through its contributions to, for example, the United Nations, and indeed acted as a middle power in the realm of peacekeeping and the Law of the Seas process. Yet had other states not explicitly recognised Canada as a middle power and treated Canada as a middle power, the term would have been meaningless to foreign policy-makers, and Canada's foreign policy would have been described as multilateral, not middle power-like. Yet the attempts of Canada to gain recognition, for example, in the United Nations Charter for the role middle powers had contributed to peace and security and the importance of the future role middle powers could play were recognised by other states at the San Francisco Conference. Indeed, Canada even attempted to have a legal definition of middle power status enshrined in the United Nations Charter. (Hayes, 1997 : 75) Whilst Canadian policy-makers failed on this front, Canada's role as middle power and its niche in peacekeeping were explicitly recognised and utilised by other states over the course of decades to come. (Cooper, 1997; Hayes, 1997; Ravenhill, 1998; Michaud and Bélanger, 2000 and Welsh, 2004)

Whilst argumentation may be advanced that recognition of middlepowermanship may be explicit, implicit, direct, indirect or a combination of these, the argument that recognition of middle power status by other states in the international system is an important facet of middlepowermanship, and a facet which can be utilised to the benefit of said middle power in terms of the pursuance of its multilateral strategy, is advanced. In the same manner in which the United States can only be argued to have attained true superpower status through the (explicit or implicit?) recognition by other states in the international system of such superpower status (whether they may like it or not is irrelevant here), so too can middle powers only be considered middle powers if they are recognised as such by other states in the international system. Without recognition of middle power status by other states, and the concomitant involvement by these states of the middle power in policy-making environs and other benefits which may be expected by the middle power, middle power status appears somewhat hollow. Thus, for example, for all of the claims made in favour of South Africa's status as a middle power, and its recognition as "the

voice of Africa” (this issue will be dealt with in the following chapter), this middle power status would be meaningless if it were not for the invitation by the Group of Eight made to South Africa to join its annual deliberations, or South Africa being granted access to so-called “Green Room” discussions at World Trade Organisation Ministerials.

Building on the definition offered above, and taking into account the line of argumentation advanced in terms of the importance of recognition, the following can be deduced. Middle powers must have the *capability* to be middle powers, must be *willing* to act as middle powers in the international system, must through their niche-building foreign policies and use of multilateralism *act as middle powers*, and must be *recognised* as middle powers.

Whilst the concept of middle powers in international relations theory and in the international system has now been thoroughly investigated, a fundamental theoretical limitation of the middle power approach is now encountered. While middle power theory as explored above is now capable of identifying middle powers (in this study according to the behavioural approach), of understanding how middle powers operate given their limited resources, of generating insight into how middle powers carve niches for themselves in international relations, and of generating insight into why middle powers make use of multilateralism and of how middle power status, or perhaps, recognition of middle power status, can be of advantage to middle powers, middle power theory remains at best retrospective, and provides little to no predictive capability.

One is capable of understanding how nations that are neither great nor small have utilised multilateralism to their own benefit, have ingeniously carved foreign policy niches for themselves, and have channelled scarce resources to maximise benefit. We are furthermore capable of explaining how these powers have marketed themselves, and have ensured that political benefits, among these recognition, have flown to them, and all under the rubric of the middle power approach. Yet we remain firmly incapable of predicting which states will and which states will not be middle powers in the international system, just as we remain equally incapable of predicting which foreign

policy choices middle powers will make. Middle power theory is only capable of providing assumptions, based on an analysis of previous behaviour. If it can be shown that Australia, as a middle power, has displayed commitment to the principles of fair and equitable trade through its involvement in the Cairn's Group, and indeed has through niche-building made fair trade in agricultural products one of the hallmarks of its middle power status, then it can be assumed that Australia, given the considerable investments made in carving this niche for itself and generating the good reputation it currently enjoys, would not deviate, at least not dramatically, from the policies its niche-building diplomatic activities have "bound" it to. If Australia has characterised itself as championing fair trade in agricultural goods through niche-building, and is recognised as being a champion for this item on the international agenda, then it can reasonably be expected that Australia will also advance this agenda in its multilateral dealings, and will not, for example, act in support of tariffs and barriers.

This is a notion of middlepowermanship which was first addressed by Evans and Grant, who noted that effective middle power diplomacy involves credibility on the part of the country in question. Evans and Grant argued that it was crucial that middle powers be able to make clear that they were not acting as a mere cipher or stalking horse for some protector, and that middle powers needed to demonstrate that policy choices and priorities were entirely their own if they were to be seen as credible middle powered states. (1995 : 347) Whilst Evans and Grant expounded on the notion of credibility in middlepowermanship, John Ravenhill served to entrench the idea in middle power theory. Among the five criteria provided by Ravenhill for middle power status was the notion of credibility (the four others being capacity, concentration, creativity and coalition-building). Credibility, argues Ravenhill, operates on two levels. First, credibility refers to the notion that middle powers, due precisely to their conceptualisation as neither weak nor dominant states, are unlikely to be viewed as being the single largest beneficiaries of negotiated outcomes. Second, credibility refers to the need for consistency in the policies advocated and pursued by middle powers. (Ravenhill, 1998 : 313)

When fusing the notion of credibility as a defining characteristic of middle powers as advanced by Ravenhill with the understanding of middle powers advanced thus far, it is evident that middle power theory, as conceptualised here, is indeed capable of generating, although perhaps limited, some predictive capability. It is this understanding of middle powers, and the notion of credibility, which will be tested throughout the remainder of this study using the specific example of South Africa as a middle power at the World Trade Organisation.

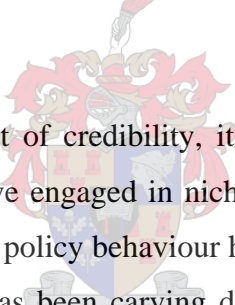
2.5 Conclusion

Perhaps the first conclusion which must be drawn from the analysis presented above is that middlepowermanship remains an elusive concept in international relations literature, and that whilst seemingly every international relations scholar has some form of opinion on the matter, no two would seemingly share one or the other perspective on what middle powers are, on the manner in which they behave, or indeed on what can be expected from middle powers in the international system. Robert Cox's affirmation of the ponderings of John Holmes, and his cautioning that the middle power role should not be evaluated as a fixed universal, but as something that has continually to be rethought within the context of the changing state of the international system, appears to possess vexing accuracy. (Cox, 1989 : 826)

Whilst the elusiveness of precise conceptual clarity on middle powers persists, and indeed is unlikely to be done away with in the near future, the analysis presented above does go some way in clarifying where middle powers fit into the international system. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of middlepowermanship arrived at through the analysis of the existing literature on the matter does lend itself to use in an empirical analysis of middle powers, and does offer some form of predictive capability.

It has been argued that middle powers are those states which have less capacity to engage with the international system than do great powers or superpowers, but more so relative to small states. Middle powers characteristically engage in multilateralism and make use

of multilateral fora so as to drive their foreign policy agendas as opposed to doing so unilaterally or bilaterally, as multilateralism presents middle powers with the platform to most successfully drive their foreign policy agendas given their limited capabilities and resources. Thus middle powers characteristically creatively make use of multilateral fora and engage with other states, often building coalitions around the particular issue-sets of interest to them. Furthermore, middle powers engage in niche-building activity, whereby they actively create policy niches for themselves in international relations, and are recognised by other states as having expertise and experience in said particular policy niche. This in turn gains the middle power recognition and standing in the international system which it otherwise might not, indeed probably would not, have gained. Furthermore, middle powers are recognised by other states in the international system as being middle powers, and accordingly are treated as such, perhaps by gaining access to fora traditionally the preserve of greater powers or managerial positions on particular issue areas.



Finally, taking note of the concept of credibility, it has been argued that if it can be established that middle powers have engaged in niche-building in specific policy areas, and that this niche-building foreign policy behaviour has been recognised, or if the policy area in which the middle power has been carving diplomatic space for itself has been acknowledged, and the middle power is indeed recognised as being a middle power, then it can be expected that the middle power will act in a manner consistent with the manner in which it engaged in the niche-building activity in the first place. Thus, for example, if Norway has consistently positioned itself as impartial bridge-builder in the Israel-Palestine conflict, it would be unexpected for Norway to favour an Israeli position above a Palestinian position in the conflict.

Utilising the understanding of middle powers developed thus far, the remaining chapters will proceed as follows. Chapter 3 will attempt to identify South Africa as a middle power employing the criteria set out above, and will attempt to show how South Africa, since democratisation in 1994, has increasingly made use of multilateralism and concomitantly become recognised as a middle power. Furthermore, the chapter will

attempt to highlight the manner in which, through niche-building foreign policy, South Africa has positioned itself and become recognised as an “African middle power”, and that the niche which it has created for itself in international relations has been as that of “the voice of Africa”, and a “champion of African interests”. Furthermore, bearing in mind the importance of credibility, the chapter will attempt to show consistency in this middle power niche throughout some of the multilateral fora in which South Africa engages and in the foreign policy statements made by representatives of the South African state in regard to this.

Chapter 4 will then proceed with a specific case study of South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation, bearing in mind its status as middle power and the niche which it utilises in international relations. The chapter will in particular focus on South African engagement with its African peers at the World Trade Organisation.

In the fifth and last chapter, a review of the findings of the previous chapters will be presented. In particular, the utility of the middle power approach for this study will be commented on, as will the general consistency of South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation. In particular, the validity of South African claims to and international recognition of South Africa’s middle power role as “the voice of Africa” in terms of its engagement at the World Trade Organisation will be reflected upon, as will the likely nature of South Africa’s future engagement with this multilateral organisation.

Chapter 3

South African Middlepowermanship

3.1 Analysing South African Middlepowermanship

South African foreign policy underwent drastic changes following the first democratically held elections in April 1994 and the coming to power of a government led by the African National Congress (ANC). South Africa quickly moved to reintegrate itself in the international community and rapidly succeeded in making the transition from international pariah to international participant, to borrow the title of one book on the subject matter. (Mills, 1994) Yet South Africa not only embarked on a foreign policy aimed at reintegrating the country into the international system, but indeed the entire focus and thrust of South African foreign policy was revolutionised. Foreign policy-makers quickly reoriented South African foreign policy from one oriented towards unilateralism and bilateralism and aimed at sanctions-busting and indeed interventionism in the affairs of its neighbouring states to one dedicated to the use of and support for multilateralism and notions of global equity. Furthermore, whereas South Africa had previously isolated itself from the rest of the continent, South African foreign policy quickly came to embrace the African continent and its ideals, values, and interests. Indeed, as this chapter will argue, South Africa sought to rapidly reintegrate itself into the global political economy, to establish itself as a recognised middle power on the African continent, and to create a niche for itself in international relations as “the voice of Africa” in international relations.

This chapter will proceed to provide a brief overview of South African foreign policy since 1994 in terms of South Africa’s embrace of multilateralism as a central pillar of its foreign policy and the manner in which it has engaged in niche-building diplomatic activity. South Africa, it is argued, has in typical middle power fashion carved a niche for itself in the international system as the “voice of Africa”, or in other words, of being broadly representative of African interests in multilateral fora and of acting on behalf of African interests in these fora. This chapter will provide a brief overview of the changing

nature of South Africa foreign policy since 1994 before South Africa's use of multilateralism and its attempts at niche-building diplomatic activity will be explored. Indeed, the manner in which South African foreign policy-makers have deliberately made use of multilateralism to create a recognised niche for South Africa as being broadly representative of the African continent in its multilateral foreign policy is of interest here. This chapter will therefore attempt to highlight how South Africa has deliberately been engaging in niche-building diplomacy through the use of a multilateralist foreign policy to push the African agenda and to establish itself as a recognised African middle power. Whilst this chapter serves to provide a generic overview of South Africa's foreign relations, South African engagement at the United Nations and the period of its chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement will be investigated in more depth in an effort to ascertain broad trends in South African policy choices and actions at institutionalised multilateral fora.

The analysis presented in this chapter will be conducted in an attempt to ascertain whether or not South Africa can be considered a middle power, specifically employing the criteria of middlepowermanship set out in the previous chapter. Thus, it must be shown that South Africa has displayed both the capability and the willingness to act as a middle power, that it has acted as a middle power through the use of multilateralism to engage in niche-building activities, and furthermore that the country has also been recognised as a middle power by other actors in the international system. This analysis of South African foreign policy and its middle power status will be conducted for two reasons.

First, it must be established that South Africa can be considered a middle power if the middle power approach is to be useful for the purposes of this study. Second, it must be established whether or not South Africa is a middle power if the notion of consistency, as outlined in the previous chapter, is to be applied to South Africa's multilateral foreign policy and indeed South African middlepowermanship. In other words, it must be established that South Africa's attempts at niche-building diplomacy have been consistent if predictive capability is to be generated in this chapter.

As outlined by the understanding of middlepowermanship advanced in Chapter 2, if it can be established that South Africa has created a middle power niche for itself in the international system as being broadly representative of African interests and of acting if not in unison then at least in harmony with its African peers in decision-making bodies at the global level, then it can be assumed that South Africa would not deviate from such policies in its engagement at the World Trade Organisation, the subject of the following chapter of this study. This chapter will then, if it can be shown that South Africa can indeed be considered a middle power and its middle power niche can clearly be uncovered, serve to establish what broad behavioural trends could be expected from South African policy-makers at the World Trade Organisation.

As was noted early in the first chapter, this study will not attempt to ascertain why South Africa made certain policy choices as opposed to others, or why it has embarked upon the foreign policy direction it has chosen for itself. Several investigations into the reasoning behind South African foreign policy have already been undertaken by various scholars, all generating somewhat different insights. (Vale, 1997; Van der Westhuizen, 1998; Taylor, 2000; Hamill and Lee, 2001; Nel et al., 2001; Van der Westhuizen et al. 2001; le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, 2002; Nel, 2002; Bischoff, 2003; Nathan, 2005; Cornelissen, 2006; Hamill, 2006; Lee et al. 2006; Taylor and Williams, 2006) What does emerge from all of these studies is that South African officials, “acting in a spirit of enlightened self-interest”, recognised that the country could not succeed as an “island of prosperity in a sea of poverty.” (Hamill, 2006 : 120) Indeed, as President Mbeki stated in 2002, “it is very directly in the interests of South Africa that there should be development in the rest of the continent. I don’t think that you can have sustainable, successful development in this country if the rest of the continent is in flames.” (Hamill, 2006 : 120 - 121)

The task which thus emerged for South Africa post-1994 was to work out a manner in which it could play an African role commensurate with its size and status without overextending itself. A creative response to this policy dilemma, it is argued, came in the form of a multilateralist foreign policy. As Hamill notes, South African officials believed that a commitment to the African Renaissance project driven through a multilateralist

foreign policy and one which required the pooling of the country's efforts in multilateral fora would prove most likely to secure success for South Africa's ambitions of reintegrating itself into the global political economy and of attaining economic growth for itself and for the rest of the continent. (2006 : 121)

Taylor and Williams argue that South African foreign policy-makers embarked on a new foreign policy strategy for two interrelated reasons. (2006 : 9)

First is Pretoria's desire to appeal to a variety of audiences that often pursued fundamentally different agendas and hold very different expectations about what politics and foreign policy should deliver. Second, despite considerable evidence of the very real opportunities for states to pursue distinct and varied responses to globalisation, successive ANC governments have failed to conceive of, let alone develop, a viable alternative to the prevailing neo-liberal orthodoxy. Although rarely stated explicitly, the rationale behind Pretoria's strategy seems to run along the lines that because there is no feasible alternative to neo-liberal political economy the most realistic option is to act as a 'middle power' and promote technical reform within the multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. The ANC government can thus feign at least a superficially plausible concern with global inequity to its domestic constituency, including the SACP [South African Communist Party] and [the] Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). (2006 : 9 - 10)

It must be reiterated that an investigation into why certain foreign policy strategies were adopted by South African policy-makers over and above other available policy options is not the purpose of this chapter or of this study, however, and such analyses will be left to others. Rather, this chapter will attempt to investigate the manner in which South African multilateral foreign policy has been conducted since 1994, and the manner in which multilateralism has been utilised by South Africa to engage in niche-building diplomatic activity.

3.2 The Winds of Change in South African Foreign Policy

Whereas South African foreign policy before 1994 had been characterised by isolation, regional interventionism and unilateralism which had succeeded in isolating South Africa from the international system at large (Mills and Baynham, 1994), South Africa's democratisation and the end of apartheid saw a fundamental sea change in the formulation and execution of South African foreign policy take place. South African foreign policy-makers undertook to firmly reintegrate the country into the international community, and to give it an authoritative voice in international affairs. Nelson Mandela in his now seminal 1993 contribution to the journal "Foreign Affairs" wrote on the new direction and changing nature of South African foreign policy, and outlined six pillars upon which any future South African foreign policy would be based.

Mandela presented these pillars as (1) issues of human rights being central to international relations and an understanding that these extend beyond the political, embracing the economic, social and environmental; (2) that just and lasting solutions to the problems of humankind could come only through the promotion of democracy globally; (3) that considerations of justice and respect for international law were paramount in guiding relations between nations; (4) that peace was the goal for which all nations should strive, and that peace should be attained through non-violent means; (5) that the concerns and interests of Africa should be reflected in South African foreign policy choices; and (6) that economic development depended on growing regional and international economic co-operation in an interdependent world. (Mandela, 1993 : 87)

The new directions of South African foreign policy encompassed two fundamental aspects which have helped the country to entrench itself as a middle power within the international system since 1994. First, South Africa firmly committed itself to multilateralism as a guiding principle in its international relations. As Taylor and Williams note, South Africa emerged from its "apartheid wilderness" and was welcomed into a host of multilateral forums, and in turn committed itself to upholding the principles of multilateralism and to playing an active role within multilateral institutions. (2006 : 1) Second, South Africa since 1994, and increasingly so since the Mbeki presidency, has

consciously and actively engaged in niche-building diplomacy; carving a diplomatic niche for itself as the foremost representative of the African continent and its interests. Indeed, South Africa has engaged in typical middle power behaviour, using multilateral fora to engage in niche-building diplomacy, and to create an image for itself as an African power, as representing African interests in its foreign policy, and indeed of being *the* voice of the African continent and of its interests in multilateral fora.

3.3 The New South African Multilateralism and Niche-Building Diplomacy

Donna Lee, Ian Taylor and Paul Williams note that South Africa, as a developing nation emerging from decades of political isolation, lacked the opportunities and capabilities to achieve its foreign policy goals in a unilateral manner. South Africa possessed limited ability to influence, and was unable to set the agenda of, international institutions, or to push its Africa-driven foreign policy so as to achieve desired outcomes by itself. (Lee et al. 2006 : 205) Whilst South Africa had succeeded in moving from pariah to international moral exemplar, “a transformation in a state’s international image so rapid and so profound as to be almost unprecedented in the annals of international politics”, it succeeded primarily in integrating itself into the international community as welcome participant. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 37) Whereas by 1990 South Africa maintained 30 overseas representation offices (as compared to the 28 operated by the ANC), by 1997 South Africa maintained relations with all but 22 of the 170 odd countries and institutions holding diplomatic status. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 37)

What South Africa lacked, however, was the ability to transform its stated foreign policy goals and ideology into political reality. This ability was to be generated not through bilateral political means, but through a commitment to multilateralism within the international system. Indeed, as Jackie Selebi, a former South African Director General of Foreign Affairs, stated in 1999, “South Africa attaches immeasurable significance to this country’s multilateral engagements. Indeed, multilateralism is the corner-stone of this country’s foreign policy.” (in Nel et al., 2001 : 1)

This commitment to the support for and use of multilateralism was confirmed by South Africa's (re)entry into a host of international institutions following the euphoria of the 1994 elections. In that year alone South Africa joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on May 31st, the Commonwealth on June 1st, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU – now the African Union) on June 13th, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on August 29th. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 37) “Indeed, South Africa was welcomed not merely as a new member but as a potentially *pivotal* new member, one capable of injecting dynamism and sense of purpose into organisations which, at least in two of these cases, appeared to be virtually moribund.” (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 37)

South Africa quickly moved to establish itself as a preponderant force in multilateral activities, and between 1994 and 2000 South Africa acceded to roughly 70 multilateral treaties and joined or re-joined over 40 inter-governmental institutions. (Nel et al., 2001 : 1) Equally as important as South Africa's joining of multilateral intuitions following the end of apartheid was the embrace by key multilateral fora of the new South Africa. As Lee et al. point out, multilateral economic fora such as the World Trade Organisation, the G8, the G20 and the Davos economic summits all turned to South Africa as a trustworthy representative of the interests of the African continent. (2006 : 210 - 211) Increasingly throughout the 1990s Pretoria came to display a willingness and enthusiasm “to become a full and active member of the key multilateral institutions and processes at international, regional and sub-regional levels.” (Lee et al. 2006 : 210)

An interesting development in Pretoria's increasing use of multilateralism as a central facet of its foreign relations was the notion that a co-ordinated approach within the developing world vis-à-vis the key multilateral institutions in the international system was important. In 1998, for example, Thabo Mbeki addressed a Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) ministerial meeting and asserted that it was vital that the NAM and the Group of 77 plus China co-ordinated a common strategic approach in their interactions with organisations of the North such as the G8 and the European Union. Mbeki further added that it was crucial that developing countries worked together to integrate their economies into the global economy. Furthermore, Pretoria increasingly sought to operationalise its

multilateralist foreign policy of advancing the interests of the global South through groupings such as the G20+ and the launch of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum, these being coalitions designed to influence global governance structures in favour of the interests of developing countries. (Lee et al. 2006 : 206 - 207) As Taylor and Williams note, “given first Mandela’s and then Mbeki’s desire to be seen as playing a leading role in constructing a more just and equitable world order, it is hardly surprising that Pretoria has invested considerable effort in multilateral diplomacy.” (2006 : 5)

Indeed, the use of multilateralism to push a Southern agenda, imbued with a particularly Africanist hue, was not accidental. Already in 1993, Nelson Mandela argued that one of the central pillars of South Africa’s new foreign policy, as outlined above, would be an awareness “that the concerns and interests of the continent of Africa should be reflected in our foreign-policy choices.” (Mandela, 1993 : 87) The perception of South Africa taking African interests into account, and indeed of being representative of African interests, in its foreign policy choices was reinforced by the notions that a democratic South Africa would resist pressures and temptations to pursue its own interests at the expense of the remainder of the continent, and that South Africa considered itself prepared to shoulder its share of responsibility for the whole southern African region, not in a spirit of paternalism or dominance, but in a spirit of mutual co-operation and respect. (Mandela, 1993 : 91; 97)

The belief that a new South African foreign policy should reflect the interests of the African continent was reaffirmed by the ANC in a foreign policy outline document presented in 1994. (ANC Working Group, 1994 : 221) The ANC argued that the future of a democratic South Africa was inextricably intertwined with that of Africa, and that South Africa had been afforded the opportunity to contribute towards the issues which affected the rest of the continent. “Accordingly,” as the policy document notes, “we dedicate our foreign policy to helping to ensure that Africa’s people are not forgotten or ignored by humankind.” (ANC Working Group, 1994 : 223)

The ANC argued at length that any future South African foreign policy would have to take into consideration the interests and concerns of its African partners, and that South

African foreign policy choices should reflect these interests and concerns. Furthermore, South Africa, it was envisioned, would strive to entrench itself in multilateral fora within the international system and to act as the voice of its African peers, and for the global South in general, within these fora. (ANC Working Group, 1994) As the ANC writes, “Our only desire is to contribute to the great African story; to the well-being of our continent.” (ANC Working Group, 1994 : 229)

Whilst foreign policy-makers scrambled to give new meaning to South African foreign policy throughout the period of democratisation, observers of the new political disposition attempted to postulate on the direction this policy would need to take. Christopher Clapham, for instance, noted that as a giant of Africa in economic terms, South Africa would be expected to take a leading role in representing the continent in the international environment. “Indeed, given that Africa is now virtually bereft of credible leaders with worldwide reputations, Nelson Mandela could well find himself projected into a role as the symbol of continental leadership as soon as he assumes the reins of power within this own country.” (Clapham, 1994 : 47)

Neil van Heerden, the then Director General of the South African Department of Foreign Affairs, asserted in 1994 that South Africa considered itself a part of Africa, in and through which the country’s future lay. (du Pisani, 1994 : 59) Mbeki similarly argued that same year that the future of a democratic South Africa was inextricably bound to the future of the African continent at large, and that foreign policy choices could not afford to ignore this given fact. (Mbeki, 1994 : 204) In 1995 Cabinet Minister Kader Asmal reiterated the government’s position on its foreign policy stance when he asserted that “there is not a corner of the vast continent where our people were not received with affection and fraternal support. Our integration into the affairs of the continent, as a result will be a joyous homecoming, because we are of the same flesh. Not surprisingly, therefore, we believe that all the policies of our country should reflect the interests of the entire continent.” (in Hamill, 2006 : 120)

James Hamill writes that the rhetoric was matched by political reality and since 1994 South African foreign policy has been “informed by, shaped by, and ultimately defined by” a robust commitment to multilateralism and the promotion of a conscious African agenda. (2006 : 118) Whilst Hamill argues that under the Presidency of Nelson Mandela the commitment to Africa was honoured more in the breach than in the observance, Thabo Mbeki’s commitment to multilateralism “imbued with a strong pan-Africanist flavour” has been “anchored in an impeccable, indeed at times overtly rigid, attachment to the norms and practices of multilateralism.” (2006 : 118) This commitment to multilateralism and the promotion of an Africanist agenda, writes Hamill, has been conscious and deliberately driven so as to “advertise and bolster” South Africa’s credentials and so as to secure its unconditional acceptance within multilateral institutions. (2006 : 118)

3.3.1 South African Middlepowermanship and “The African Niche”

One early South African attempt at playing a middle power role in the international system came in the form of the Lockerbie issue, an issue in which, argue Hamill and Lee (2001), South Africa played the typical middle power function of catalyst. South Africa, argue the authors, assumed the lead on resolving a host of issues which had become entrenched in relations between Libya and the West following the bombing by two Libyan agents of PanAm Flight 103 over Scotland in December 1988, and through use of diplomatic skill and by triggering diplomatic initiatives attempted to engineer a rapprochement between the Libyan government and its Western counterparts. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 45 - 46)

South African diplomatic efforts and shuttle diplomacy by Mandela himself soon bore fruit, and “as a result of some particularly dextrous diplomacy, South Africa had helped resolve an international dispute which had proved intractable for over a decade and, in the manner of all successful mediators, Mandela had been able to extract concessions from each side which they could not have contemplated making directly from their adversary.” (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 47) Thus by 1999 South Africa had managed to

secure an agreement amicable to all parties which resolved the stalemate in the Lockerbie issue which had persisted for over a decade. Mandela's attempts at facilitation were not limited to the Lockerbie issue, and early on in his presidency Mandela became involved in the East Timor conflict, and, unsuccessfully, attempted to broker negotiations between Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila in Zaire. (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 114)

In a similar vein, South Africa engaged with typical middle power diplomatic prowess in the Ottawa Process aimed at banning landmines and the Kimberley Process, aimed at curtailing the flow of conflict diamonds, alternating between the roles of catalyst, facilitator and manager traditionally associated with middle powers in the international system. (Cornelissen, 2006) Indeed, Janis van der Westhuizen writes that South Africa emerged as a leading African voice in the Ottawa Process by hosting the first Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines in Kempton Park from the 19th to the 21st of May 1997, which was attended by 40 member states of the Organisation of African Unity, as well as members of the international donor community and non-governmental organisations. (2001[a] : 34) The significance, of the conference, argues Van der Westhuizen, lay in the fact that it helped to solidify not only a stronger southern African position towards the landmine issue, but also contributed towards the creation of a firm African position towards a total international ban on landmines. (2001[a] : 35)

Van der Westhuizen shows that South Africa, the first African country to destroy its stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines and the first African country to publicly support the Ottawa Process, played a prominent role in sustaining the Ottawa Process throughout the period of negotiations. (2001[a] : 35) Indeed, the importance of South Africa's contribution to the Ottawa Process was symbolised in the country becoming the third signatory – after Canada and Norway – amongst over one hundred others to sign the “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction” in Ottawa on the 3rd of December 1997. (Van der Westhuizen, 2001[a] : 36)

Van der Westhuizen finds that South Africa as an “emerging” middle power came to play an active if not a leading role at the regional and continental levels in the Ottawa Process (2001[a] : 40), and concludes that for South Africa, as for other middle powers, the landmine issue provided “a relatively “cheap” issue through which political kudos could be won” (2001[a] : 42) Cornelissen finds that South Africa played an even more enthusiastic and active role in the Kimberley Process than it did in the Ottawa process, and whilst Cornelissen argues that South Africa acted predominantly out of self-interest in this particular case due to its significant stake in the global diamond trade, South Africa came to play a central role in the Process, which served to elevate its global stature, as had its involvement in the Ottawa Process. (2006 : 45)

Another multilateral issue area in which South Africa quickly came to play a prominent role was that of debt reduction for the developing world, in which the country has become increasingly active and vocal since 1998. Already in March 1999 during her visit to Japan, incoming Minister of Foreign Affairs Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma specifically sought Japanese support in light of its membership of the G7 for a debt relief plan for the African continent, and South Africa has persistently lobbied at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for developing country debt reduction. (Van der Westhuizen, 2001[b] : 50) South Africa has furthermore actively engaged in the promotion of human rights through multilateral human rights diplomacy at the global level of the United Nations, at the sub-global level through organisations such as the Commonwealth, and at the regional level through SADC. (Black, 2001)

South Africa’s multilateral credentials continue. South Africa played an important role in the signing of the Rome Statute in 1998 which brought into existence the International Criminal Court, has played active roles at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (where it served as chair of the Africa group), served as chair of SADC from 1995 to 1999, held the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development presidency from 1996 to 1999, and chaired the Commonwealth from 1999 to 2002. South Africa furthermore chaired the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on the International Total Ban on Antipersonnel Landmines, acted as chair of the 1998 session of the United Nations

Commission on Human Rights, and accepted election to the Executive Boards of UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNFPA. (Nel et al., 2001 : 1 - 2)

Philip Nel, Ian Taylor and Janis van der Westhuizen, in their analysis of South African multilateralism, find that the country's multilateral diplomacy is characterised by three central traits. First, South Africa's multilateralism entails high levels of activism in multilateral institutions, an increasing use of such institutions as a means of achieving broader foreign policy goals, and a broad endorsement of multilateralism as a preferred institutional form in global interactions. Second, the country's multilateral diplomacy is geared at attempting to revive and further strengthen existing multilateral institutions that are supposed to look after the interests of developing countries, both in Africa and on the global level. Finally, South Africa uses multilateral diplomacy to make concerted efforts at instituting change in the manner in which institutions of global governance handle the concerns of developing countries, and particularly so as to off-set the marginalisation of the African continent. (Nel et al., 2001 : 5)

Indeed, Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen find that, since 1994, South Africa has emerged as a middle power characteristically and deliberately using multilateralism to “punch above its weight” in international relations. (Nel et al., 2001 : 17)

Yet as has been argued above, whilst South Africa fused a commitment to multilateralism with a commitment to African interests in the early days of its post-apartheid foreign policy, in the initial years following democratisation South Africa's commitment to multilateralism proved more stable and sincere than its commitment to being representative of African interests and of taking these into account in its foreign policy decisions. As Hamill argues, Nelson Mandela's commitment to Africa was honoured more in the breach than in the observance. (2006 : 118) This is an important argument, particularly bearing in mind that this chapter aims to investigate both South Africa's multilateralist credentials and its attempts at niche-building diplomacy. However, inconsistencies in South African foreign policy will be returned to at a later stage. What is of interest here is the manner in which South Africa made use of multilateralism to deliberately carve a niche for itself as “the voice of Africa” in the international system.

Whilst a South African commitment to both multilateralism and the African continent were evident under the presidency of Nelson Mandela, it was the presidency of Thabo Mbeki from 1999 onwards which saw a burst of diplomatic effort imbued with an African flavour on the part of South Africa. Indeed, under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki South Africa's middle power credentials only truly began to emerge. One author, commenting on Mbeki's emerging global role after his first year in office, writes that it was Mbeki who emerged as the developing world's "single most important voice in the world economy." (Barrell in Van der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 111)

James Hamill writes that Thabo Mbeki is now furthermore "Africa's strongest and most eloquent voice in world politics, and during his presidency South Africa has emerged as perhaps the leading 'Southern' campaigner for a democratised system of global governance." (2006 : 123 - 124) Mbeki has attained this position for himself, and concomitantly for South Africa, through an approach which has progressed on two levels.

First, Mbeki exploited South Africa's position within global multilateral institutions, a position which Mandela had created, to "draw upon the reservoir of goodwill towards South Africa" so as to place the African agenda in the limelight. (Hamill, 2006 : 124) Second, Mbeki consistently challenged the existing distribution of power within the major multilateral institutions, and called for structural reforms which would serve to give greater weight to Africa's voice in the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations system. Mbeki argues, with justification, that as the decisions emanating from these various bodies invariably have a universal application, "the institutions themselves require a legitimacy which can only be acquired by addressing the absence of equitable forms of representation within them." (Hamill, 2006 : 124)

Thus whilst Nelson Mandela served to reintegrate South Africa into the international community of states between 1994 and 1999 and served to shore up the country's middle power credentials, it was Thabo Mbeki who made deliberate use of South Africa's middle

power credentials and employed multilateralism to engage in niche-building diplomacy, carving a niche for South Africa as the quintessential African powerhouse speaking up for continental interests in multilateral fora.

Central to Mbeki's reinvigorated Africanist multilateralism has been the notion of the African Renaissance, a project which Mbeki personally steered since 1997, and which by June 2000 was dubbed by the South African Director-General of Foreign Affairs, Siphosiphuthu Pityana, as the underlying vision of a new policy direction to be developed by his department. (Muller, 2000 : 4) The African Renaissance, it is argued, embodied a foreign policy strategy designed to lift Africa out of its marginalised position and to promote African interests globally. (Nicola, 2001 : 22) Mbeki has been pushing the African Renaissance since early in his presidency and already in April 2000 the South African president expressed the need for a strategic partnership between Europe and Africa at the EU-African Summit in Cairo. One month later Mbeki repeated his efforts at placing Africa on the agenda at the Nordic Summit, and in June of that year drove the African agenda at the EU Summit held in Portugal and the Summit on Progressive Governance in Berlin, before heading for Okinawa and, together with Nigeria's Obasanjo and Algeria's Bouteflika, requesting the G8 to join the South in creating a partnership for a "more humane world". (Nicola, 2001 : 31 - 32)



Indeed, Mbeki's participation at the G8 Summits should not be underplayed. In 1999 the G8, meeting in Cologne, decided to open their doors and allow certain developing nations to take part in selected deliberations as from the following summit, to be held in Okinawa in 2000. South Africa was invited to attend the Okinawa Summit, and has held a seat at the annual G8 deliberations since. (Nicola, 2001 : 52) One of Mbeki's successes at the G8 forum has been the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative, which grew out of the amalgamation of a variety of earlier African initiatives, including Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 12) The success of South African, and Mbeki's, diplomatic endeavours are evidenced by the prominence of the debate around the NEPAD initiative at the G8 summits in Genoa in 2001, in Kananaskis in 2002, at Evian in 2003, at Seal Island in 2004, and at Gleneagles in 2005,

as well as the coverage given to Tony Blair's Commission for Africa in 2004, all since South Africa joined the deliberations in Okinawa in 2000. (Hamill, 2006 : 125)

As James Hamill notes, the African Renaissance rhetoric and Mbeki's own rhetoric have raised expectations in the international system about South Africa's role in translating the renaissance rhetoric into political and economic reality, and South Africa, with its "economic and political clout" and "moral capital" has come to be considered by many as the "indispensable nation", and "the only one that can realistically step on the plate and lead the continent out of the abyss." (2006 : 119) "The sheer persistence of Mbeki's renaissance rhetoric since 1996-1997, and the implication in those speeches of a pivotal role for South Africa in leading that renaissance, has created expectations within Africa and in the wider international community of what South Africa can do on Africa's behalf." (Hamill, 2006 : 119) And these perceptions have not only been generated from outside of South African foreign policy-making circles. During his visits to the United States and the United Kingdom in May 2000 Mbeki's own entourage is reported to have projected him as the "standard-bearer of Africa and the developing world." (Hamill, 2006 : 119)

It has become evident that South Africa's reintegration into the global political economy was marked first by an invigorated commitment to multilateralism as a guiding principle of global governance and second by a commitment to the African continent and a determination to advance African interests in the multilateral institutions in which South Africa held membership. Whilst a commitment to an Africanist foreign policy was evident under the presidency of Nelson Mandela, the presidency of Thabo Mbeki witnessed the creation of an invigorated multilateral Africanist foreign policy which manifested itself throughout the spectrum of South Africa's foreign relations and multilateral policy initiatives. Whilst thus far a generic review of South African foreign policy since 1994 has been provided, a more in-depth review of South African engagement at two prominent multilateral institutions, the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, will now be conducted.

3.3.2 South Africa at the United Nations

One institution in which the new South African multilateralism and niche-building diplomacy was operationalised was the United Nations. As Scarlett Cornelissen notes, South Africa's involvement with the United Nations was characterised "by its desire to increase its global stature as a progressive and African power." (2006 : 27) The United Nations, notes Cornelissen, proved an important arena for South Africa's rapid reintegration into the international system and since its full reintegration into the United Nations system, South Africa has actively sought to increase its profile in the United Nations. (2006 : 29)

Pretoria quickly demonstrated an enthusiasm for adopting a leadership role within the United Nations system, and in 1996 assumed leadership of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX) for a term for four years, and was elected vice-president of the General Assembly in 1997. In the same year South Africa assumed chairmanship of the UN Commission on Human Rights for a three year period, was elected to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and chaired the Preparatory Commission for the Implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. South Africa was further elected to the executive boards several UN bodies, including the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Population Fund between 1998 and 2000. South Africa in 2003 was also elected as vice-chairperson of the General Assembly's Economic and Financial Committee, regarded as a particularly significant achievement by the South African government as this committee is generally viewed as one of the most influential in the United Nations. (Cornelissen, 2006 : 29) Perhaps one of the most significant developments of late for South Africa at the United Nations was its election to the Security Council, commencing in December 2006, where the country will replace Tanzania as one of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. (de Coning, 2006)

Chairmanship of UNCTAD IX in particular offered South Africa with the opportunity of raising its international profile and of defining itself as a leading voice in the developing world. Certainly, UNCTAD offered South Africa the opportunity of assuming a

leadership role in issues pertaining to developing countries, as policy-makers recognised that UNCTAD was a body which enjoyed some degree of status within the United Nations system as a mouthpiece of the developing world. (Cornelissen, 2006 : 30) Cornelissen writes that this stature was reflected particularly in the Midrand Declaration, which was drafted by South African Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin and was adopted at the ninth conference, which emphasised that UNCTAD maintained an important role in addressing the challenges to development faced by the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and by the African continent in particular. (Cornelissen, 2006 : 30) “Indeed, chairing UNCTAD IX allowed South Africa to fulfil a major platform of its multilateral diplomacy: using key UN events or conferences to raise its stature and to mark foreign policy priorities.” (Cornelissen, 2006 : 30)

The analysis of South African engagement with the various United Nations bodies and organs listed by Cornelissen indicates that South Africa made good use of its various membership and leadership positions within the United Nations to advance its Africanist agenda. And as highlighted by Cornelissen, South Africa also utilised key United Nations events to advance its foreign policy goals. In 2001 South Africa hosted the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Intolerance, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR), and in 2002 the country played host to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). “Given the size and high profile of the conferences, hosting them proved a major diplomatic feat for South Africa. More significantly however, the conferences provided Pretoria with the opportunity to cast itself as a leader of the developing world and a campaigner for a transformed world order.” (Cornelissen, 2006 : 31)

Cornelissen finds that South Africa made, and continues to make, extensive attempts to drive the Africanist agenda within the United Nations, attempting to garner attention on and support for NEPAD, promoting stability and security on the African continent, and attempting to steer policies and goals surrounding African peace and security initiatives at various levels of the United Nations system. (2006 : 34) In conclusion, Cornelissen finds that “South Africa has sought to craft a new role for itself aiming to resuscitate the UN as a multilateral agency. The country has also driven a self-conscious Africa-centred

UN policy, at least rhetorically, where it has attempted to ground all of its engagements with the world body under the framework of its ambitions regarding Africa.” (2006 : 47)

South African engagement with the United Nations since 1994 thus can be viewed as one example of the country’s deliberate use of a multilateral forum in which South Africa’s reintegration into the international system following the end of apartheid could be sped up, in which South Africa could maximise its prestige and generate a positive international image for itself, and in and through which South Africa could actively engage in niche-building diplomatic activity. By pushing the African agenda, and by “driving a self-conscious Africa-centred UN policy” (Cornelissen, 2006 : 27), South Africa was able to carve a niche for itself as a “progressive and African power.” (Cornelissen, 2006 : 47)

3.3.3 South Africa as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement

Another multilateral organisation which provided South Africa with the platform to establish itself as a powerful developing nation and to create a niche for itself as an African power was the Non-Aligned Movement. Having joined on the 31st of May 1994, South Africa quickly established itself as a serious member of the organisation, and assumed chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement from September 1998 to February 2003, a period of nearly four and a half years as opposed to the usual three years due to problems relating to the hosting of the next summit. (Morphet, 2006 : 90)

President Thabo Mbeki later stated that South Africa had had two goals in mind after assuming chairmanship of the Movement. One was increased co-operation among countries of the South, the other was enhanced dialogue with the North. A sub-theme of both of these considerations was an attempt to make the North more open to Southern economic concerns; an attempt which, according to Mbeki himself, had borne fruit. (Morphet, 2006 : 90 - 91)

Already at the Durban Summit of the movement, hosted by South Africa in 1998, South Africa began to infuse its foreign policy agenda into the movement. The final economic chapter of the Durban Declaration dealt with, among others, the newly emerging context of international economic co-operation, an agenda for development, the need for increased South-South co-operation, and “the critical economic situation in Africa.” (Morphet, 2006 : 85 - 86) Furthermore, in what Sally Morphet calls “an unprecedented move”, South Africa made use of one of the afternoons during the proceedings to discuss, at foreign minister level, the conclusions of the ad hoc Panel of Economists which had been established by Sri Lanka at the 1997 Foreign Ministers Meeting in New Delhi in an attempt to “assess the current international economic situation from the perspective of developing countries and to identify and analyse major issues of concern to them and to assist in developing a positive agenda of the South.” (Morphet, 2006 : 86)

Indeed, the summit appears to have been centred around the principle of developing an agenda for the global South, with particular emphasis being placed on the African continent. Then President Mandela both opened and closed the summit, and in his opening address stressed the importance of the need for principles of collective self-reliance and mutual co-operation in Africa, and noted that the achievement of Africa’s goals depended “critically on the collective interests of the developing countries being effectively addressed.” (Morphet, 2006 : 90) Then Deputy President Mbeki furthermore challenged members of the Non-Aligned Movement to “demonstrate much greater creativity and flexibility in their approach to global development issues – specifically their interventions in the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank – rather than remaining locked into an outmoded, Manichean economic world view.” (in Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 50)

What South Africa initiated at the Durban Summit it seems to have rigorously pursued throughout the period of its chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement. In April 2000 South Africa highlighted Africa and African interests, as well as developing country economic concerns, at the G77 Summit in Havana. (Morphet, 2006 : 92) That same year a North–South meeting of heads of state and government was held in Tokyo, immediately

preceding the Okinawa G8 Summit, and President Mbeki, together with Algerian President Bouteflika, arrived with an Organisation of African Unity Summit mandate on Africa's debt burdens. Mbeki, together with Nigerian President Obasanjo, who had been mandated to represent the G77, reportedly exerted efforts to present the outcomes of the Havana South Summit to the G8 in Okinawa. Notably, this was the first time that the G8 had focused specifically on the agenda of the global South and on the needs of developing countries. (Morphet, 2006 : 92)

In her analysis of South Africa's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement, Sally Morphet also notes that South Africa utilised the NAM to significantly contribute to the evolution of the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union and to the formulation of and garnering of support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. (Morphet, 2006 : 93)

It can be seen that similar to the manner in which South Africa's multilateralist foreign policy allowed it to make use of the United Nations to enhance its stature in international relations and to engage in niche-building diplomatic activity to advance its Africanist agenda, so too does an analysis of South African membership of the Non-Aligned Movement, and particularly the period of South African chairmanship of the NAM between 1998 and 2003, reveal that South Africa utilised a multilateral approach to advance its Africa-driven foreign policy agenda and to gain international respectability.

3.4 South African Middlepowermanship

The analysis presented above on generic trends in South African foreign policy and multilateralism, as well as of the manner in which South Africa utilised its position in the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, indicates two clear strands in South African foreign policy since 1994. First, South Africa has displayed, and increasingly continues to display, a rigorous commitment to multilateralism as a guiding principle in the international system, and through its use of a decidedly multilateralist foreign policy the country has become an important role-player in the international system and

mechanisms of global governance. Second, South Africa has increasingly imbued its multilateral foreign policy with an African hue, and through its creative use of its multilateralist foreign policy South Africa has been engaging in niche-building diplomacy, consciously carving a niche for itself in the international system as “the voice of Africa”. This study therefore agrees with the finding of James Hamill and Donna Lee, who argue that South Africa is in the process of creating a distinctive niche for itself in global affairs in a deliberate attempt to join the ranks of middle powers. (2001 : 33)

South Africa, it has been shown, has been engaging in typical middle power diplomacy through its use of multilateralism and its attempts at niche-building diplomacy. South African foreign policy also appears characteristic of another middle power trademark; that of acting as what has been termed a “bridge-builder”. Indeed, South Africa has utilised its multilateralism and its African niche to act as a bridge-builder between the North and the South. (Van der Westhuizen 1998; Taylor, 2000; Nel et al., 2001 and Lee et al., 2006) South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfred Nzo made the government’s cognisance of this quite clear when he stated that “South Africa is a developing country with certain of the attributes of a developed, or industrialised, country. This enables us to understand, and relate to, the concerns of both the South as well as the North, and therefore to play a pivotal role in drawing them closer together to promote international development.” (in Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 450)

This finding, supported by the country’s fulfilment of typical middle power characteristics in its foreign policy, leads one author to assert that South African foreign policy reflects the dynamics of a new middle power emerging in the developing world. (Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 436) South Africa’s status as a middle power has also been asserted by many, if not most, scholars on the matter. (Taylor, 2000; Hamill and Lee, 2001; Nel et al., 2001; Bischoff, 2003; Jordaan, 2003; Landsberg, 2005; Nathan, 2005; Lee et al, 2006; Hamill, 2006 and Taylor and Williams, 2006)

Yet whilst South Africa may generally be acknowledged as a middle power in international relations literature through the application of either an aggregate or a behavioural approach, as discussed in Chapter 2, it must be ascertained whether or not

South Africa fulfils the criteria of middle powers as set out for this study in the previous chapter. That is, it must be ascertained that South Africa has shown the capability and the willingness to act as a middle power, that it has indeed acted as a middle power through the process of niche-building diplomacy, and that it is recognised as being a middle power.

Thus far the analysis of South African foreign policy presented in this chapter has demonstrated that South Africa possesses both the capability and the willingness to act as a middle power. South Africa moved quickly to establish itself within the international community after April 1994, and the country succeeded both in opening a string of embassies across the globe and in joining, and in some cases re-joining, a host of international organisations. South Africa has also displayed the capacity and the willingness to not only hold membership in these multilateral institutions, but also to hold leadership positions and to act as an important, at times even critical, role-player in the guises of facilitator, bridge-builder, catalyst, or a host of any other functions typically associated with middle powers. Some examples of such capacity and willingness have been provided above in the reviews of South Africa's role at the United Nations or in the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as its importance in, for example, the Kimberley Process, the Ottawa Process, and successive G8 summits.

It has also been shown that South Africa has actively been engaging in niche-building diplomacy since 1994, although this tendency has only become distinct since the presidency of Thabo Mbeki. South Africa foreign policy-makers, it is argued, have actively and consciously attempted to establish the country as "the voice of Africa" in the international system, and as was shown above, has utilised a host of multilateral fora to advance the African agenda. This is evidenced in South Africa's spearheading of the African Renaissance concept, its intimate involvement in NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism, its role in the African Union and its championing of African interests at successive G8 summits since the Okinawa Summit in 2000. This has been reinforced by consistent policy statements by Mbeki and other senior foreign policy-makers linking South Africa's interests to the interests of the African continent, of a benevolent foreign policy which considers African interests crucial in foreign policy

formulation and execution, and of South Africa utilising its position in the international system and within international organisations to act as the standard-bearer of the African continent.

Finally, South Africa has also been recognised as a middle power. The attainment by South Africa of numerous leadership positions within international organisations since 1994 does not necessarily indicate an express recognition of the country's middle power status, and could perhaps be attributed to international goodwill more so than a recognition of South Africa's status as a(n) (emerging) middle power. South Africa's now permanent seat at G8 summits can however be seen as a more express recognition of the country's middle power status and of the potentially important role it could play in the international system, particularly with regards to the rest of the African continent. Other forms of recognition of South Africa's middle power status in the international system can be found as much within international organisations as outside them.

Early in Mandela's presidency recognition of South Africa's middle power status, arguably its status as an emerging middle power, came in the form of a request by the United Nations for 21 countries, including South Africa, to intervene in the ethnic massacres occurring in Rwanda and Burundi. Under the leadership of Jean Chrétien, Canada spearheaded an initiative to intervene in the refugee crisis in Rwanda in 1996, and Mandela was reportedly one of the first leaders Chrétien contacted as he sought support for an intervention. Sadly the speed at which the refugees were moving and increased levels of operational complexity in the Great Lakes region grounded the initiative, which subsequently had to be abandoned. (Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 450; Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 37 - 38) Yet the fact that South Africa was called upon by Canada so early in the initiative, argues Van der Westhuizen, reveals a recognition by an established middle power of South Africa's "emerging" middle power status, as well as the degree to which South Africa was increasingly "donning the garb" of a middle power. (1998 : 450)

Explicit recognition of South Africa's middle power status also came in June 1995, when Sweden convened what was termed a "Group of 16" middle powers, which included

South Africa. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 37 - 38) From 1995 onwards the Clinton administration also recognised South Africa's emerging role in the international system, and declared that the country was one of the Big Emerging Markets where future American investments would be focused. (Nel et al., 2001 : 19) This notion was reinforced by Warren Christopher when on an official visit to South Africa he remarked that there were "few countries with greater potential to help shape the 21st century than the new South Africa." (in Nicola, 2001 : 47)

South Africa has also been called upon repeatedly to engage in the peace process in Israel and Palestine, in the Northern Ireland conflict, in the refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region, in East Timor, and in the conflict in Sudan. (Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 437) Another example of recognition by the international community of South Africa's status was the country's appointment to the G20 in 1999, a multilateral body of 18 finance ministers and central bank governors of leading countries in the world, the European Union and the Bretton Woods institutions, which was created by the G8. (Nel et al., 2001 : 2) All of these instances of recognition of South Africa's middle power status lead one author to assert that South Africa not only plays the role of middle power, but that it indeed is encouraged to do so. (Nicola, 2001 : 51)

It therefore can be argued that the criteria of middlepowerdom set out in the second chapter for use in this study have been fulfilled. South Africa, it is argued, has displayed both the capability and the willingness to act as a middle power, has acted as a middle power through deliberate efforts at niche-building diplomacy, and has importantly also been recognised as holding the status of a middle power in the international system. Furthermore, it is argued, South Africa has successfully engaged in niche-building diplomacy by pushing the African agenda globally, and that this niche which South Africa has created for itself has been broadly recognised at the global level.

If these criteria have been fulfilled, then, it can be expected that South African foreign policy with regards to the niche which it has created for itself, and which gives it the label of middle power, would be consistent. Indeed, as was argued in the previous chapter, if South Africa has invested so much in creating a niche for itself as an African middle

power and as being “the voice of Africa” in the international system, then it could be expected that South African foreign policy would be consistent, and that in its multilateral foreign policy across a range of international organisations South African policy-makers would act in a relatively consistent manner. This is in line with the argumentation presented by John Ravenhill relating to the importance of the credibility dimension as a criteria of middlepowerdom. (Ravenhill, 1998 : 313)

The review of South African foreign policy presented above, particularly that of South African policy at the United Nations and at the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as the review of South Africa’s middle power credentials and the range of institutions across which South Africa has asserted itself as a middle power and driven its niche-building diplomatic efforts, appears to indicate that South Africa has indeed acted in a consistent, reliable and credible manner, and that policy rhetoric appears to have been matched by policy choices and actions. However, it is imperative to note that South African multilateralism and its niche-building activities have not been as consistent as would be expected.

3.5 Inconsistencies in South African Niche-Building Diplomacy

South Africa’s attempts at creating a niche for itself in the international system, whilst embraced by multilateral institutions and developed nations, have not easily gained credence among its African peers. Whilst South Africa gained re-entry into the international community with relative ease following the end of apartheid, assisted by its newly acquired moral capital and its embrace as somewhat of a “darling child” of the developing world by developed states, it also needed to regain acceptance on its own continent. This task was confounded by the fact that, fairly or unfairly as Hamill writes, South Africa was perceived by influential sectors of African opinion-makers as “essentially a Western state in its political and economic outlook and a proxy for Western interests.” (2006 : 118) Indeed, for a period of time following South African democratisation many viewed South Africa as a state *in* Africa, but not truly *of* Africa., (Hamill, 2006 : 118)

Whilst it has been shown above that South Africa actively engaged in multilateral foreign policy strategies designed to advance an Africanist agenda at the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, and indeed to raise the country's stature internationally and to create an image of South Africa as an African middle power, if not *the* African middle power, complaints by African countries that South Africa was simply a proxy of the West were not entirely unfounded, and threatened to seriously hamper, if not negate, South African attempts at creating an image of itself as an African middle power actively channelling its foreign policy efforts towards the upliftment of the African continent, and thereby of establishing itself as *the* quintessential African middle power in international relations.

3.5.1 The Renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Perhaps one of the first multilateralist ventures of South African foreign policy which revealed inconsistencies between South Africa's proclaimed African credentials and its actual policy choices was its involvement in the renewal of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995.

South Africa's involvement in the field of nuclear weaponry began in 1970 when the South African Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC) began construction of a government-sponsored undercover uranium enrichment facility. Ian Taylor writes that whilst South Africa had expressed interest in nuclear capabilities in the early 1970s and had constructed a nuclear test site in the Kalahari desert in 1974, it was the geopolitical developments following the Lisbon coup of 1974 and Soviet and Cuban involvement in Angola that prompted Pretoria to adopt a 'total national strategy' aimed at combating communism which accelerated the development of nuclear capabilities. (Taylor, 2006 : 164)

In 1977, South Africa constructed its first atomic device with the assistance of Israel, but aborted the project after it was apparently discovered by a Soviet spy satellite. At the behest of then President P.W. Botha, South Africa reinvigorated its nuclear programme in 1979 and Armscor, the state weapons manufacturer, took over responsibility for the

project. That same year a secret nuclear test was conducted in the southern Indian Ocean, and by 1989 six nuclear weapons had been constructed and a seventh was nearing completion. (Taylor, 2006 : 164) South Africa's nuclear ambitions were abandoned by Botha's successor, F. W. de Klerk, in 1989, and the programme was shut down in November of that year whilst all seven devices were ordered destroyed. Setting a historical precedent, South Africa turned its nuclear policy on its head, and on the 10th of July 1989 acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In September of the same year South Africa agreed to monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and since then, as Taylor notes, "has been fully committed to a non-nuclear policy and has supported the concept of a nuclear-free Africa (the Treaty of Pelindaba) endorsed by the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union) and within the framework of the NPT." (Taylor, 2006 : 165)

According to Article X of the original Non-Proliferation Treaty, a conference was to be convened 25 years after the coming into force of the NPT to discuss whether the Treaty would continue to function unaltered or whether it would be extended, and thus the NPT Renewal Conference was held in New York from April 17th to May 12th 1995. (Taylor, 2006 : 163) Its recent accession to the NPT and its singular status as the world's first nuclear 'rollback' state, argue Hamill and Lee, provided South Africa with a natural authority on the question of nuclear disarmament and made it one of the key developing world countries taking part in the NPT renewal process. (2001 : 43) It is also notable that South Africa was the only member of the Non-Aligned Movement which also held membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. (Taylor, 2006 : 169) This unique position in the NPT renewal conference, it is argued, was both fully recognised and exploited by South Africa. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 43)

Initially in the run-up to the NPT Renewal Conference South Africa held a similar position to that of the Non-Aligned Movement and the SADC countries and was opposed to an indefinite extension of the NPT subject to ratification by signatories. (Taylor, 2006 : 166; Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 447) The United States, the principle nuclear power globally, was however opposed to a limited extension of the NPT and instead favoured an indefinite extension of the Treaty. Recognising that South Africa was a key member of

the NPT renewal process, American pressure quickly came to bear on Pretoria. “Indeed, South Africa was a special target for lobbying because it was perceived to have influence over other Non-Aligned Movement, and especially African, countries.” (Taylor, 2006 : 167)

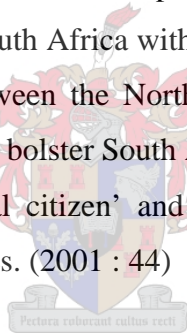
Princeton Lyman, the American Ambassador to South Africa, is reported to have delivered a demarche to Pretoria, warning that South African support for a limited extension of the NPT would undermine mutual interests and would serve to change Washington’s perceptions of South Africa’s non-proliferation credentials. (Taylor, 2006 : 167; Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 447) American President Bill Clinton further lobbied Nelson Mandela by writing to him and demanding support for the American position, whilst American vice-president Al Gore personally lobbied Thabo Mbeki, then vice-president, for South African support for a non-time-bound extension of the Treaty. (Taylor, 2006 : 167)

Whether purely as a result of American pressure or due to other considerations, South Africa decided to break ranks with the Non-Aligned Movement and its SADC partners shortly after the Renewal Conference had commenced. (Taylor, 2006 : 170) On April 19th 1995 Alfred Nzo, then South African foreign affairs minister, decided to support the American position of an indefinite extension of the NPT, presenting the argument that a majority position for an indefinite extension of the Treaty existed. (Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 447) One member of the South Africa Department of Foreign Affairs, Abdul Minty argued that the South African decision to change its stance was taken “virtually on the eve of the NPT”, and therefore had left little time for consultation with others. (Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 448)

Whilst initially opposed to an indefinite extension of the NPT, a position shared by the Non-Aligned Movement and most African states, South Africa abandoned this position once the Renewal Conference had begun and instead opted for what could be conceived of as a compromise position, attempting to facilitate agreement between the North and the South. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 43) South Africa planned and convened meetings around what came to be known as the “South African concept” and, displaying

diplomatic prowess typical of middle power bridge-building attempts, ensured the adoption of the “South African concept”, which called for an indefinite extension of the NPT whilst simultaneously containing more effective mechanisms which would ensure greater compliance with the Treaty’s disarmament provisions. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 44) These provisions would include strengthening of the review procedures between the mandated five-year review conferences as well as the adoption of a set of specific targets which would measure progress made by NPT member states towards the goals of disarmament. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 44)

The “South African concept” found widespread support amongst member states and on May 11th allowed for the NPT to be extended indefinitely by consensus rather than what could potentially have proved a divisive vote. (Hamill and Lee, 2001 : 44) Hamill and Lee note that the NPT Renewal Conference proved a highly successful diplomatic venture for Pretoria and provided South Africa with the opportunity of acting in a bridge-building or facilitating manner between the North and the South. Indeed, the authors argue that the NPT process served to bolster South Africa’s reputation in the international community as a ‘good international citizen’ and as capable of exerting considerable influence over other developing states. (2001 : 44)



Whilst South Africa’s participation in the NPT Renewal Conference served to provide the country with an opportunity to engage in middle power bridge-building behaviour and to add credence to its claims of being able to bring together the North and the South (whilst still representing Southern interests), it also served to reinforce claims from some African quarters that South Africa was merely a proxy of the West. Indeed, the discrepancies between South Africa’s stated position before the NPT Conference and its actual policy choices and behaviour after the Conference had commenced, whilst still supporting the notion of South Africa as a middle power, appear to damage claims of South Africa being a middle power representative of African interests. Yet the NPT Renewal Conference was not the only instance of South African multilateral diplomacy where stated policy goals, particularly those relating to South Africa’s multilateralist African foreign policy, were not matched by actual policy choices taken.

3.5.2 The “Nigerian Crisis”

The “Nigerian Crisis” started between October and November 1995 when Nigerian General Sani Abacha, who had come to power in 1993 after annulling a presidential election, threatened to execute nine environmental activists, among them Ken Saro Wiwa, against rising international pressure. The South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad, claimed that South Africa’s initial objectives in the crisis were to prevent the execution of the activists and to secure Chief Moshood Abiola’s, the supposed winner of the 1993 elections, release from prison, as well as to encourage the process of democratisation in Nigeria. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 13) South Africa’s initial policy of choice in the early days of the crisis had been one of quiet diplomacy, similar to the one currently practiced by South Africa in the case of Zimbabwe, and South Africa refused to speak out against the actions taken by Abacha at the United Nations, probably, as suggested by Taylor and Williams, so as to avoid publicly breaking ranks with other African states. (2006 : 13)

However, the quiet diplomacy and the considerable international pressure placed on Nigeria failed to bring about the desired outcomes, and precisely when Commonwealth heads of government were meeting at a summit in Auckland, Abacha ordered the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and the eight other activists. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 13) An “enraged” Nelson Mandela immediately and publicly accused Abacha of “judicial murder” and stated that if the African continent refrained from taking firm action then talk of the African Renaissance proved nothing but hollow and shallow. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 13; Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 447)

South Africa proceeded to take unprecedented actions against Abacha’s regime; unprecedented particularly for the manner in which it singularly distanced itself from the silence and inaction of other African states. Nelson Mandela unilaterally called for a boycott of Nigerian oil and for its expulsion from the Commonwealth. (Van der Westhuizen, 1998 : 447) This was followed by a recalling of the South African High Commissioner from Nigeria, demanding that the United States and the United Kingdom impose oil sanctions on Nigeria, and by Mandela summoning the South African manager

of the Shell corporation to his office. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 13) Mandela furthermore personally called for a SADC summit in December following the executions with the aim of discussing SADC policy on Nigeria. Yet SADC leaders refused to take a definitive stance on the matter or to publicly ostracise the Nigerian regime, and passed the matter to the Commonwealth. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 13)

The Commonwealth in turn created a Ministerial Action Group to address the Nigerian problem, yet despite being a member of the Action Group South Africa did very little on the committee and “got off it as soon as it decently could”. (Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 13) South Africa, writes Janis van der Westhuizen, infringed upon the solidarity rule among African states by being the only country in the developing world to have recalled its High Commissioner from Nigeria in protest at the executions, and had thereby moved well ahead of the position of other African states. These actions, argued Van der Westhuizen, “played into the hands of those who accused [South Africa] of acting in concert with London and Washington.” (1998 : 447)

South Africa’s efforts, note Taylor and Williams, to play to the interests of both Western and African governments proved difficult. Pretoria found itself torn between two different types of multilateralism it wished to practice, “one infused by liberal values about what constitutes appropriate conduct within a state’s borders, and another informed by ideas of sovereign autonomy, pan-African solidarity, and the virtues of private rather than public criticism.” (2006 : 12 - 13)

Taylor and Williams conclude that, in the case of the Nigerian crisis, “... not only was Pretoria revealed to be a reluctant multilateralist, [but] its desire to champion African solidarity was directly at odds with its stated foreign policy principles of speaking up for liberal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.” (2006 : 13) Initially South Africa broke ranks with other African states on the matter of the events transpiring in Nigeria, and indeed South Africa succeeded in alienating itself from its African peers. However, once the immediate crisis had passed South Africa appears to have returned to its more routine policy positions, and refrained from acting contrary to the wishes of

other African states. This ambiguity will be explored further at a later stage. First, a further example of South African foreign policy which sidelined African interests, less multilateral in nature than the previous two cases of inconsistency but interesting to this study due to its economic and trade-related nature, will be explored.

3.5.3 The South African – European Union TDCA

The signing of the Trade, Co-operation and Development Agreement (TDCA) between the European Union and South Africa in 1999 served to displease many of South Africa's immediate neighbours. From the onset of democracy the South African government was keen on formalising its relationship with the European Union, as in 1995 the European Union was South Africa's largest trading partner and its most significant source of investment. As Stephen Hurt notes, the formalisation of the relationship between South Africa and the European Union proved significant for Pretoria, as it would come to define the manner in which South Africa would reintegrate into the global economy. (2006 : 100)

Negotiations for the TDCA were concluded in October 1999 and the agreement, containing two central areas of co-operation (these being the creation of a Free Trade Area between South Africa and the European Union and the provision by the European Union of development assistance to South Africa), came into effect on the 1st of January 2000. (Hurt, 2006 : 100) Yet whilst Africa and particularly the Southern African region were given importance in the foreign policy statements of South African officials, with Nelson Mandela claiming that "Southern Africa commands a special priority in our foreign policy" and the dominant view of African National Congress policy-makers being that "South Africa could not remain an island of wealth in a sea of poverty", Stephen Hurt argues that regional concerns were given a low priority in South Africa's negotiations with the European Union. (2006 : 112)

Hurt correctly points out that Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland (the BLNS states), as members of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), were directly

affected by the TDCA, as the Free Trade Area did not come into existence merely between South Africa and the European Union, but indeed de facto came into existence between the European Union and all SACU members. Yet despite this, SACU members appear to not have been seriously consulted during the TDCA negotiations, and only after Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland lobbied the European Union did it agree to finance the only impact study to have been conducted on their behalf in January 1998. (Bischoff, 2003 : 192; Hurt, 2006 : 112)

The findings of this impact study revealed that SACU members, excluding South Africa, would indeed be affected negatively by the TDCA. For example, the common external tariff and revenue-sharing formula operated by SACU provided members with a significant proportion of annual budgets. As trade liberalisation was to take place under the auspices of the TDCA, this source of revenue was estimated to decline between 5 and 15 percent. (Hurt, 2006 : 112) The impact assessment also found that certain sectors of the BLNS states economies would come under threat from duty-free exports from the European Union, and that job losses in the private sector alone could amount to roughly 12,000. (Hurt, 2006 : 113) Furthermore, within the wider context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the argument was advanced that due to porous border controls duty-free exports from the European Union could reach the SADC market and further revenue losses would be incurred. (Hurt, 2006 : 113)

An analysis of the Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement between South Africa and the European Union would seem to indicate that, for all its rhetoric of African solidarity and of being representative of and actively campaigning for African interests, South Africa appears to have abandoned these notions when it came to the negotiating table. Indeed, the conclusion can be made that South Africa appears to have benefited from the TDCA at the expense of its Southern African neighbours, with whom it shares membership in SACU and SADC.

An analysis of the South African Free Trade Area negotiations with its SADC partners by Mzukisi Qobo generates much the same findings. Qobo argues that negotiations for the

Free Trade Area, finalised and signed in 1996 and coming into operation in 2000, were characterised by the dominance of South Africa's mercantilist interests, and not by notions of fraternity or partnership. Indeed, Qobo argues that "South Africa initially drove a hard bargain in ways that are akin to the manner in which developed countries negotiate with developing countries, betraying its hard-edged interests uncamouflaged by the imagery of partnership and sensitivity." (2006 : 146 - 147) Qobo concludes that in the case of these negotiations, "... the moral sentiment of uplifting the region [was] easily shipwrecked on the rocks of selfish economic interests." (Qobo, 2006 : 148)

3.6 Consistency and Inconsistency in South African Middlepowermanship

It has been established that South Africa fulfils the criteria of a middle power set out in Chapter 2, that is, South Africa has displayed the capability and the willingness to act as a middle power, it has acted as a middle power in its foreign policy and engaged in distinctive niche-building diplomacy, and it has also been recognised as a middle power by and large by other states in the international system, a recognition which has allowed South Africa to play its middle power role effectively.

Yet whilst it has been demonstrated that South Africa can indeed be conceived of as a middle power, it has proven more difficult to argue that South Africa has acted in manner consistent with its middle power status and with the middle power niche which it has created for itself. Consistency in South African middlepowermanship in forums such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the G8, and the manner in which it has pushed the African agenda and positioned itself as a driving force behind the African agenda globally is matched by notable inconsistency with regards to the promotion of African interests in the cases of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Renewal Process, the Nigerian crisis, and the Trade, Development and Co-operation Treaty South Africa entered into with the European Union.

In the previous chapter it was argued that the understanding of middle powers utilised in this study would advance the notion that middle powers would act in a reliable and

predictable manner in areas related to their niche-building activities, which have defined them as middle powers, and would not deviate, at least not dramatically, from the policies its niche-building activities have “bound” it to. Constant deviations from policy statements and inconsistencies in foreign policy would serve to seriously undermine the middle power status a state has attained for itself. Thus middle powers were conceptualised as not necessarily being the single largest beneficiary of negotiated outcomes, at least not always, and as being consistent in the policies advocated and pursued. (Ravenhill, 1998 : 313) This notion of consistency then provides for predictive power in middle power theory.

It has been shown that South Africa can be conceptualised as a middle power, and that the niche which it has created for itself in the international system is one of a bridge-builder between developing and developed states and as an “African middle power”, as “the voice of Africa” and as a “champion of African interests”. (Taylor, 2006 : 159) How then are the inconsistencies in South African middlepowermanship to be explained before this study can proceed with an analysis of South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation?

One explanation may lie in the complexity of the niche which South Africa has created for itself, as essentially policy-makers are playing to two different audiences. As Taylor and Williams note, “abroad, Pretoria has tried to appeal to both the powerful Western states by selling itself as a pro-Western bridge-builder capable of smoothing the differences between the North and the South, while simultaneously seeking to champion the values of the weaker Southern states in general and of an ‘African Renaissance’ in particular.” (2006 : 6) This means that whilst South Africa must play to African audiences so that its claims of championing African interests are given credence, it simultaneously must present itself as amenable to the West and its interests if it is to be granted access to decision-making fora and to locate itself in a position where it can indeed drive its Africanist agenda.

This means that at times South Africa has chosen what Van der Westhuizen terms the “safe” options, these being policy choices which would not bring South Africa into direct confrontation with the forces controlling the global political economy. (2001[b] : 57) For example, South Africa has rigorously campaigned for debt reduction for the poorest nations in Africa, but not for itself in fear of presenting South Africa as an unsafe destination for foreign investment. (Van der Westhuizen, 2001[b]) This could account for inconsistency in South African middlepowermanship, where publicly it has called for certain policies, but when hard policy choices needed to be made side-stepped issues or acted in a manner contrary to the interests of its African peers.

Another possible explanation lies in a historical account of South African middlepowermanship. Whilst in the matters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Nigerian crisis and the Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement South Africa’s proclaimed Africanist agenda was watered down, these were all issues which emerged early on during South Africa’s reintegration into the global political economy. South Africa’s later middlepowermanship, particularly since the presidency of Thabo Mbeki and the pursuance of the African Renaissance, appears to be more in line with the niche it has been creating for itself, and therefore more reliable and consistent. As Van der Westhuizen et al. note, whilst the early days of South Africa foreign policy were filled with uncertainty, vacillation and re-calibration, this was only a transitory period in which South Africa gradually moved away from heroism towards a more routine orientation. (2001 : 114)

A further tentative explanation for inconsistencies in South African middlepowermanship may also lie in the types of situations in which South African multilateralism proved inconsistent. In the cases of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Nigerian crisis and the Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement, South Africa’s immediate interests were at stake and it jettisoned notions of African solidarity. However, in its engagement at established international organisations South Africa has proved more consistent in advancing the African agenda.

Finally, it must be remembered that the dictum that middle powers are benevolent and not self-interested is a deceptive one. As was established in the previous chapter, middle powers are self-interested and indeed do act in their own perceived interest, utilising multilateralism and engaging in niche-building diplomatic activities so as to enhance their own prestige and their relative power in the international system and so as to generate gains and positive outcomes which otherwise might not, indeed probably would not, have been attainable.

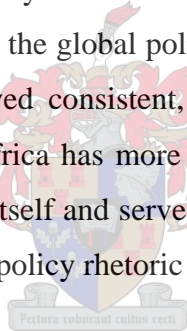
Thus, whilst early inconsistencies in South African middlepowermanship prove vexing, they do not serve to seriously undermine South Africa's credentials as a middle power. Rather, they serve to undermine the notion that middle powers act both reliably and consistently in their foreign policies and in relation to the niches which they have created for themselves. Nonetheless, the argument is still advanced that South Africa has of late acted in a manner consistent with its (self-) proclaimed status as "the voice of Africa", and particularly has acted consistently with regards to this position in the established international organisations in which it holds membership.

Bearing the above in mind the argument is advanced that overall South Africa has established itself as a middle power in the international system and that it has created a niche for itself by advancing an Africa-centred multilateralist foreign policy, which it relatively consistently drives in the multilateral fora in which it holds membership. Based on these findings, it is argued, it can be expected that South African engagement at the World Trade Organisation will be similar to its engagement at the United Nations or the Non-Aligned Movement. That is, the expectation is advanced, based on the findings generated in the previous chapter and in this chapter, that South Africa will be found to be acting in a manner consistent with its middle power role as a champion of African interests, and that it will be found that South Africa acts in harmony with, and not against the interests of, other African member-states of the World Trade Organisation.

3.7 Conclusion

Africa has gradually been elevated to the top priority of South African foreign policy, as has a broader concern for multilateralism and a more focused version of pan-Africanism. (Landsberg, 2005 : 737; Taylor and Williams, 2006 : 12) As Nel et al. argue in the preface to their study of South African multilateralism: “this global equity perspective is not something that we are forcing onto the theme of South Africa’s multilateralism. In fact, it is something that lies at the heart of the approach that President Mbeki’s government is taking towards global affairs.” (Nel et al., 2006 : viii)

This chapter has shown that South African foreign policy since 1994 has indeed served to establish South Africa as a middle power in the international system, and to entrench its position as such. Furthermore, this chapter has argued that South Africa has actively engaged in niche-building diplomacy aimed at establishing an image of itself as representative of African interests in the global political economy. Whilst South Africa’s policies may not always have proved consistent, it is nonetheless argued that within international organisations South Africa has more often than not adhered to the middle power role which it has created for itself and served as a champion of the African cause, as outlined in South African foreign policy rhetoric since 1994.



Based on these findings it is claimed that South Africa should also act in accordance with the interests of its African peers, and as a driving force behind the advancement of African interests at the World Trade Organisation. The analysis which follows in Chapter 4 is aimed at investigating and answering this claim.

Chapter 4

South Africa at the World Trade Organisation

4.1 Introduction

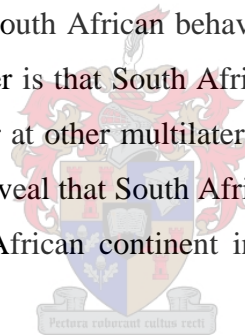
The previous chapter has highlighted how since 1994 South Africa has engaged in middlepowermanship and niche-building diplomacy in an attempt to establish itself as a recognised African middle power representative of African interests and serving as the voice of the African continent in multilateral fora. Whilst early South African foreign policy was less real and more rhetorical in this respect, as was illustrated with the examples of South African behaviour in the renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Nigerian Crisis and the European Union Trade, Development and Co-operation agreement, South African middlepowermanship, it is argued, has stabilised and become both more reliable and predictable under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki.

Indeed, whilst early South African foreign policy was characterised by ambiguity and inconsistency, South Africa soon emerged as a consistent middle power in the international system. South African attempts at niche-building diplomacy were subsequently rewarded, and South Africa has successfully established itself as *the* African middle power in international relations, fusing African representivity in multilateral fora with friendly relations with developed countries, seemingly making it the ideal middle power both to represent the African continent in multilateral affairs and to market the African continent to the North.

Based on this understanding of South African middlepowermanship and its attempts at niche-building diplomacy, indeed its success at establishing a niche for itself in the international system as the voice of the African continent, and based on the understanding of middle powers as advanced in the second chapter, it is argued that if South Africa has acted in a consistent manner in multilateral fora, and has acted in a manner which is broadly in accordance with the middle power niche it has created for itself, then it could be expected that South African behaviour at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) would not be significantly different from its behaviour at any other multilateral institution. This

is to say, if it has been demonstrated that South Africa has actively created a middle power role for itself as the recognised voice of Africa in multilateral institutions, and has invested considerable energy in establishing and maintaining this middle power role, then it can reasonably be expected that South Africa would pursue the same middle power role as the voice of Africa in the World Trade Organisation.

Indeed, if it can be found that South Africa has aligned itself with African countries in the United Nations, and the Non-Aligned Movement, and if it actively drives African interests at G8 Summits, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as was shown in the previous chapter, then it can be assumed that South Africa would also align itself with African countries, and would drive the African agenda, within the WTO. Whilst previous chapters have explored middle power theory and established that South Africa has indeed established itself as a middle power driving an African agenda, this chapter will serve to investigate South African behaviour at the WTO. The premise laid out at the beginning of this chapter is that South African behaviour at the WTO will not diverge greatly from its behaviour at other multilateral institutions, and that the findings generated in this chapter should reveal that South Africa has represented African interests and served as the voice of the African continent in WTO negotiations just as it has elsewhere.



It should be noted at the outset that due to the very nature of the WTO system and the manner in which meetings are conducted, particularly at the WTO Ministerial level, any analysis of the WTO is faced with inherent difficulties. Decisions, at least in theory, are taken by consensus only, thus no voting records of WTO decision-making are available. Furthermore, no minutes or written records are produced at WTO meetings, and certain multilateral meetings can be accessed by invitation only, particularly so-called mini-ministerials and green room meetings. This means that the manner in which the WTO operates and in which decisions are taken, or not taken, remains opaque. For the purposes of this particular study such obfuscated operating procedures means that it proves inherently difficult to track South African behaviour at the WTO and its interactions with other states at WTO meetings and Ministerial Conferences. It is for this reason that this particular chapter must rely primarily on the works produced by scholars who have

conducted in-depth investigations, and who have had unprecedented access to the WTO and the diplomatic corps representing its members, to gain insight into South African engagement at the WTO. Whilst secondary source material has therefore primarily been utilised in this chapter of this study, it is augmented by primary material as and where applicable and available.

Whilst the use of secondary material poses certain obstacles to the research conducted for this chapter, all information has been cross-referenced where possible. One author whose work has been drawn on particularly is Amrita Narlikar (2003), who has written extensively on bargaining coalitions in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organisation. The work of Fatoumata Jawara and Aileen Kwa (2003), a critical review of trade negotiations in the Doha Round of the WTO, aptly titled “Behind the Scenes at Doha – The *Real* World of International Trade Negotiations” has also proven to be particularly useful for this study. The works of Donna Lee (2006), which is one of the few to focus specifically on South Africa at the WTO, Ian Taylor (2000; 2001) and Mills Soko and Mzukisi Qobo (2003) have also been consulted extensively. Yet an analysis of South African behaviour at the WTO has to remain incomplete and has to rely on instances where extraordinary behaviour has been recorded, more so than it does on regular interactions throughout the WTO system. Nonetheless this chapter attempts to provide as comprehensive an analysis of South African engagement at the WTO as possible.

4.2 The World Trade Organisation

The World Trade Organisation is the institutionalised replacement of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which served as the global multilateral trading regime since 1947. The GATT was initially intended to have served only as a temporary regime and was to have been replaced by the International Trade Organisation (ITO), yet opposition from the United States Congress ensured that the ITO never got off the ground. Thus the GATT served as a global regime for the multilateral regulation of trade, and successive rounds of trade negotiations were conducted over the course of the 50 odd

years of the GATT's existence, culminating in the Uruguay Round which lasted from 1986 to 1994. (Jones and Whittingham, 1998 : 9 – 13)

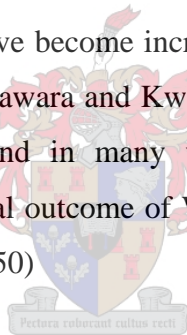
With the closing of the Uruguay Round GATT members on the April 15th 1994 signed the Marrakesh Declaration, which paved the way for the formation of the World Trade Organisation, coming into existence on January 1st 1995, as an institutionalised version of the GATT. Yet the WTO was not intended to create an institutionalised trading regime which would merely replace the GATT. Rather, the WTO was created to expand the areas of trade which were to be regulated, and which had previously been controlled by protectionist measures, and WTO agreements were to include negotiations in the areas of goods, services, agriculture, textiles, provisions on tariffs, trade related intellectual property rights (TRIPS), and trade related investment measures. (Taylor, 2000 : 206) Additionally, the WTO was to include an expanded and empowered dispute settlement mechanism.

In essence the WTO is an intergovernmental organisation which both embodies and serves to entrench the neo-liberal trading regime which the GATT established, and which currently “informs the global financial architecture and forms the foundation for the ongoing global trading system.” (Taylor, 2001 : 59) The WTO therefore represents an attempt to effectively deal with the challenges posed to all state administrations by globalisation and the ongoing liberalisation of global markets. The current 148 members of the WTO account for roughly 90 percent of global trade, in which exports account for one quarter of world GDP. Indeed, the importance of the WTO as an institution of global governance is underscored by the sheer volumes and value of trade which are regulated at the multilateral level through WTO agreements, and due to the mandatory nature of WTO agreements, the single undertaking, the strengthened dispute settlement system, the robust trade review process, and the ever-widening trade agenda which is covered, the WTO has a major impact on the economic well-being of all of its members. (Lee, 2006 : 51)

Major WTO decisions are made at ministerial level at conferences held every two years, such as those in Singapore (1996), Geneva (1997), Seattle, (1999), Doha (2001), Cancún

(2003), and most recently, Hong Kong (2005), and decisions are reached by consensus only. Yet whilst WTO Ministerials are the scenes of important decision-making in the organisation, the dynamics of negotiations between all 148 members and the limited time-frame for negotiations at Ministerial Conferences mean that much discussion and political horse-trading must take place well before Ministerial Conferences occur, and that many of the important WTO decisions are taken before Ministerials and ratified (or not) at the high-level Ministerial Conferences.

Therefore while publicly the WTO may be characterised by Ministerial Conferences, behind the scenes the WTO is characterised by pre-ministerial negotiations, political manoeuvrings by various and varying coalitions of countries, semi-private meetings held behind closed doors, and mini-ministerials. Indeed, as will be explored later, mini-ministerials, small meetings of invited WTO members at the ministerial level which precede Ministerial Conferences, have become increasingly important in the WTO since the Seattle Ministerial of 1999. As Jawara and Kwa note, mini-ministerials set the scene for the Ministerials themselves, and in many ways what happens at these select gatherings is as important to the final outcome of WTO negotiations as what happens at the Ministerials themselves. (2003 : 50)



Due to the importance of the WTO in the regulation of global trade, and the direct impact of global trading patterns on both developed and developing countries the world over, it has become increasingly apparent that no country, especially not developing countries, can truly afford to remain outside of the framework of the WTO regime. (Lee, 2006 : 51) Yet whilst the WTO in theory works only on the principle of consensus, and therefore both developed and developing states are able to steer the process of negotiations and the speed at which these negotiations take place, in reality developing countries have experienced difficulty in controlling the agenda of the WTO, or indeed in benefiting from WTO agreements.

4.2.1 The Global South and the World Trade Organisation

Already at the height of the GATT regime developing countries came to view the neo-liberal trading model with suspicion as the process of globalisation increasingly appeared to be engendering division and inequality between the North and South. (Taylor, 2001 : 59) Developing countries progressively attempted to neutralise liberalisation through multilateral bodies such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). During the Tokyo Round of trade negotiations developing countries successfully engaged with the GATT, gaining preferential tariff and non-tariff treatment for the South through the Generalised System of Preferences of 1971. (Taylor, 2000 : 206) Indeed, developing countries succeeded in institutionalising a two-tiered system of global trade whereby the developing world was exempt from the requirement of reciprocity in its trade with the developed world, which Ian Taylor views as “a tacit recognition of the structural inequalities that the developing world suffered from and a reflection of the broadly dependista-tinged ethos then current amongst those multilateral bodies ostensibly dealing with the South’s problems.” (2000 : 206)

This recognition, writes Taylor, was based on the knowledge that an alternative economic system in the East provided the developing world with a measure of autonomy and political space. Yet the Uruguay Round occurred at a time of monumental structural change in the global political economy, and by the time of the signing of the Marrakesh Declaration “... the global landscape had fundamentally altered, drastically undermining if not destroying the (relative) positions of negotiating strength the South had enjoyed vis-à-vis the developed West.” (Taylor, 2000 : 206 - 207) The reassertion of American-based hegemony, combined with the so-called “lost decade” of debt accumulation and continuous structural adjustment programmes, within the context of global neo-liberalism, at the expense of interventionism profoundly altered the global balance of power. (Taylor, 2000 : 207)

Within this overarching context, it is argued, export-based economies and budding international trade increasingly came to be viewed as the panacea to the problems of the

developing world, and the demands of the North in terms of economic policy, trade regulation and fiscal arrangements all met with declining Southern solidarity. As the Uruguay Round drew to a close, developing countries thus saw little option but to go along with the demands of the North, fearing that refusal to endorse the formation of the WTO would stimulate developed countries to form regional trade groupings and therefore would result in the further marginalisation of the South. (Taylor, 2000 : 208)

Historically developing countries played only a minor role in the multilateral trading system, and up until the Uruguay Round, participation by developing countries had been described as a la carte, with many not making commitments or playing only a marginal role in trade negotiations. (Hoekman, 2004 : 10) This changed, however, with the entry into force of the WTO, as due to the Single Undertaking developing countries became subject to most of the disciplines of WTO agreements. Yet the so-called “Uruguay Round Hangover”, where developing countries increasingly gained the perception that trade benefits were highly skewed towards developed countries, generated much scepticism towards the emerging WTO system, and developing countries increasingly sought to make use of the WTO to improve their terms of trade in the multilateral trading system. (Hoekman, 2004 : 10 - 11)

One strategy which was employed in the GATT / WTO by developing countries to improve their terms of trade has been to limit the reach of reciprocity by seeking Special and Differential Treatment (SDT); more favourable terms of trade for developing countries imbued with a notion of exceptionalism. Special and Differential Treatment provisions in the WTO have come to span three core areas, these being market access (trade preferences granted to developing countries and an acceptance that developing countries make fewer market access commitments than developed countries in trade negotiations), exemptions (deferrals from some WTO rules), and technical assistance (assistance designed to help developing countries implement WTO mandates). (Hoekman, 2004 : 23)

A precondition for developing countries to fully benefit from the WTO, however, remains ensuring that WTO negotiations and agreements are designed to support

development. Yet most developing countries are relative newcomers to the multilateral trading system, having only joined the WTO but not the GATT, and many current WTO rules, it is argued, still predominantly reflect the interests of the developed countries which established the WTO. As Brian Hoekman argues, for example, the much greater latitude that exists in the WTO for the use of agricultural subsidisation reflects the use of such support policies in many developed countries. Similarly, the permissive approach that has historically been taken towards the use of import quotas on textile products, in principle prohibited by GATT rules, and the inclusion of rules on the protection of intellectual property rights (TRIPS), argues Hoekman, has strengthened perceptions that the WTO is balanced more favourably towards the developed countries than towards the developing countries. (2004 : 25)

This ‘unbalanced’ nature of the multilateral trading regime was recognised by most WTO members, and the Doha Round of trade negotiations (dubbed the “Doha Development Agenda”) which was initiated in November 2001, was designed to address the concerns of developing countries in WTO deliberations and to place the notion of development at the heart of WTO deliberations. The challenge which the Doha Development Agenda aimed to address was to achieve outcomes which would support poverty reduction and economic growth. Yet implementation problems from the Uruguay Round, the addition of new disciplines such as those on intellectual property rights and labour standards, and the persistence of tariff peaks and production export subsidies for agricultural commodities in developed countries has left the WTO with a “development credibility deficit”. (Hoekman, 2004 : 10 - 11)

One example of this development credibility deficit is the sugar industry, which has been termed one of the most policy-distorted industries globally. With Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) protection rates averaging above 200 percent, producers in developed countries receive more than double the world market price for sugar. Indeed, OECD support for sugar producers totals USD 6.4 billion per year, roughly the equivalent of the value of developing country exports. A further example of the development credibility deficit is the cotton industry. US subsidies to

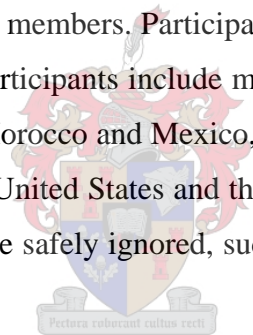
cotton growers totalled USD 3.9 billion in 2002 (three times the value of US foreign aid to Africa), depressing world cotton prices by around 10 percent and cutting the income of cotton growers in West Africa and Central and South Asia. (Hoekman, 2004 : 17) Indeed, in West Africa alone, where cotton is a critical cash crop for small-scale and near-subsistence farmers, annual income loss for cotton growers is in the range of USD 250 million per annum. (Baffes, 2003 in Hoekman, 2004 : 17) It is for these reasons that the Doha Development Agenda, which seeks to redress such imbalances, is of great importance to developing countries that have comparative advantages in these and other products. (Hoekman, 2004 :18)

Whilst the Doha Development Agenda has been designed to address development issues which are of critical importance to developing countries, it should be emphasised that although developing country interests are important in the multilateral trading regime and indeed form the substance of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, they still face considerable difficulties in driving the agenda of the WTO, just as they faced difficulties in voicing their concerns and trade interests under the GATT. This is in part due to what Fatoumata Jawara and Aileen Kwa have provocatively termed the “Bullying Hierarchy”. Whilst the WTO functions on the principle of consensus and all members carry equal weight in WTO decision-making, due to economic and political power a distinct hierarchy has emerged in the WTO system. At the top of this hierarchy are members of the Quadrilateral Group (termed the Quad), these being the United States of America, The European Community, Canada and Japan – the dominant global economic powerhouses. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 :149)

Next in line in the WTO hierarchy come the upper- and some lower-middle income countries (mostly middle powers), whose alliances with both developed and developing countries are strategically important in WTO negotiations. These countries have the ability to exert both multilateral and bilateral influence, and due to their strategic positioning are courted both by developed and developing countries in the WTO. Examples of countries holding this status in the WTO would include Brazil, India and South Africa. Finally, at the bottom of this hierarchy of powers in the WTO come the

Least Developed Countries (LDCs), whose economic power is minimal and whose influence in WTO negotiations as such is limited, maximised only by bargaining coalitions and strategic partnerships with more influential WTO members.

This hierarchy of powers in the WTO is entrenched by the manner in which WTO negotiations are conducted. As mentioned previously, WTO negotiations are conducted at regular Ministerial Conferences, yet due to the time-constraints imposed on deliberations at such Ministerial meetings, much of the groundwork must be accomplished before Ministerials. Increasingly the WTO has become characterised by an operating structure in which the United States and the European Community conduct bilateral negotiations, followed by multilateral negotiations with Canada and Japan, in an attempt to establish common positions. Following deliberations by the Quad, what have been termed “mini-ministerial” meetings are held, which allow for common ground to be established between the Quad and other WTO members. Participation in mini-ministerial meetings is allowed by invitation only, and participants include members of the Quad and “friendly” countries, such as South Africa, Morocco and Mexico, as well as nations usually opposed to the bargaining positions of the United States and the European Community, but which are of too great a significance to be safely ignored, such as India and Brazil. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 58 - 59)



Due to power imbalances between developed and developing countries in WTO negotiations, and the increased use of mini-ministerial meetings preceding major WTO negotiations at which important decisions relating to the multilateral trading system are made, developing countries have come to the realisation that they cannot afford to remain politically isolated within the WTO if their concerns are to be voiced and dealt with adequately. Developing countries have therefore increasingly resorted to the use of alliances and the formation of bargaining coalitions in order to counter inequalities in the WTO system and thereby to strengthen their own hand in trade negotiations. (Lee, 2006 : 51)

4.2.2 Bargaining Coalitions at the World Trade Organisation

As illustrated above, developing states are generally unable to influence outcomes in the World Trade Organisation due to structural and deliberative asymmetries embedded within the WTO and in the manner in which negotiations, particularly at the level of Ministerial Conferences, are conducted. Donna Lee, taking note of these structural and deliberative asymmetries, writes that unequal material power relationships within the WTO predispose developing countries towards certain negotiating strategies, the optimal choice among these being the formation of bargaining coalitions. Bargaining coalitions within the WTO, it is argued, are based on an understanding that the asymmetrical power politics of the WTO create conditions under which coalitions become a “crucial instrument” for developing countries to bolster their bargaining power vis-à-vis the developed nations and to offer a way out of their weak position. (Lee, 2006 : 54) Thus, to solve the problem of asymmetrical balances of power, developing states are drawn to pursuing collective action strategies. (Lee, 2006 : 54) Bargaining coalitions within the WTO, therefore, are viewed as important instruments of bargaining power and for gaining advantage in international trade negotiations.

As Amrita Narlikar points out, bargaining coalitions are not restricted to the WTO or to the area of trade, and developing countries have increasingly sought bargaining leeway through coalition-building across a variety of institutions and issue-areas. Examples here include the G-77 in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the G-24 in the IMF, and the Afro-Asian Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as in other United Nations bodies. (Narlikar, 2003 : 2) Coalitions among developing countries are therefore not unique to the WTO. However, as Narlikar correctly points out, coalitions in the GATT and in the WTO prove more difficult to trace as they do not enjoy the same levels of institutionalisation which they do in various United Nations bodies, for example. (2003 : 2) Rather, coalitions remain loose amalgamations of countries based on perceived common interest or geographical identifications, and as such constitute ‘gentlemen’s agreements’ more than entrenched and unified coalitions.

Yet the increasingly diverse nature of areas in which WTO agreements are concluded and the encroachment of WTO agreements into areas traditionally seen as lying within domestic jurisdiction place new a new imperative on developing countries and new importance on bargaining coalitions in the WTO. Equally, developing countries, through means of bargaining coalitions, have the means to leverage bargaining power and to place their own agenda items onto the negotiating table. (Narlikar, 2003 : 2) Indeed, “coalitions provide developing countries with a means of capitalising on the new opportunities.” (Narlikar, 2003 : 2) It is worth noting that, as Jawara and Kwa write, bargaining coalitions have come to play a role commensurate in importance in the WTO as the organisation’s own system-wide bodies and meetings, with collaboration varying in degrees from groups of states negotiating as a single entity (such as in the case of the European Community) to informal closed group discussions on issues being negotiated. (2003 : 22) Furthermore, it should be pointed out that some countries hold membership in more than one group, whilst others hold membership in none. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23)

Whilst this makes bargaining coalitions in the WTO extremely important as they hold tremendous influence over the outcomes of negotiations, it simultaneously makes negotiations in the WTO system inherently complicated. Similarly, due to overlapping membership in multiple bargaining coalitions by some countries, it complicates any analysis of the bargaining dynamics in the WTO. Nonetheless, certain bargaining coalitions have emerged which appear consistent and which have come to affect the outcomes of WTO negotiations. These will briefly be explored below, as an understanding of the prominent coalitions in the WTO serves as an important base for the analysis of South African engagement with other states within the framework of the WTO which will be presented below.

One of the most powerful coalitions in WTO negotiations is the Quad comprising the United States of America, the European Community, Canada and Japan. As Jawara and Kwa note, the Quad forms the most formidable alliance within the WTO, and

breakthroughs in difficult negotiations are often the result of the Quad coming to an agreement on how negotiations are to proceed. (2003 : 23)

A second powerful group of countries in WTO negotiations is the European Community, composed of the twenty-five members of the European Union. Individual member states co-ordinate their positions ahead of WTO negotiations, and the European Commission alone serves as the common and singular voice of the European members at key WTO meetings, mini-ministerial meetings and WTO Ministerial Conferences. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23)

A somewhat larger, yet more loosely amalgamated, coalition at the WTO is the Informal Group of Developing Countries. This group comprises the entire developing country membership of the WTO and emerged at the Singapore Ministerial when developing countries forged a common position on the exclusion of labour standards from WTO negotiations. (Narlikar, 2003 : 179) As a result of the forging of the Informal Group of Developing Countries and the resolve which they displayed against the inclusion of negotiations on labour standards at the Singapore Ministerial, the Singapore Ministerial Declaration confirms its commitment to the observance of internationally recognised core labour standards but identifies the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as the competent body to set and deal with labour standards. “The Declaration also explicitly rejects the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes and emphasises that the comparative advantage of low-wage developing countries must in no way be put into question.” (Narlikar, 2003 : 179)

Whilst the Informal Group of Developing Countries came to prominence at the Singapore Ministerial it appears to have lost momentum and fractured into a multitude of smaller issue-based bargaining coalitions. One smaller group of developing countries which has proved more permanent in WTO negotiations is the Like-Minded Group (LMG). The Like-Minded Group came into existence as an issue-based coalition with an agenda of blocking the Singapore Issues, or ‘new issues’ as they also been termed, from WTO negotiations – these being the issues of competition policy, government procurement, trade facilitation, and trade and investment. (Narlikar, 2003 : 179)

The Like-Minded Group has a diverse membership that includes Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23 - 24) It was particularly in the run-up to the Seattle Ministerial in 1999 and again in the run-up to the Doha Ministerial in 2001 that the Like-Minded Group saw a surge in its membership base, as it was at these Ministerial meetings that the Singapore Issues became of increasingly greater importance to WTO negotiations. (Narlikar, 2003 : 180)

The Like-Minded Group, which stresses that implementation issues from the Uruguay Round need to be addressed before new issues can be negotiated (hence the opposition to the Singapore Issues), and that the implementation issues raised by developing countries need to be taken seriously by developed countries, meets informally at the WTO and has attained the reputation of being the grouping that most frequently raises pro-development positions at the WTO. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 24)

Whilst retaining its initial focus on addressing implementation issues before the consideration of new issues throughout WTO negotiations the Like-Minded Group has also evolved to proposing several issues that its members are willing to discuss, and frequently makes submissions to the WTO. Among others, the Group has emphasised the removal of tariff peaks and tariff escalations in market access negotiations, and has submitted proposals on Special and Differential Treatment, technology transfer, and the relationship between trade, finance and debt. (Narlikar, 2003 : 180) The Group has furthermore raised concerns related to agriculture and public health, linking up with the Africa Group on the latter on TRIPS agreements. (Narlikar, 2003 : 180)

A further developing country grouping which has demonstrated considerable influence at WTO negotiations has been the Least Developed Country (LDC) grouping. The LDC grouping consists of the thirty members of the WTO (the remaining nineteen LDCs do not hold membership of the WTO) who are defined by the United Nations as having a particularly low level of economic development. (Narlikar, 2003 : 183) The LDC Group has become increasingly stronger and more coherent as a bargaining coalition since the Seattle Ministerial, and before the Doha Ministerial produced a joint declaration (the

Zanzibar Declaration) and appointed a co-ordinator for the Ministerial. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23) Notably, at the Doha Ministerial the LDC Group found allies in both the Africa Group and the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) Group and began negotiating jointly with these two developing country groupings. (Narlikar, 2003 : 184)

The African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) Group in the WTO comprises the 56 developing country members of the WTO which benefit from the European Union trade preferences under the EU-ACP Partnership Agreements (twenty-two ACP members do not hold membership in the WTO), which were embodied first in the Lomé Agreements and now in the Cotonou regime. The ACP Group presents joint statements to the WTO and at Ministerials on trade matters and for the first time appointed a co-ordinator at the Doha Ministerial. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23)

Whilst the Least-Developed Country and African-Caribbean-Pacific coalitions have gained prominence recently, one of the more sustained and institutionalised coalitions of developing countries has been the Friends of the Development Box. This grouping originated in the preparatory phase for the Seattle Ministerial and Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zimbabwe hold membership. (Narlikar, 2003 : 186) Members of the Friends of the Development Box emphasise that the concerns of developing countries regarding agricultural production and trade are fundamentally different than those of the developed countries, and advocate for WTO provisions allowing developing countries to further their food security concerns and to take appropriate steps to alleviate rural poverty by helping resource-poor farmers to improve productivity and production. (Narlikar, 2003 : 186) Since its formation in the run-up to Seattle, however, the Group appears to have enjoyed only limited success. (Narlikar, 2003 : 186)

One coalition of countries within the WTO which similarly focuses on agricultural issues, yet which has proven to be more successful in WTO negotiations and in maintaining cohesion at the WTO than the Friends of the Development Box, is the Cairns Group. Indeed, the Cairns Group appears to have emerged as one of the most unified and

powerful bargaining coalition at the WTO. The Cairns Group was established in 1986 shortly before the commencement of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations by a group of medium-sized countries, all of which were major agricultural exporters, to pursue common agricultural trade objectives and to argue for agricultural trade liberalisation. (Taylor, 2000 : 221; Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 24) The Cairns Group consists of seventeen members from four continents, and Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cost Rica, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Uruguay hold membership in the group. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 24)

The Cairns Group, notes Ian Taylor, has developed into a successful example of a bridge-building coalition between developed and developing nations in the WTO, as its formation was “a response to the failure to successfully include agriculture into the GATT regime and sprang from the desire of food exporters to open up the markets of the United States and Europe and push for greater liberalisation in cross-border trade.” (2000 : 221) In effect the Cairns Group was derivative of the special treatment afforded to agriculture throughout the tenure of the GATT as it had always been accepted that the international rules governing trade in agricultural goods needed to be different from those applied to manufactured goods. (Taylor, 2000 : 221)

The ‘agriculture exceptions’ first under the GATT and now under the WTO came from the recognition that agriculture was subject not only to weather conditions, but that it was also politically and socially sensitive. Thus, “combined with strong and well-organised lobbies that served specific interests – the ‘sacred cows and hot potatoes’ of agriculture as it was once put – various exceptions were made to accommodate the agribusiness demands. (Taylor, 2000 : 221) It was around this issue-area that the Cairns Group emerged as a group of “middle-ranking powers which possessed strong export-oriented agricultural industries” and which “shared the normative principles of neo-liberalism” which came to lead the charge of pushing for liberalisation in the agricultural sector. (Taylor, 2000 : 223)

A final group of countries which focuses specifically on the agricultural sector in WTO negotiations emerged in the build-up to the Cancún Ministerial in 2001 as the Group of 20+ (G20+). The G20+ was forged by Brazil (which maintains a prominent leadership role in the alliance), India, Mexico, Chile and South Africa, and represents a broad-based alliance advocating that momentum in the currently stalled Doha Round needs to be maintained and that the outcome of the Round should contribute to enhanced development in developing countries. The G20+ however represents a coalition centred primarily on the common objective of liberalising agricultural markets and has gained the support of the developed countries of the Cairns Group (notably Australia, Canada and New Zealand). (Ismail, 2003 : 10)

Whilst several bargaining coalition have emerged around the “hot potatoes and sacred cows” of the negotiations on agricultural trade at the WTO, a prominent alliance with a developing country membership emerged in the form of the Group of twenty-four (G-24) on Services. The group arose formally around the issue of Guidelines and Procedures for the Services Negotiations, and under the leadership of India between late 1998 and early 1999 a group of nine countries formed a coalition based on co-operation among developing countries on service issues. The Group came to include twenty-four members, and currently includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uruguay and Venezuela. (Narlikar, 2003 : 187) Recently, the G-24 has come to garner the support particularly of the Africa Group at WTO negotiations.

Finally, the Africa Group has come to play an increasingly important role in WTO negotiations. The Africa Group comprises all African countries at the WTO and has its roots in the Organisation of African Unity. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23; Narlikar, 2003 : 191) The Africa Group first emerged as an informal caucus group of Geneva-based African trade representatives at the end of the Uruguay Round, inspired by a general recognition among African countries “that if they were to become a force to be reckoned with within the WTO they had to pool their intellectual and technical resources and work together as a unified force in pursuit of common goals.” (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 48) Initially the Africa Group was formed with the intention of developing the capacity of

African countries to engage meaningfully with implementation issues arising from the Uruguay Round, yet increasingly the Africa Group has come to serve as a bargaining coalition for African countries, and the Group often generates common positions prior to WTO negotiations and produces joint statements and declarations. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23; Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 48)

In April 1998, African trade ministers meeting in Harare agreed on the need for greater levels of co-ordination and the formulation of a positive African agenda for the Seattle Ministerial. So as to ensure the sustainability of an African Group in the WTO, the Africa Group established a Permanent Delegation of the AU in Geneva, which was, among others, to co-ordinate the activities of AU members at the WTO. (Narlikar, 2003 : 191)

The Africa Group meets regularly to synchronise African trade negotiation positions on sectoral and product-specific provisions, and meetings are convened and chaired by member states on an annual rotational basis, with the incumbent chair acting as spokesperson for the Group as a whole. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 48) The activities of the Africa Group, note Soko and Qobo, are predominantly interest-driven or issue-based, and members participate on a voluntary basis depending on the issues under consideration. Additionally, whilst the Africa Group does not hold special representational status in formal WTO processes, it does provide an important platform for intra-Africa dialogue, for the formulation of common positions on issues arising from the WTO system, and for strengthening African coalition building efforts with respect to South-South alliances. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 48)

Whilst African members of the WTO attempt to co-ordinate their activities and to forge common positions through the Africa Group, it should be noted that the Africa Group “is not a monolithic entity but a hybrid formation encompassing African countries that belong to overlapping groupings.” (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 48) Indeed, African members at the WTO who form part of the African Group also form part of the LDC Group, the Like-Minded Group, the ACP Group, and a variety of other bargaining coalitions, as illustrated above. As Mills Soko and Mzukisi Qobo argue, this heterogeneous character

of the Africa Group can at times be its very undoing, as will be explored later in this chapter. (2003 : 48)

Whilst high levels of overlapping membership and internal differences have emerged within bargaining coalitions at the WTO, bargaining coalitions still represent an important part of the manner in which WTO negotiations are conducted and trade agreements concluded. Indeed, bargaining coalitions have found common ground at various ends of the spectrum when it has come to implementation issues from the Uruguay Round, Special and Differential Treatment, technical assistance, technology transfer, debt and financing issues, the concerns of the Least Developed Countries, the inclusion of the Singapore Issues, matters pertaining to labour standards and the environment, and trade in agricultural goods. (Narlikar, 2003 : 192 - 193) Furthermore, developing countries have increasingly found common ground in bargaining coalitions and made use of these coalitions in trade negotiations. As Amrita Narlikar's study on bargaining coalitions at the WTO reveals, "there still remains an element of a broad developing world bloc identity that members acknowledge even when speaking in terms of functional, issue-based coalitions." (2003 : 194) "The fact that bloc-style diplomacy continues may appear somewhat surprising if one recalls the euphoria that had surrounded the issue-based coalition diplomacy in the late 1980s to early 1990s. But continue it does, and [...] many developing country delegates point out that, even though their positions may differ across issue areas, there are still important systemic issues that allow them to maintain some bonds of loyalty. (Narlikar, 2003 : 195)

4.3 South Africa at the World Trade Organisation

South Africa joined the WTO in 1994, and whilst Pretoria recognised that the WTO possessed inherent flaws, the organisation was of significant strategic importance for a South Africa which was attempting to rejoin the global political economy after years of isolation. (Lee, 2006 : 51)

From the outset Pretoria broadly adopted the neo-liberal trading regime which the WTO embodies, and early into South Africa's membership of the organisation President

Mandela remarked that South Africa was firmly of the belief that the existence of the WTO as a rules-based system provided a solid foundation for economic growth. (Taylor, 2000 : 210) South Africa quickly sought to establish itself within the WTO system, and was one of only two states (the other being Côte d'Ivoire) to attend the summit in Geneva celebrating the 50th anniversary of the GATT – all other African states having boycotted the event. Mandela defended this move on the basis that all states had to acknowledge that integration into the global economy was inevitable and had to be accepted, echoing Bill Clinton's comment that globalisation was "not a policy choice but a fact", and Tony Blair's assertion that the "irreversible and irresistible trend" towards free trade was unstoppable. (Taylor, 2000 : 216)

The South African stance of not only supporting but also promoting a rules-based neo-liberal trading regime, embodied by the WTO, quickly came to be, as Director-General of Foreign Affairs Jackie Selebi put it, a major plank of South African foreign policy. Selebi justified this stance by stating that "the creation of a rules-based international system of interaction between states contributes to our domestic agenda. The setting of international standards and rules, the creation of transparent trading and other systems and ensuring that no single country or group of countries can dominate world affairs [...] creates an environment within which growth and development can take place." (Taylor, 2000 : 209)

While South Africa embraced the WTO and the neo-liberal trading regime it embodied under the Mandela presidency, a more reformist policy towards the WTO emerged shortly after Thabo Mbeki took over the South African presidency. (Taylor, 2001 : 59) Mbeki took the view that a co-ordinated Southern reformist platform was vital to the success of the African Renaissance, a stance which he summed up when addressing the 1999 Non-Aligned Movement ministerial meeting.

It is vital that the NAM and the Group of 77 plus China should have a common, co-ordinated and strategic approach in their interactions with organisations of the North such as the G8 and the European Union. We must ensure that the benefits of the twin processes of globalisation and liberalisation accrue to all of our countries and peoples and that its potential threats and risks are accordingly mitigated. It is therefore incumbent

upon the Movement to continue being in the forefront of efforts to ensure the full integration of the developing countries' economies into the global economy. It is to our mutual benefit that we continue advocating for a new, transparent and accountable financial architecture. (Mbeki, 1999 in Taylor, 2001 : 60)

Thus whilst accepting the broad tenets of neo-liberalism, under the Mbeki administration South Africa began to push for reformist initiatives vis-à-vis international trading issues which would advance specifically southern, and at times specifically African, interests. (Taylor, 2001 : 59) In this light a Deputy Director of Multilateral Trade relations for the South African government asserted that the WTO needed to address the issue of implementation, and that WTO agreements should facilitate rather than penalise developing countries for bringing down their trade barriers. (Taylor, 2000 : 215) Indeed, Pretoria came to adopt a position which facilitated trade negotiations and the liberalisation of markets, but which simultaneously highlighted wherever relevant the double standards practiced by the developed world and aligned South Africa with the developing world. (Taylor, 2000 : 215)

South Africa's membership in the bargaining coalitions of the G20+ and the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum, as well as the Cairns Group in the WTO, are very much in line with the Southern position which South Africa has adopted vis-à-vis the WTO. (Lee et al. 2006 : 208) Indeed, membership in all of the above coalitions have been attempts by Pretoria to act in partnership with the developing world to get developed countries to take their responsibilities seriously and to act in a manner more sensitive to the needs of developing countries. (Lee et al. 2006 : 208) South Africa's membership of the Cairns Group appears to fit this objective particularly well, as the Cairns Group throughout its existence has attempted to dismantle protectionism and to overhaul the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, as it was domestic export subsidisation which threatened the viability of Cairns members' agricultural sectors to remain competitive in the global market. (Taylor, 2000 : 224)

Since the Uruguay Round the Cairns Group has evolved from an agenda-setting to a negotiating coalition, and has pushed for the full and fair implementation of WTO

agreements on agriculture, as well as the liberalisation of the agricultural sector, looking at generic issues and not country-specific issues. (Narlikar, 2003 : 127) It was in such a milieu that South Africa, under the sponsorship of New Zealand, joined the Cairns Group in February 1998. (Taylor, 2000 : 229) Indeed, South Africa's accession to the Cairn's Group, as Ian Taylor notes, was a natural progression of its membership of the WTO as an African middle power.

With a foreign policy that shared the basic presumptions of the Group's acceptance of neo-liberalism as the organising framework upon which macro-economic policy should be based, whilst at the same time pushing for a more rules-based global trading regime and posturing a policy of attempting to mitigate the most negative aspects of globalisation, the Cairns Group afforded Pretoria with the platform to affirm all of these complex positions at once. (Taylor, 2000 : 229)

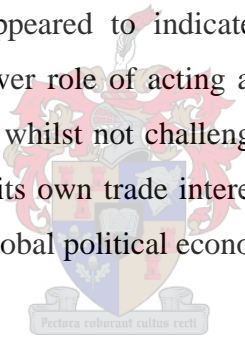
Australia, recognising South Africa's middle power role, asserted that the leadership role that South Africa played in southern Africa would strengthen the capacity of the Cairns Group to explain and advance its objectives. (Taylor, 2000 : 232)

Since joining the organisation in 1994 the WTO has become an increasingly important international forum for the projection of South African foreign policy, both due to the highly visible nature of the WTO and its Ministerial Conferences and due to the importance of the WTO as the regulatory mechanism of global trade and the impact that the WTO has on developing countries. As Donna Lee argues, the WTO provides a global platform on which Pretoria can project and perhaps even increase its power at the international level as well as providing a means of increasing its international status by constructing a positive image of good citizenship and responsible leadership, which increases the potential for South Africa to play its African middle power role at the international, regional and sub-regional level. (Lee, 2006 : 51)

And indeed South Africa has made use of the platform provided by the WTO to assert itself as an African middle power. Since joining the Cairns Group for example, South Africa has taken an activist role, being integral at the eighteenth ministerial meeting of

the Group in April 1998 in crafting the “Vision Statement” which laid out the Group’s plan of action for the Seattle Ministerial of 1999, and which embodied a firm commitment to continue the drive for the liberalisation of agricultural markets and to hold developed countries to their Uruguay Round commitments. (Taylor, 2000 : 233) Pretoria firmly committed itself to this task, and the business press in South Africa enthusiastically remarked that the country was “at the forefront of a fight for international free trade in agricultural products.” (Taylor, 2000 : 235)

South Africa also increasingly attempted to play a facilitation and bridge-building role between the North and the South within the WTO, pursuing diplomatic strategies which attempted to find common ground and drive WTO negotiations forward. (Lee, 2006 : 52) South Africa’s status as an African middle power, its extensive network of bilateral, regional and multilateral networks with developing countries, and its positive relations with the developed world, all appeared to indicate that Pretoria would be able to successfully pursue its middle power role of acting as a “voice of the South” and “the voice of Africa” within the WTO, whilst not challenging the neo-liberal paradigm upon which the WTO was built due to its own trade interests and its efforts at re-integration into, and not alienation from, the global political economy. (Lee, 2006 : 52)



South Africa initially appears to have played its traditional middle power role as representative of the interests of the African continent, and trade diplomats in Pretoria and Geneva stated that South Africa’s position on the question of starting a so-called “Millennium Round” of trade negotiations was that although South Africa was sympathetic to the view that negotiations should be launched, Pretoria felt that the process should be slowed down. (Taylor, 2000 : 216) Yet, whilst South Africa initially supported the Southern and the African position that no new trade negotiations should be launched until implementation issues from the Uruguay Round had been dealt with, this position quickly changed. Nelson Mandela soon asserted that “... the developing world should precisely define those areas that are obstacles to their progress in the world trading system”, and that “there can be no refusal to discuss matters such as labour standards, social issues and the environment.” (in Taylor, 2000 : 216)

Mandela's comments were directly contrary to the stated positions of the remainder of the states on the African continent, particularly with regards to the inclusion of labour standards in WTO negotiations. Indeed, developing countries had been so opposed to the inclusion of labour standards that the Singapore Ministerial Declaration confirmed its commitment to the observance of internationally recognised core labour standards, but identified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as the body to set and deal with labour standards. In addition the Declaration explicitly rejected the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes and emphasises that the comparative advantage of low-wage developing countries should no way be put into question. (Narlikar, 2003 : 179)

Thus, by stating that labour standards should be included in WTO negotiations, a position which was reaffirmed in his opening speech to the Non-Aligned Movement in September 1998, Mandela adopted a position which was well ahead, and indeed somewhat contradictory to, the positions adopted by the remainder of the developing world. (Taylor, 2001 : 66) South Africa appeared not only to be developing an agenda close to that of developed countries in terms of issue-areas to be negotiated at the WTO, but indeed in the months preceding the Seattle Ministerial increasingly appeared to be moving away from the developing world and all-African opposition to a new round of trade negotiations, publicly favouring the launch of a new round of trade negotiations at the Seattle Ministerial. The adoption of such a position by South Africa before the Seattle Ministerial of 1999 proved problematic for the remainder of the continent, as it was generally recognised that if South Africa agreed to a new round of trade negotiations it would be difficult for other African countries to oppose negotiations. (Taylor, 2000 : 216 - 217)

4.3.1 The Seattle Preparatory Process

South Africa came to play an increasingly active role in the build-up to the Seattle Ministerial, in particular placing emphasis on the needs and concerns of developing

countries. In the months preceding the Seattle Ministerial South Africa was leading the charge in a campaign to re-start negotiations over agricultural issues, and actively attacked uncompetitive industries in developed countries, particularly the heavily subsidised steel industry. (Taylor, 2001 : 69)

South African officials were also disturbed that the concerns of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), while having brought their problems to the fore in fora such as UNCTAD, were not adequately being addressed by the WTO. A co-ordinating workshop for Senior Advisors to trade ministers of LDCs was therefore convened under the joint sponsorship of the South African government, UNCTAD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sun City, South Africa, from the 21st to the 25th of June 1999. At this workshop LDCs both discussed their experiences and problems in implementing the Uruguay Round Agreements and addressed the problems they were encountering in participating in WTO negotiations, and the resulting draft communication titled “The Challenge of Integrating the LDCs into the Multilateral Trading System” proposed several solutions to be implemented at varying levels. Notably, one recommendation to emerge from this Declaration (Part B, Paragraph 5) urged the LDCs to generate a common negotiating position, both among themselves and with other developing countries, as a means of improving their position within the WTO. (Narlikar, 2003 : 183 - 184) It was this meeting in South Africa, argues Amrita Narlikar, which allowed the LDCs to emerge as a viable bargaining coalition in the run-up to the Seattle Ministerial. (2003 : 183)

Apart from hosting the LDC conference in late June 1999 South Africa also participated at the Marrakesh Summit of the G77 in September of that year. The Marrakesh Summit, as Van der Westhuizen, Nel and Taylor note, was almost entirely devoted to pressing for the reform of the WTO based on a process of what was termed ‘The Three Rs’ – Review, Repair and Reform of the WTO. (2001 : 120) “Indeed, Marrakesh was quite pivotal in pressuring the North to be more responsive to the developmental needs of the South. The whole future of the WTO system was seen to be hinging on the North’s acceptance of the South’s demand that they be more open to the concerns of the developing world.” (Van

der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 120) Michael Moore, the Director-General of the WTO, attended the Marrakech Summit, and taking note of the concerns of the G77 and promised to “shape the WTO so it can help make the next century a century of persuasion unlike so much of this century which often was a century of coercion.” (in Van der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 120) However, the agenda as Moore saw it was not to overhaul the WTO system in its entirety (which was presumed non-negotiable), but instead to persuade the South of the benefits of globalisation whilst ameliorating its more negative outcomes. (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 120)

South Africa adopted a somewhat similar position, and whilst advocating for reform of the WTO system in certain areas, attempted to persuade members of the G77 to participate in the WTO more actively and to reap the benefits the system presented whilst softening its negative outcomes. Alec Erwin, the South African Minister of Trade and Industry, repeatedly stressed that South Africa had already taken “visible and significant” measures to align its trade policies and practices as required by the WTO, and that it was benefiting from these, and urged his Southern counterparts to do the same in the months preceding the Seattle Ministerial. (Taylor, 2001 : 66)

Whilst the LDCs and the G77 were preparing for the Seattle Ministerial the Africa Group too was coming together, and as a result of frequent meetings and extensive research, Amrita Narlikar writes that African participation in the preparatory phase of Seattle reached unprecedented levels. The Africa Group submitted proposals across issue areas including technical assistance, competition policy, customs valuation, TRIPS, and a host of other issue-areas of importance to its members, and attained unprecedented levels of access to green room meetings during the preparatory phase due to “active, informed and united engagement.” (Narlikar, 2003 : 191) Indeed, African countries jointly made important proposals on practically all areas of the WTO Agreement as reflected in the draft Ministerial Declaration for Seattle. (Mangeni, 2002 : 35) It became increasingly clear throughout the course of the months and then weeks leading up to Seattle that developing countries, and particularly the Africa Group, would come to play an important role in the Seattle Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

However, perhaps rather foolishly as Van der Westhuizen, Nel and Taylor point out, the dominant developed nations did not take the concerns of the developing countries seriously and continued to push a one-sided agenda in preparation for the Seattle Ministerial, which was reflected in numerous versions of the Draft Ministerial text which continually failed to take the submissions and proposals of the developing countries into account. “This attitude of the North alienated whole swathes of the developing world even further. The non-transparent and undemocratic nature of the WTO system, the open orchestration of that system by the North and the refusal by much of the South to continue being on the receiving end of a one-way form of liberalisation met head-on with the haughtiness of economic power.” (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 120)

South African trade representatives quickly moved to establish a positive agenda for the Southern Africa region in the run-up to the Seattle Ministerial, recognising that a combined platform for negotiations would strengthen the hand of developing countries in the Seattle Ministerial. (le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, 2002 : 202) In his August 1999 address to the consultative conference in preparation for the WTO Seattle Ministerial the South African Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin, highlighted the challenge posed by the upcoming round of multilateral trade negotiations. Erwin asserted that if the process and objectives of Seattle remained similar to those of the Uruguay Round it would be of detriment to the developing world, and that South Africa would be able to articulate the interests of developing nations. (Muller, 2000 : 9)

As the Seattle Ministerial approached South African notions of Southern solidarity began to fade however, and whereas it had previously actively campaigned for Southern and African interests at the WTO, Pretoria’s commitment to the African continent and to representing African interests at the WTO was seen to waiver. In the months preceding the Seattle Ministerial the South African position diverged from the all-African position even more, as South Africa had not only agreed to the launching of a new round of trade negotiations, but indeed was actively lobbying for the launch of a new round of WTO negotiations which would include the Singapore Issues, a position shared by the

European Union and the United States, and indeed one for which both had aggressively campaigned.

This move by South Africa was in direct opposition to the stance adopted by all of the remaining African members of the WTO, who firmly remained opposed to the inclusion of the Singapore Issues in WTO negotiations. Indeed, South Africa had defined its position heading into the Seattle Ministerial irrespective of the positions of its African peers, for whom it claimed to speak. South Africa's support for the launching of a new round of trade negotiations, which was received negatively on the African continent, was positively acknowledged by the European Union and the United States, who jointly decided, as Jawara and Kwa report, to delegate to South Africa the responsibility for aligning African positions with their own in the run-up to Seattle. (2003 : 168) It was with this breaking of ranks with its African peers that South Africa entered the Seattle Ministerial of the WTO.

4.3.2 The Siege of Seattle (1999)

From the 30th of November to the 3rd of December 1999 trade ministers and diplomats from WTO member states, as well as hordes of non-governmental activists and journalists, descended on Seattle for the Third Ministerial Meeting of the WTO. (Narlikar, 2003 : 191) Whilst differences between developing and developed states had emerged well before the Ministerial, these flared into outright tensions at Seattle once the Ministerial began, and by the second day of the conference the Seattle Ministerial appeared to be failing. Charlene Barshefsky, the United States Trade Representative and Chair of the conference, in an attempt to obtain some form of consensus and a declaration out of Seattle, arbitrarily declared that she would change the rules of procedure as she saw necessary to obtain a Ministerial Declaration. Barshefsky and WTO Director-General Moore proceeded to establish several green room meetings, some of which ran simultaneously, on vital issues of disagreement between developing and developed states, and only select countries, very few of them from the developing world, were invited to

attend, among them South Africa. (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2001 : 121; Bond, 2004 : 51)

It was this move in particular which highlighted that the Africa Group had become a force to be reckoned with at the WTO. After finding themselves repeatedly excluded from Green Room meetings and private consultations at the Seattle Ministerial, the African countries issued a joint statement on their marginalisation from the decision-making processes. The statement, made on the 2nd of December 1999, the third day of the Seattle Ministerial, by the Africa Group noted: “There is no transparency in the proceedings and African countries are being marginalised and generally excluded on issues of vital importance to our peoples and their future. [...] We will not be able to join the consensus required to meet the objectives of the Ministerial conference.” (in Narlikar, 2003: 191 - 192) The South African Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin, attempted to moderate the stern language employed by the Africa Group and to convince African states that South Africa was attempting to negotiate on behalf of other African states in the green room meetings. Yet Erwin could not persuade the African delegates that his green room negotiations were in their interest. (Bond, 2004 : 51)

Whilst mass protests raged in the streets of Seattle, an impasse had been reached at the Ministerial as developing nations steadfastly refused to accept negotiations on labour standards being used as a mechanism to block exports from the developing world to the developed world. (Taylor, 2001 : 69) Whilst progress had been made in the fields of agriculture, non-agricultural market access, implementation issues and trade and investment, all agreements were frozen as the negotiations verged on collapse. Frustrations at the manner in which the negotiations were being conducted led the Ghanaian Minister of Trade and Industry, and the first vice-chairman of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), to condemn the “blatant lack of transparency in the negotiations and the marginalisation of Africa”, whilst the OAU expressed particular concern “at the declared determination to produce a ministerial text at all costs, even at the cost of procedures intended to guarantee participation and consensus.” (in Taylor, 2001 : 69 - 70)

Indeed, frustration at the manner in which the negotiations were being conducted and the manner in which developing countries were being bypassed led the Africa Group to block the consensus needed to launch what at the time was to be termed the Millennium Round of trade negotiations, a position emulated by CARICOM and a number of South American countries. (Taylor, 2001 : 70) After having blocked consensus on the Millennium Round, the Africa Group proceeded to take the lead in threatening to walk out of the Seattle Ministerial if its members continued to be marginalised in the negotiations. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 23)

Yet despite African frustrations with the proceedings and continuous affirmations by the Africa Group that its members remained opposed to the launch of a new round of trade negotiations until implementation issues from the Uruguay Round had been adequately dealt with, South Africa continued to push for a new round of trade negotiations which included the Singapore Issues, and South African trade diplomats worked tirelessly to keep negotiations on track. (Lee, 2006 : 63 - 64) Despite South African efforts to garner consensus on the draft Declaration, the ACP Group and the Africa Group refused to accept a declaration that they had had no hand in crafting. (Khor, 2003 : 28) As no consensus could be established and the ACP and Africa Groups were threatening a walkout the talks collapsed, and not even a Ministerial Declaration emerged from Seattle.

Following the collapse of negotiations at Seattle, South Africa claimed that it was 'upbeat' about the progress which had been made and expressed sorrow that Seattle had failed to produce the positive outcomes achieved in the form of a Ministerial Declaration due to resistance by developing countries. Most developing countries however, and particularly the Africa Group, expressed the sentiment that no outcome had been better than a bad outcome, and Ghana and Zimbabwe in particular voiced negative sentiments about the Seattle Ministerial and the manner in which developed states had attempted to ride roughshod over developing states. (Taylor, 2001 : 70)

4.3.3 From Seattle to Doha

It had become clear from the failure of Seattle, that most developing countries rejected the idea of launching a new round of trade negotiations, particularly one including the Singapore Issues, until implementation issues remaining from the Uruguay Round had been dealt with. Particularly, developing states wanted developed states to implement the commitments made in the Uruguay Round before new issues could be negotiated. Yet whilst the position of most developing states and of the Africa Group had been made clear, Singapore, Mexico, Korea, Morocco and South Africa supported negotiations on the new issues, and Argentina, Brazil Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Chile, whilst not actively supporting a new comprehensive round of negotiations, were willing to accept one provided the agenda included an end to all agricultural subsidies.” (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 54)

Whilst South Africa had taken note of the positions of most developing countries at Seattle, and actively pushed for the resolution of the trade problems faced by its less developed African counterparts, it also sought to advance its own trade policy objectives at the WTO, one of which was the inclusion of the Singapore Issues in a new round of trade negotiations; an issue in which it had “a keen material interest.” (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 52) Thus, in the period between Seattle and the next WTO Ministerial which was to be held in Doha in 2001, South Africa made no secret of its advocacy for the launch of negotiations on the Singapore Issues, particularly during numerous meetings held by African countries on the matter. Jawara and Kwa report that South African trade officials started their campaign by ‘persuading’ Lesotho to support the South African position, before using South Africa’s dominance within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Africa and ACP Groups within the WTO to push the notion of a new trade round which would include the Singapore Issues. Yet South African officials met stiff opposition both from within the Africa Group and the ACP, and notably also from India, which remained vehemently opposed to the inclusion of the Singapore Issues. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 169)

Yet whilst South African officials pursued their own agenda at the WTO which ran contrary to the stated positions of other African countries, South African diplomats “exerted a great deal of energy” in constructing a united bloc of Southern countries from which a reformist agenda at the WTO could be launched. (Taylor, 2001 : 60) In March 2000, South Africa met with Brazil, India, Nigeria and Egypt in Cairo to launch a developing nation trade bloc to challenge the G7 in the post-Seattle round of WTO negotiations. As Ian Taylor noted, Thabo Mbeki joined forces with Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo “to push the reformist agenda at every opportunity.” (2001 : 60)

Indeed, the failure of Seattle had made it apparent that a disorganised global South was at a distinct disadvantage when facing a recalcitrant North in global trade issues, and South Africa became increasingly keen on forging a common strategy and approach to issues of global trade and development. The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, stated that a group of developing countries should form a nucleus of countries in the South that would interact with the North on behalf of developing countries, and that the establishment of such a nucleus of developing countries was “a serious priority for South Africa.” (Taylor, 2001 : 60 - 61)

South Africa expended great effort in investigating ways of moving the WTO process forward, placing emphasis on developmental issues and matters relating to the South. South African Deputy-President Jacob Zuma began criticising delays in WTO trade talks and asserted that it was “incumbent upon humanity to collectively and through real partnerships address the central question of poverty.” Zuma furthermore claimed that “the colonial relationship between developed and developing countries was very evident in the previous WTO forum [Seattle], especially by the way in which the developing countries were not taken seriously by the developed ones.” Finally, Zuma declared that the ongoing manner of operations at the WTO demonstrated “a mentality that seeks to perpetuate the unequal relationship of the coloniser and the colonised. Instead, partnership between North and South is needed to move forward on international trade issues.” (in Taylor, 2001 : 70)

South African Director-General of Foreign Affairs, Siphos Pityana, echoed Zuma's criticism in mid-2000, arguing that "we seek acknowledgement of the fact that, with the global village as our marketplace, there cannot be continued selective protection of access to markets for political motives. We therefore also call for the full implementation of the Uruguay Round commitments to dismantle trade barriers. We are not calling for charity for developing countries. What we are rather calling for are enhanced export opportunities for developing countries and improved market access, in order that they might improve their living standards through strong export growth to the levels enjoyed in the industrial world." (in Taylor, 2001 : 71)

In April 2000 the South African position received a major boost at the G77 Summit in Havana when the meeting adopted a resolution that agreed with Mbeki's vision of a united developing world within trading bodies such as the WTO. Lee, Taylor and Williams write that this approach was greeted with so much enthusiasm that the G77 Summit was cast as the starting point of a collective process which would come to affect the future of the global trading system. (Lee et al. 2006 : 208) Indeed, the credibility South Africa had established in other multilateral fora and the middle power niche it had created for itself as the voice of the African continent, coupled with Mbeki's self-image as a "philosopher king" and his G8-friendly credentials as the architect of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme, seemed to ideally place South Africa at the heart of the reformist drive and making it the perfect representative of Southern interests within the WTO. (Lee et al. 2006 : 208)

In late May 2000 Mbeki, on a visit to Washington, won the backing of Clinton for a far-reaching package of measures designed to address the problems faced by the African continent, including proposals on debt relief, rules governing the multilateral trading regime, the restructuring of international financial institutions, and investment promotion for Africa. (Taylor, 2001 : 71) During this same visit the South African Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin, reportedly also urged the United States to "see certain things from the perspective of developing nations" if it wanted a deal with the WTO, due to the

understanding that, as Ian Taylor notes, Seattle had demonstrated quite clearly that without the support, or at least the consent, of developing nations, the WTO process could effectively and very publicly be stopped in its tracks. (2001 : 72) Late in 2000 Mbeki echoed the same message to Nordic prime ministers, whose support he obtained in working towards more agreeable terms of trade for Africa in the post-Seattle phase. (Taylor, 2001 : 72)

Increasingly a reformist stance came to underpin South African multilateral trade policy in the period between the Seattle and Doha Ministerials, and because of this public stance Pretoria emerged as the “de facto recognised leader of Africa”. (Taylor, 2001 : 71) This leadership position, writes Taylor, was granted official approval by developed states when the European Union invited Mbeki as the sole “special guest” to a two-day EU Summit in Feira in June 2000, with the EU regarding Mbeki’s presence as “a mark of warm and growing relations between the EU and South Africa.” (2001 : 71) Whilst South Africa appeared to be emerging publicly as a voice of the developing world with a reformist agenda within the WTO, the EU had apparently also taken note of South African support for the European position on the Singapore Issues in a new round of trade negotiations, thus the warming of relations between the EU and South Africa.

Although a reformist agenda was increasingly being driven by developing nations at the WTO, little movement had been achieved in negotiations following the collapse of the Seattle Ministerial, and WTO members only regained a sense of urgency in the months preceding the Doha meeting. Two mini-ministerials were called, the first in Mexico at the end of August 2001, and the second in Singapore in October of the same year, to address the failed Seattle meeting and to decide on a way forward for the launch of a new round of trade negotiations. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 58)

At the first mini-ministerial meeting in Mexico only 30 of the 142 WTO members at the time were invited, these being Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, the European Community (comprising 15 members), Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United States and Uruguay. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 59) At this meeting crucial decisions for the Doha Ministerial were

formulated, which were sent back to Geneva for consultation, and on September 26th were released by Stuart Harbinson, the Chair of the WTO General Council, in the form of the first draft of the Doha Ministerial Declaration and an implementation report on the manner in which the Uruguay Round agreements had been carried out. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 63) This draft declaration, which came to be known as the 'Harbinson Text', received widespread criticism from developing nations, however, who expressed both surprise and disappointment at the lack of ambition on implementation issues and the lack of concern for developing country issues in the draft declaration. Indeed, both Egypt and Jamaica, who had been present at the Mexico meeting, condemned the draft and made statements to this effect at an informal General Council meeting on the 1st of October, joined by Indonesia, Malaysia, Cuba, Honduras, Pakistan, Kenya and Bangladesh (representing the LDCs). (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 63)

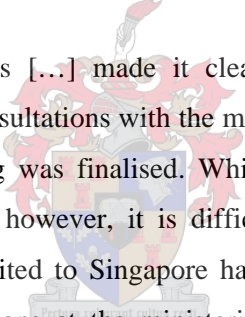
Developing countries expressed particular anger over the section of the draft entitled 'Future Work Programme', in which the possibility of launching a new round of trade negotiations including the Singapore Issues was mentioned. Particularly, developing countries expressed their opposition to the inclusion of the new issues, a position favoured by the European Union, Singapore, Korea, Mexico, Morocco and notably South Africa, as the majority of developing countries felt that agreements on the new issues would not be of benefit to them and that too many outstanding implementation issues still remained to be addressed. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 63)

South Africa was increasingly diverging from the position of the remainder of the continent once again. The Africa Group had stated its objectives clearly in the Abuja Ministerial Declaration as a part of the Doha preparatory process. The Abuja Declaration laid great emphasis on the importance of implementation issues, and reaffirmed opposition to the Singapore Issues, requesting that the working groups in Geneva continue their deliberations on the matter until such a time as consensus on the Singapore Issues could be reached. (Narlikar, 2003 : 192)

The second mini-ministerial meeting held in Singapore in October 2001 as a follow-up to Mexico and the final preparatory meeting before Doha was attended by 35 invited WTO

members represented mostly at ministerial level, these being Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the European Community (again counting 15), Egypt, Gabon, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Switzerland, Tanzania and the United States. South Africa also attended the mini-ministerial, as it had done in Mexico, whilst interestingly the Malaysian trade minister had been invited but did not join, as he “did not see the purpose of attending.” (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 65)

Again, whilst developing countries and the Africa Group had made their opposition to the inclusion of new issues in trade negotiations clear, it was only Egypt, India, Jamaica and Tanzania which stood firm on the new issues, whilst South Africa advocated their inclusion in a new round of trade talks, breaking ranks with the official all-African position. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 65) Egypt’s representative to the WTO, Dr. Magdi Farahat, summed up the events which unfolded in Singapore as follows:



Developing country delegates [...] made it clear to the Quad that, although some agreements were reached, consultations with the majority of delegates absent would have to take place before anything was finalised. While Doha was not entirely a ‘pick up where we left off’ scenario, however, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the privileged few who were invited to Singapore had largely set the agenda and secured most of the influential positions at the ministerial itself before it even started. Most developing countries – especially the least developed – just had to swallow this state of affairs like a bitter pill. (in Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 67)

Whilst Egypt, India, Jamaica and Tanzania opposed a new round of trade negotiations, commensurate with the position of most developing countries, in stark contrast to the position being advanced by South Africa, the lack of representation by developing countries in Mexico and in Singapore meant that their positions were not adequately taken into account.

When asked why so many developing countries were left out of the Mexico and Singapore mini-ministerial, a middle-income country delegate whose trade minister was present at both meetings replied: ‘Frankly, there are only a handful of countries doing business at the WTO. Some West African countries don’t even know what they have

signed up to. Even the Nigerians don't have much of a clue about the technicalities and complexities of negotiations. The mini-ministerial meetings are really 'limited edition' meetings for ministers who are considered influential'. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 61 - 62)

That only what were considered influential countries were invited to the mini-ministerial meetings became apparent following the Singapore meeting. The Singaporean delegate who attended the meeting briefed WTO delegations in Geneva on the outcomes achieved at the mini-ministerial. Issues which had been identified as important in Singapore and therefore to be discussed at Doha included the Singapore Issues, the environment, TRIPS, subsidies and countervailing duties, and agriculture, all of which were on the negotiating agenda of the developed countries. Matters of importance to developing countries and to the LDCs, such as institutional reform, were accorded little priority for Doha, apparently due to "time constraints". (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 67)

Whilst developing countries appeared increasingly to have lost influence over the content of the emerging Doha draft declaration they maintained their insistence on the importance of implementation issues and their opposition to the inclusion of the Singapore Issues. A few days before the Doha Ministerial the ACP Group meeting in Brussels from the 5th to the 6th of November 2001, with WTO Director-General Mike Moore and EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy in attendance, issued a declaration stressing the need for Special and Differential Treatment for developing countries, calling for the outstanding implementation issues to be addressed, and urging the various WTO working groups to continue work on the Singapore Issues until an explicit consensus could be reached for negotiations on them to commence. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 69) The ACP Group furthermore sought a waiver from the WTO for its trade agreement with the European Union, as the trade preferences of ACP members violated the Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) rule. In this regard the ACP Group had actively worked with the Africa Group, which had included the waiver in its negotiating objectives in the Abuja Declaration. (Narlikar, 2003 : 192 - 193)

In a similar fashion to the ACP Group, the LDCs, meeting on the 8th of November, reiterated their total opposition to negotiations on the Singapore Issues and decried the

lack of provisions for LDCs in the draft Ministerial Declaration. India reaffirmed that it would not accept the “biased” draft declaration, whilst Fiji, Sri Lanka, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Honduras, as well as a host of other developing countries, fully opposed the introduction of new issues into trade negotiations. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 87) Yet despite this opposition the Singapore issues appeared set to form a central component of negotiations in the Doha Ministerial. As Jawara and Kwa write, “never have the wishes of so many been ignored by so few, over key areas of contention, in a supposedly rules-based and consensus-driven organisation.” (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 72)

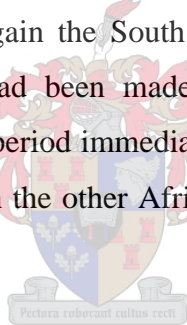
Heading into the Doha Ministerial, South Africa’s position was described as “ambiguous and awkward.” (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 52) South Africa, whilst publicly supporting developing countries and rallying support for a cohesive developing country approach to trade negotiations between the Seattle and Doha Ministerials, entered the Doha Ministerial at odds with the Africa Group, the ACP, the LDCs and the Like-Minded Group. At the heart of these differences, note Soko and Qobo, lay disagreement over how African countries ought to have approached the negotiations in the Doha Round. Almost all African countries (with the notable exception of Morocco) adopted a stance which sought to block a new round of WTO negotiations on the grounds that they perceived to have given away more than they had received in the Uruguay Round and were reluctant to support the launch of a new round of trade liberalisation until their grievances had been sufficiently addressed. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 52)

South Africa, whilst taking note of African concerns, nevertheless argued for the launch of broad-based negotiations which would include the Singapore Issues.

In other words, although South Africa did not support the ambitious EU agenda it was prepared to consider a modified, less ambitious and carefully defined agenda. In adopting this position South Africa was influenced not only by a recognition of rapid changes in the global economy that needed to be accommodated within the WTO but also by a conviction that a wider negotiating agenda would make it possible for developing nations to extract key concessions from industrialised countries in respect of agriculture and industrial tariffs. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 52)

Alec Erwin, the South African Minister of Trade and Industry, attempted time and again to convince African states to support a new round of trade negotiations which included the Singapore Issues. This particular agenda was pushed by Erwin at a SADC meeting in Pretoria, at the LDC meeting in Zanzibar, at the Eastern / Southern African ministerial meeting in Cairo and finally at the Abuja meeting of African trade ministers shortly before the Doha Ministerial. (Bond, 2004 : 53)

On the eve of the Doha Ministerial Mike Moore, the Director-General of the WTO, asserted that Erwin had acquired “very useful African leadership”. Whilst the draft Ministerial Declaration for Doha had been heavily criticised by African states and civil society groups, Erwin maintained in retrospect that, going into Doha, “our overall approach was to defend the overall balance in the draft text”. (in Bond, 2004 : 53) Thus, in a manner reminiscent of Seattle, distinct battle lines had been drawn well before the Doha Ministerial got underway. Again the South African position on matters of vital importance to African countries had been made clear well in advance, and whilst supporting African countries in the period immediately following the Seattle Ministerial, South Africa again broke ranks with the other African countries in the final months and weeks leading up to Doha.



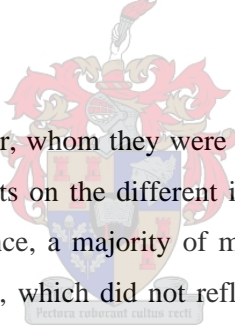
4.3.4 Deception in Doha (2001)

The Doha Ministerial of the WTO ran from the 9th to the 13th of November 2001, yet already on the first day of the conference differences emerged between the developed and the developing coalitions. As heads of delegation met for the opening session to outline the work schedule for the Conference, the Chair, Qatari Trade Minister Youssef Hussain Kamal, opened the first session by announcing that the contentious and widely criticised Harbinson Text would be the basic document of discussion for the Ministerial, although this had not been agreed to by the Africa Group, the ACP, the LDCs or the Like-Minded Group. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 90)

Kamal then proceeded to present six “friends of the chair” who would lead consultations on select themes around which the Ministerial would revolve. Developing countries

expressed surprise that friends of the chair had already been appointed when no consultations had been conducted and it appeared as though facilitators had been arbitrarily chosen by conference organisers. (Mangeni, 2002 : 42) Furthermore, whilst Singapore secured the seat for agriculture, Switzerland the seat for implementation issues, Mexico the seat for TRIPS and Health, and Canada the seat for the Singapore Issues, only two developing countries secured seats as facilitators. Chile was appointed facilitator for environmental issues, and South African Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin was appointed facilitator for rule-making. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 90)

Whilst none of the “friends of the chair” were from the United States or the European Union, all held views sympathetic to the positions advocated by both the United States and the European Union. The task of the facilitators was to hold consultations with members and to make amendments to the draft Declaration according to what members decided.



It was totally unclear, however, whom they were consulting with, when and where; and as brackets and additional texts on the different issues crept in and out of the working document during the conference, a majority of members remained unsure who exactly was making the ‘adjustments’, which did not reflect their views and suggestions. Most developing country delegates came to view the facilitators as the reincarnation of the green room process, leading NGOs to dub them ‘the green men’. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 91)

Indeed, South Africa’s appointment as “friend of the chair” was not received well by other African members at the Doha Ministerial.

By the third day of the Ministerial, delegates were informed that negotiations on the Singapore Issues had commenced, yet no indication was given as to which nations were being consulted on the matter. Belize, Egypt India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya (as chair of the ACP Group), Malaysia, Nigeria (as chair of the Africa Group in Doha), Senegal, St Vincent and Zimbabwe (as chair of the Africa Group in Geneva) all reaffirmed their opposition to negotiations on the new issues and requested that negotiations be ceased

and that the working groups in Geneva continue their deliberations on the matter until consensus had been reached on their inclusion in trade talks. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 93 - 94)

South Africa, however, suggested that the introduction of capacity-building provisions for developing countries on the Singapore Issues “might move things along”, yet this move was rebuffed by the Philippines which argued that those nations rejecting the Singapore Issues did so for fundamental reasons, and not because they lacked the capacity to negotiate. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 94) Bangladesh, Bolivia, India, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe also raised process issues, pointing out that negotiations were not failing due to the capacity constraints of developing countries, but due to the fact that it was not clear where meetings were being held and who was being consulted on what basis, and that there were simply too many meetings occurring simultaneously. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 94)

On the 13th of November all WTO members met to discuss the latest version of the draft Ministerial Declaration, and whilst the United States and Australia accepted the text in its totality, the European Union found the changes made on investment and competition policy unacceptable. Yet Barbados, Cuba, India, Nigeria (on behalf of the Africa Group), Tanzania (on behalf of the LDC Group) and Zimbabwe all rejected the text and negotiations on the Singapore Issues. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 102) No form of agreement could be reached, and the Committee entered a recess. With no agreement in sight, and without consultations being conducted or a decision taken by consensus, the Ministerial was extended into the 14th of November. “This was a very serious procedural omission since a significant number of ministers and delegates were unable to reschedule their flights and had to leave Qatar late Tuesday [that day]. Some who left did so totally convinced that the entrenched division could not be resolved, so that their absence would not influence the outcome. As a result, the most crucial decisions were made in the absence of a significant number of developing country ministers.” (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 103 - 104)

With most developing country ministers having left and no Declaration in sight, a green room meeting was convened which lasted throughout the night, which included Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Egypt, the European Union, Georgia, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United States and Uruguay. As Jawara and Kwa point out, as at the Mexico and Singapore mini-ministerials, all of the members of the Quad were present. Furthermore, all but seven of the participants had attended either the Mexico or the Singapore meetings, and all thirteen members who had attended both mini-ministerials were again present in the final green room in Doha, among them South Africa. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 104)

Whilst the United States was allowed five advisers in the green room, developing country delegates were allowed only two, and the Zimbabwean minister, who spent the entire night sitting on the floor as he had not been invited but had managed to enter the room with the other invited African ministers, was allowed no advisers at all. Furthermore, only ministers were allowed to speak whilst ambassadors were asked only to observe, although many developing country ambassadors represented ministers who had already left the conference. Once uninvited delegates, who unlike the Zimbabwean minister had not been able to slip into the green room proceedings, discovered that the meeting was in progress, many were rumoured to have kept vigil in the hotel corridors waiting for the final outcome of the Doha Ministerial. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 105)

As the green room meeting drew to a close in the early hours of the 14th of November, no agreement had been reached and the African countries in particular remained steadfast in their opposition to the inclusion of new issues in the Doha Round. It was at this point in time that South African Trade Minister Alec Erwin intervened and made what was claimed to be an “impassioned” speech to his African counterparts in the room, stating that it was in the overwhelming interest of Africa to support the final draft Declaration. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 107) When African nations refused to budge, South Africa led the breakaway of SADC from the All Africa position and Southern opposition began to crumble. (Bischoff, 2003 : 192; Bond, 2004 : 54 - 55) One African delegate later claimed

that “there was a sense of deception – not by what some of the African ministers who were representing the rest of us were saying, but by what they were *not* saying.” (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 128)

Meeting with the remaining African, ACP and LDC delegations outside of the green room shortly thereafter, Erwin is claimed to have advised the African states that they had no choice but to accept the text, which was “the best possible outcome for them in the circumstances.” According to participants and eyewitness accounts, there were a number of angry responses to Erwin’s comments, with some states asking rhetorically “who he represented and whose interests he was serving”. (Bond, 2004 : 54) As one observer noted, South Africa leading the SADC breakaway from the all-Africa position and subsequently attempting to persuade African states to accept the draft Declaration could easily “signify to the Africa Group of countries that South Africa, a prominent leader of the continent, does not have their best interests at heart.” (Voges in Bond, 2004 : 55)

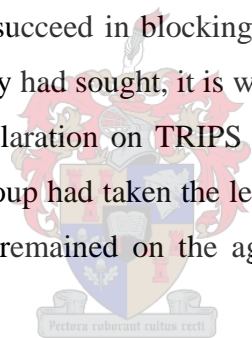
As African cohesion in opposition to the Singapore Issues and the draft Declaration began to crumble, Kenya and Tanzania, who one negotiator in the room described as “tough as nails”, worked hard to tone down some of the contentious language in the draft before also finally agreeing to accept it. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 108) After the draft Declaration emerged from the green room deliberations, South Africa worked hard to ensure that all developing nations would support the Doha Round, or what was termed the Doha Development Agenda, stating that it would be unwise for developing nations not to reach an agreement, and on the eve of the signing of the Doha Declaration the Like-Minded Group, which had resolutely held out, agreed to endorse the Ministerial Text. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 108; Narlikar, 2003 : 180)

Whilst Kenya proclaimed Doha a success and Tanzania was content with the fact that it had gotten the ACP waiver it had sought, Nigeria, Botswana and Senegal reluctantly accepted the text. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 108) Zimbabwe, Zambia, Gambia and Uganda, however, were not satisfied with the final text, and pushed to have the Singapore Issues excluded, a position later supported by Kenya, which had initially supported the text. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 109) Indeed, most developing countries were not pleased

with the text, yet no country managed to take the step of breaking consensus in the final hours of Doha and walking out of the Ministerial. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 111)

In the final analysis, argue Jawara and Kwa, the Ministerial Declaration which emerged from Doha was little different from the Harbinson Text which had gone into Doha (2003 : 117). A key factor of this outcome was the political strategy employed by the Quad to overcome their lack of voting power. Utilising the mini-ministerials and the green room processes, the Quad was able to progressively build support around its own positions by using middle powered countries within other WTO groupings. Notably, one country which is singled out by Jawara and Kwa as having been used by the Quad in the Doha Ministerial is South Africa, particularly due to its perceived influence in the Africa Group. (2003 : 272)

Whilst the Africa Group did not succeed in blocking the Singapore Issues or in getting the implementation guarantees they had sought, it is worth noting that one visible success of the Africa Group was the Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health which emerged from Doha. Indeed, the Africa Group had taken the lead in presenting proposals on these issues and in ensuring that they remained on the agenda throughout Doha. (Narlikar, 2003 : 192)



In the matter of the TRIPS agreement the South African position had mirrored the positions of its African counterparts, and South Africa played a crucial part in brokering the deal on TRIPS and Public Health, which granted WTO licences for the production of certain medicines under certain circumstances which would normally have violated intellectual property rights. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 53) The stance taken by South Africa on the TRIPS agreement, writes Paul-Henri Bischoff, was in line with the South African government's position that there should be a compensatory movement to globalisation, and that through conscious interventions such a movement could correct the inability of the market to address issues of peace, democracy, health and prosperity. (2003 : 185 - 186)

Whilst South Africa may have shared the position of the Africa Group on TRIPS, it had not supported the Africa Group in its opposition to the inclusion of the Singapore Issues or its fundamental opposition to the draft Declaration. On the contrary, South African officials actively worked against their African counterparts, and in the final hours of Doha it was South African Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin who attempted to convince African representatives to accept a text they were opposed to. African nations saw little choice but to grudgingly accept the text, and Amrita Narlikar argues that the only reason the Doha Declaration emerged was due to the eventual agreement of the Africa Group on the basis that it had received the ACP waiver. (2003 : 192) Thus the Doha Declaration was accepted by WTO members, launching a new round of trade negotiations dubbed the “Doha Round” or the “Doha Development Agenda.” The agenda of the Doha Round included matters relating to agricultural subsidies, services, industrial tariffs, implementation issues, the environment, Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights, and, notably, the Singapore Issues. (Yallapragada et al., 2005 : 67)

From the point of view of African countries, and indeed of the developing world at large, the Doha Declaration proved to fundamentally alter the trading regime, as the Declaration firmly merged a commitment to revisit the Uruguay Round agreements with movement on the Singapore Issues. Indeed, in terms of the Singapore Issues a specific time frame for negotiations was put in place: negotiations would commence, subject to minor clarification, after the mid-term review of negotiations at the next Ministerial, which was to be held in Cancún in 2003. The broad-based consent that underpinned the Doha Development Agenda, writes Rorden Wilkinson, ensured that any movement forward on those issues of concern to the South would automatically trigger pressure for movement forward on those issues important to the North. (2004 : 154) Thus, by actively ensuring that the Doha Declaration was accepted by the South, and by African countries in particular, South Africa contributed to fundamentally altering the playing field in favour of the developed countries of the North.

4.3.5 From Doha to Cancún

In February 2002, just three months after the Doha Ministerial, United States Trade Representative Robert Zoellick visited Africa on the first official visit ever by a US Trade Representative to the continent. Zoellick's visit included South Africa, where the possibility of establishing a free trade area agreement between South Africa, as well as other members of SADC, and the United States was explored. Zoellick also succeeded in convincing South Africa to support the United States in a possible suit against the European Union at the WTO for blocking imports of genetically modified seeds from the USA. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 170) It appeared as though the United States had taken note of South African support at Doha, and that Washington was attempting to forge closer ties with Pretoria.

Following Zoellick's Africa tour the process of mini-ministerials commenced, and South Africa attended the first mini-ministerial in Sydney in November 2002 together with Brazil, China, Colombia, Egypt, the European Union, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Korea, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Senegal, Singapore, Switzerland and Thailand. Further mini-ministerials involving roughly the same member states, were held in Japan and in Egypt in 2003 during the build-up to the Cancún Ministerial, both of which were also attended by South Africa. Jawara and Kwa express particular dissatisfaction with the mini-ministerials in the build-up to the Cancún Ministerial, arguing that the mini-ministerials served increasingly to allow select countries to discuss key WTO issues at ministerial level with no written records, to set the agenda for negotiations, and to build a process of "railroading" the remainder of the WTO membership. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 230)

Developing countries increasingly submitted agricultural proposals, requesting Special and Differential Treatment for the agricultural sectors of developing countries as well as provisions for developing countries in agricultural negotiations, yet these proposals were consistently rejected by the United States, the European Union, and notably the Cairns Group, of which South Africa is a member. One argument advanced for this position was that South Africa, as an exporter of staple crops, sought to access developing country

markets as much as developed ones, and therefore consistently pushed for the liberalisation of agricultural markets across the board. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 259)

Yet whilst South Africa and the Cairns Group supported the initial position of the United States on the agricultural sector following Doha, as the Cancún Ministerial approached dramatic changes began to manifest themselves in this area of negotiation. The United States, realising that the European Union was unlikely to meet its commitments in the agricultural sector, shifted from a multilateral to a bilateral strategy of engagement with the European Union. Through intense bilateral discussions the United States agreed to harmonise its trade policies with those of the EU. In exchange for European understanding of American farm policies the US reduced its ambitions of opening the European market and of eliminating EU export subsidies, which were destructive to agricultural markets in the developing world and generally served to distort global agricultural markets. The result was an EU-US joint text on Agriculture, which the European Union and the United States hoped could be used for the basis of negotiations in Cancún. Yet developing countries, and some developed ones too, broadly criticised the text on Agriculture. Argentina, Australia, Brazil and South Africa, in particular, as well as other former allies of the United States in agricultural negotiations, voiced concerns that the text served to undermine the common objective of securing liberalised global agricultural markets. (Ismail, 2003 : 10)

As a direct response to what was perceived as a threat to the liberalisation of global agricultural markets, developing countries, led primarily by Brazil, Chile, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa (indeed, South Africa is acknowledged to have played an instrumental role in the creation of this grouping), began to create a broad-based coalition which would oppose the EU-US text, and which came to be known as the Group of 20+ or G20+. (Ismail, 2003 : 10) The G20+ was forged on the basis of two common objectives, the first of which was the creation of free and fair markets in agricultural trade, and the second of which was ensuring that the outcome of the Doha Round enhanced the development of developing countries. Notably, the G20+ quickly came to gain the support of a broad base of countries not only from the developing world but also from the developed world, and developed members in the Cairns Group (Australia,

Canada and New Zealand) came to share and support the views and perspectives of the G20+ coalition. (Ismail, 2003 : 10)

In preparing for the fifth WTO Ministerial meeting to be held in Cancún at the end of 2003 the African Union, at its Ministerial Summit in Mauritius, deliberated extensively over issues of interest to African countries, and Mauritius was appointed as spokesperson for Africa in Cancún. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 49) Despite fundamental differences between South Africa and Mauritius, the Africa Group was able to come up with an important proposal for agricultural negotiations. (Mangeni, 2002 : 25)

In the final weeks leading up to the Cancún Ministerial, South Africa also claimed to have achieved success on the issues of Intellectual Property rights on public health, which had remained contentious following Doha. Yet, many developing countries opposed the deal which emerged as it proved limited and represented a “deeply flawed compromise” due to numerous terms and condition attached to compulsory licensing procedures required to bypass intellectual property regulations for developing country access to medicines for certain diseases. (Lee, 2006 : 64) Furthermore, many developing countries were displeased as they had not been consulted during negotiations and the agreement to accept the American offer on TRIPS in September 2003 had only been entered into by Brazil, India, Kenya and South Africa. (Lee, 2006 : 64 - 65)

Whilst negotiations on agricultural issues and TRIPS were raging as the Cancún Ministerial approached, developing countries displayed an unprecedented level of activism within the WTO. Developing states, which had submitted almost half of the submissions at the Seattle and Doha Ministerials, again came together in bargaining coalitions and presented a long list of proposals for consideration in Cancún. This increased participation, writes Donna Lee, reflected greater willingness on the part of the major developed nations to draw key developing states such as Brazil, India and South Africa into the negotiating process. Yet it also reflected developments within the South itself. “Two developments in particular are worth noting. First, developing countries [...] increased their deliberative capacity by enhancing the skills of their delegations through increased manpower, training and better preparation. More noticeable, however, [was]

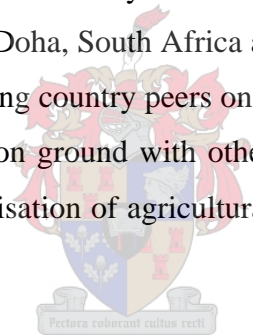
the establishment of the G20+ of Southern members that [...] actively opposed the majors on agriculture.” (Lee, 2006 : 53)

South Africa appears to have positioned itself along the same lines as its G20+ counterparts heading into the Cancún Ministerial. Shortly before leaving for Cancún Xavier Carim, South Africa’s Chief Director of Multilateral Trade, summarised South Africa’s key objective as pushing developed countries to advance agricultural issues so as to advance the interests of developing countries. (Lee, 2006 : 62) Alec Erwin, South African Minister of Trade and Industry, similarly stated that at Cancún Pretoria sought to promote structural adjustment in the North through the reform of agricultural trade regimes and the elimination of protection for sunset industries. Yet Erwin, moving beyond the position of the G20+, argued that the only way to achieve the desired outcomes was through participation in a broad range of negotiations in which the interests of the North (such as services, investment and competition policy and the Singapore Issues) were on the negotiating table. (Lee, 2006 : 62) By adopting such a position, South Africa had again moved well ahead of its coalition partners (this time the G20+) on issues of importance to developing countries, and as before Doha had aligned itself with a position at odds with members of the Africa Group, the ACP Group, the LDCs, and the Like-Minded Group, many of whom were also members of the G20+.

South Africa’s commitment increasingly appeared to be not with the Africa Group or with developing countries, but rather supportive of neo-liberalism, so much so that one author writes that “no other Southern country has so comprehensively conformed to the orthodoxy.” (Lee, 2006 : 63) Going into the Cancún Ministerial South Africa rigorously supported developed country proposals in the area of services, for example, to increase market access, despite the almost complete lack of comparative advantages for developing countries in the fields of financial services, telecommunications, energy and transport. In the area of industrial tariffs, South Africa supported total trade liberalisation, and in agriculture South Africa supported increased market access and the reduction of subsidies. Donna Lee explains this South African adherence to neo-liberalism by the fact

that South Africa enjoys comparative advantages in all of the above areas within Africa due to its advanced economy. (Lee, 2006 : 63)

Yet the South African adherence to neo-liberalism was not entirely to the disadvantage of developing countries, as Pretoria also supported proposals to eliminate tariff peaks and tariff escalations in the clothing and textile sectors, areas in which developing countries maintain comparative advantages over the developed countries. Despite South African support for the liberalisation of the clothing and textile sectors, however, the contentious area was once again the Singapore Issues. South Africa, again, reaffirmed its commitment to the inclusion of the new issues in trade negotiations, asserting its belief that the new disciplines could “contribute positively to development and not merely provide advantage to advanced economies”. (Lee, 2006 : 63) This despite continued vocal opposition to the Singapore Issues by the Africa Group and developing-country bargaining coalitions. As before Doha, South Africa again entered a WTO Ministerial at odds with its African and developing country peers on matters of vital importance, except that this time it had found common ground with other developing (though mostly non-African) countries over the liberalisation of agricultural markets in the form of the G20+ coalition.



After the draft of the Ministerial text for Cancún was circulated on August 24th 2001, developing countries stated that the text remained non-negotiable. (Titumir, 2004 : 70) Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa later asserted that developing countries had firmly decided on two objectives heading into the Cancún Ministerial: the dismantling of agricultural subsidies in the North and denying the consensus needed to proceed with the Singapore Issues. (2004 : 133) In the final build-up to Cancún, US President George Bush, taking note of African opposition, was rumoured to have phoned Mbeki to “ease inertia” on agriculture and the Singapore Issues and to ensure that a Ministerial Declaration would come out of Cancún. (Narlikar and Wilkinson, 2004 : 449)

4.3.6 Collapse in Cancún (2003)

The Cancún Ministerial ran from the 10th to the 14th of September 2003, and as Rorden Wilkinson writes, all of the usual players were in town. “Legions of trade officials from the industrial North; significantly fewer representatives from the more numerous countries of the South; protestors; non-governmental organisations; the press; organising committee officials; onlookers; and heavy security consisting of armed police, co-opted personnel and, most formidably, three Mexican warships.” (Wilkinson, 2004 : 149) Yet early into the Cancún negotiations divisions between developing and developed states emerged. During the first two days of the Cancún Ministerial the G20+ emerged as one of most active bargaining coalitions, and drawing on a powerful team of six ministers, with Brazil as co-ordinator, the G20+ engaged head-on both separately and jointly with the European Union and the United States, seeking movement on the elimination of agricultural subsidies. (Ismail, 2003 : 11)

The G20+, write Soko and Qobo, succeeded in providing a counterweight to the enormous bargaining power of the United States and the European Union, “and made it difficult for these economic powers to resort to their long-standing divide and rule tactics of buying off small nations with bilateral deals or threats.” (2003 : 48) Whilst the G20+ appeared to weaken the bargaining power of the Quad at the Cancún Ministerial, African countries actively participated in the negotiations and succeeded in placing their trade interests onto the negotiating agenda. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 48) Yet as the G20+ began to succeed in having the draft text on Agriculture altered, the ACP and LDC groupings refused to accept the altered text or to negotiate on any of the Singapore Issues, which had again found their way into the draft Ministerial Declaration. (Draper and Sally, 2003 : 21)

Opposition to the Singapore Issues quickly mounted, and the ACP Group and the LDCs were joined by the Africa Group in refusing to accept the draft Declaration until the European Union, South Korea, Japan and South Africa had agreed to remove the Singapore Issues from the negotiating table. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 50) During mid-afternoon of the fourth day of the Cancún Ministerial the Chair of the conference,

Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs Luis Ernesto Derbez, released his second version of the draft Ministerial Declaration.

On agricultural issues the text poorly reflected the progress which had been made in discussions, to the anger of the G20+, which had advocated that a differential approach be taken to the agricultural sectors in developing countries, whilst in other areas the text presented positions which served to rile the combined developing world. Again the Singapore Issues had been included in the draft text. Yet what served to anger developing countries even more was wording on the politically contentious issue of US and EU cotton subsidies. Whilst developed country cotton subsidies were decimating the livelihoods of West African cotton farmers, the text called on those farmers to consider other economic options, without any commitment by the United States or the European Union to remove their destructive subsidies. This left African countries “shocked and appalled.” (Ismail, 2003 : 12)

It was with the release of this draft text however, that South Africa's differences with its alliance partners became most pronounced, and the South African delegation found itself increasingly isolated. Whilst the Africa Group, the ACP, the LDCs, the Like-Minded Group and the G20+ refused to accept the draft Declaration and rallied around the cotton-producing countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Benin, South Africa urged developing nations to accept the Singapore Issues in negotiations in exchange for movement by the European Union and the United States on agriculture. Yet even the G20+, a grouping which South Africa had been instrumental in creating, in which South Africa had played a prominent role, and which had been so influential in the Cancún negotiations, refused to consider the inclusion of the Singapore Issues. An impasse quickly developed as both the developed and the developing countries refused to move from their respective positions.

The South African Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin, made a desperate attempt to break this deadlock in the negotiations, and pleaded with the Africa Group to support a final offer made by the European Union of including just one of the Singapore Issues –

trade facilitation – in the negotiations. (Lee, 2006 : 68) Yet developing countries refused to accept even a slimmed down version of the Singapore Issues in negotiations. Kenya in the Africa Group and Mauritius in the G20+ also refused to accept the South African position. (Soko and Qobo, 2003 : 50) Clearly, South Africa's willingness to submit to the demands of the European Union and the United States were at odds with the more strident position adopted by the Africa Group and G20+. (Lee, 2006 : 69)

Erwin's personal conduct also quickly came under fire at this point. Riaz Tayob of the Southern and Eastern African Trade and Investment Negotiations Initiative (SEATINI) accused the South African minister of selling out on the Singapore Issues. As Tayob notes:

Erwin consulted with civil society in South Africa where he gave the assurance that he would not open up new issues for discussion until the requirements of the Doha Development Agenda had been met. Contrary to what he informed us, during the Green Room meeting last night, he took the position that he would move on the new issues if the imperialists [sic.] conceded on agriculture. Alec Erwin misrepresented his position to civil society and is playing a game of speak left and act right. (in Bond, 2004 : 64)

Yet despite Erwin's attempts no agreement on the Singapore Issues and on agriculture could be reached, and the Cancún negotiations began to stall. In the early hours of the last day of the Ministerial a green room meeting was convened for just nine countries; Brazil China, the European Community, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa and the United States. At this meeting all states are reported to have adhered to their previous positions. South Africa, continued to promote the inclusion of even just one of the Singapore Issues, in line with the positions of the United States, the European Community and Mexico, but in opposition to Brazil, China, India, Kenya and Malaysia. (Khor, 2003 : 26)

The overt message being generated by the developing countries was that it was unacceptable for them to return to their home countries having opened up their markets to foreign goods without having improved the lives of the poor. Increasingly, developing

countries took the stance that the best outcome would be for the negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda not to receive the endorsement of the Cancún Ministerial. (Titumir, 2004 : 77) Yet South Africa appeared not to have fully grasped the resolve of developing countries, and continued to push for the inclusion of the Singapore Issues despite opposition from India and Brazil, its partners in the IBSA forum. (Yallapragada et al., 2005 : 68) The Africa Group in particular refused to give in to the Singapore Issues, and finally together with the ACP threatened to walk out of Cancún in solidarity with Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali over the cotton dispute. (Bhagwati, 2004 : 61; Narlikar and Wilkinson, 2004 : 457)

As it became apparent that the deadlock could not be broken, Derbez, as Chair of the Conference, closed the Cancún Ministerial with no agreement having been reached on the matters of critical importance. Whilst the South African delegation viewed the collapse of the Cancún Ministerial as a major blow for development, other developing nations viewed Cancún as a “slap in the face” for the European Union and the United States, “who might now have to take more notice of the demands of the developing countries in the Doha Round.” (Lee, 2006 : 69)

Faizel Ismail, the Head of the South African Delegation to the WTO in Geneva, lamented that a successful outcome of the Cancún Ministerial essentially could have been found in the agricultural negotiations. “From the outset, agriculture was recognised to be at the heart of the Doha Development Agenda; progress in the agricultural negotiations was generally understood to be the catalyst for movement in all other areas of the Doha Agenda.” (Ismail, 2003 : 9) Yet Ismail felt that enough progress had been made in agriculture, and that the failure of Cancún lay with developing countries, especially the ACP countries and the LDCs, who had not moved quickly enough or exercised flexibility as new conditions in the negotiations unfolded. (Ismail, 2003 : 17) This is to say, Ismail felt that developing countries in the ACP and LDC blocs should have exercised flexibility in their positions on the Singapore Issues, once concessions had been reached in agricultural negotiations. This point of view presented by Ismail is reminiscent of the negotiations in Doha, where South Africa believed that capacity constraints were to

blame for developing country opposition to the Singapore Issues, and not fundamental opposition to the issues themselves. South African officials seemingly failed to fathom why developing countries consistently and fundamentally remained opposed to the Singapore Issues, even when the G20+ had made progress in agricultural negotiations.

4.3.7 From Cancún to the Suspension of the Doha Round

Following the collapse of the Cancún Ministerial, South Africa became increasingly isolated within the G20+, a group which at one time it had claimed to “lead”. South Africa was particularly at loggerheads with two of its key strategic partners in the G20+, India and Brazil, who together with South Africa made up the IBSA Group within the WTO. Differences between India and South Africa in particular became pronounced, as India remained adamantly opposed to the inclusion of the Singapore Issues in WTO negotiations and had taken a particularly hard stance vis-à-vis the European Union and the United States at Cancún. (Lee, 2006 : 68)

South Africa also appeared to have lost credibility with the Quad, and during a round of informal meetings in July 2004, where a modified post- Cancún agreement was reached South Africa was notable for its absence at successive multilateral meetings. Indeed, Donna Lee argues that the Quad members had recognised the limitations of South Africa’s middle power strategy and its inability to “deliver” Africa and other developing countries. (2006 : 60) South Africa was quickly sidelined at mini-ministerials following Cancún, and the European Union and the United States turned their attention to other potential facilitators, notably Botswana, which had emerged as a strategically important ally for the United States and the European Union as leader of the G90 coalition, and which was invited to attend numerous mini-ministerial meetings in the preparatory phase for the Hong Kong Ministerial in 2005. (Lee, 2006 : 60)

The original end date for the Doha Round was extended from December 2004 to the end of 2005, and later again to the end of 2006, with the Hong Kong Ministerial being viewed as the key to the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda. Yet as both developed and developing countries continued to adhere to their Cancún negotiating

positions, prospects for a successful conclusion to the Doha Round appeared increasingly bleak, and the original objectives for the Hong Kong Ministerial were scaled back.

The Africa Group continued to push the cotton initiative which had been launched by the West African cotton-producing countries at Cancún and refused to consider the inclusion of the Singapore Issues in WTO negotiations, whilst the EU, the United States and the G20+ remained focussed on agricultural negotiations. Indeed, agriculture remained at the heart of the South African negotiating position between the Cancún and the Hong Kong Ministerials. Faizel Ismail, the South African Representative to the WTO in Geneva made this clear when he stated that all countries needed to reach an understanding that the focus of the Doha Round should not be altered, and that this focus was placed squarely on agriculture. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [k] : 14)

The South African Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry Rob Davies echoed this sentiment shortly before the Hong Kong Ministerial, asserting that a move on agriculture needed to be made in Hong Kong before any other issues could be discussed, and reaffirmed his belief that the G20+ represented the interests of developing countries and the LDCs. Yet in the same breath, Davies also stated that developing countries would have to accept their obligations as part of an overall package, and these obligations lay not only in the fields of agriculture and agricultural market access, but also in the inclusion of the Singapore Issues in WTO negotiations. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [g] : 8)

South Africa's belief that it was representing the interests of Africa, developing countries and the LDCs heading into the Hong Kong Ministerial appears not to have been shared by other African countries. Dipak Patel, the Zambian Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry as well as the co-ordinator of the LDCs, expressed anger at the manner in which agriculture was being placed at the centre of negotiations to the detriment of issues of importance to developing countries, Africa and the LDCS. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [f] : 3) Indeed, Patel lamented that agriculture had "completely hijacked the Development Agenda". (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [f] : 7) Such sentiments were echoed by Erastus Mwencha,

the Secretary-General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), who argued that a focus solely on agriculture was to the detriment of the interests of developing countries, and that the scaling back of the Hong Kong agenda was worrying as other issues of importance had been taken away and agriculture had again been placed on the centre stage. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [i] : 10 - 11)

Ambassador Sasara George, Botswana's former representative to the EU, went even further, indicating that South Africa was not particularly representative of African interests in the trade negotiations and was rather pursuing its own interests, thereby undermining African regional integration in the process. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [c] : 14) Mauritian representative to the WTO Sheree Servansing summed up his view of the WTO negotiations as follows. "Basically the priorities of Mauritius are not very different from the mainstream of African countries. Mauritius and the others, excluding South Africa, have basically the same problems." (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [j] : 12)

Opposition by the Africa Group remained strong in the build-up to Hong Kong, and at its ministerial meeting in Arusha from November 21 – 24, African Union trade ministers outlined development benchmarks which needed to be attained before movement on negotiations could be made, insisting that they would not sign up to policies which were detrimental to development on the African continent. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005 [l] : 22; [m] : 24)

While African countries focused on making progress on the issue of cotton at the Hong Kong Ministerial, the G20+ succeeded in obtaining concessions in agriculture from the EU and the US, who agreed to cutting and by 2013 phasing out subsidies to agricultural exporters. Yet the value of this concession proved limited, as the EU had already decided to internally restructure export subsidies and to replace these with other support measures. (Keet, 2006 : 9) On the vital matters of contention, however, Hong Kong did

not succeed in driving the Doha Round forward, and developing and developed countries remained as divided after the Ministerial as they had been before going into it.

Negotiations continued after the Doha Ministerial, yet as no agreement could be reached on almost any of the matters on the negotiating table, trade talks in Geneva began to break down in June of 2006. The United States dug in its heels over developing country demands for further cuts in agricultural subsidies, and as all previous progress in the negotiations had stalled on the subject of agricultural subsidies, the European Union declared a deadlock. (Terreblanche, 2006 [a] : 3) The EU and US then proceeded to call again for greater liberalisation of markets in developing countries, and the United States demanded that developing countries cut back on protection for special products in the agricultural sector, which had only been gained in Cancun and secured in Hong Kong, before progress in the negotiations could be resumed. (Terreblanche, 2006 [a] : 3)

Developing countries were opposed to such a move, and Xavier Carim the Chief South African Multilateral Trade Negotiator, supported the stance adopted by developing countries, arguing that developed nations had an obligation to cut export subsidies on agricultural goods. (Mokopanele, 2006 : 20) Yet whilst Carim favoured the stance taken by most developing countries in Geneva, Mandisi Mphalwa, the South African Minister of Trade and Industry, expressed support for the opening up of markets in developing countries, and wanted to raise the political level of the talks, expressing the hope that an agreement could still be reached, as concessions which had been gained were of importance to developing countries. (Terreblanche, 2006 [a] : 3) Although South Africa again found itself attempting to mediate between developed and developing countries in an effort to gain consensus and move the negotiations forward to a successful conclusion, many developing countries refused to accept the deal which was being offered to them, as it was considered so bad “that no deal was better.” (Terreblanche, 2006 [a] : 3) As Indian Trade Minister Kamal Nath walked out of the talks in disgust and the Doha negotiations completely deadlocked, the Doha Development Agenda looked increasingly set to fail. (Wardell, 2006 : 11)

The G8 Summit in St Petersburg was viewed by most observers of the WTO as the last chance to resuscitate the Doha Round, and South African diplomats committed themselves to playing a central role in finding a solution to the deadlocked negotiations. Thabo Mbeki, as the only representative from Africa, joined the leaders of India, Brazil and China in St Petersburg in July 2006. South African officials asserted that in a stepped up role Mbeki would be speaking not only on behalf of South Africa, but indeed on behalf of the African countries, and in particular on behalf of the LDCs, which stood to lose most from a failure to reach an agreement. (Terreblanche, 2006 [b] : 5) Yet, whilst members of the G8, and particularly Britain, welcomed South Africa's participation and its representation of the African continent at the G8 Summit, which it was hoped would ensure a breaking of the deadlock, South African trade negotiator Xavier Carim himself began to concede the peculiarity of South Africa representing the interests of vulnerable and much less developed countries in Africa, both at the G8 Summit and in the WTO negotiations themselves. (Terreblanche, 2006 [b] : 5)

The St Petersburg G8 Summit, however, failed to reach agreement on the Doha negotiations, and South African officials did not manage to break the deadlock. In mid-July 2006 the Doha Development Agenda was suspended. "Its dead", said Zambian Trade Minister and Co-ordinator of the LDCs, Dipak Patel. (Terreblanche, 2006 [a] : 3)

4.4 Reflections on South Africa's Role at the World Trade Organisation

South Africa was a relative newcomer to the WTO system, having joined only in 1994. Yet South African trade officials quickly came to relish the onus placed on them as "major players in the WTO" and "as newly appointed referees of the rest of Africa" due to the country's re-entry into the global political economy and its emerging status as an African middle power. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 168) At the same time as South Africa ascended to the status of key developing country participant, indeed perhaps the central African participant, the WTO also became an increasingly influential body in the international political economy, with its rules coming to bind not only trade in goods, but also trade in services, intellectual property and the environment. As Donna Lee points

out, with so much at stake it is no wonder that South Africa has sought a central role for itself and has become an influential and active member of the WTO. (Lee, 2006 : 56)

South Africa played the typical role of bridge-builder in WTO negotiations, acting as a facilitator for consensus between developing and developed countries. This was aided by South Africa's strategically important membership in the Africa Group, the Cairns Group and the G20+. (Ismail, 2003 : 9) Yet South Africa's stance was not always in line with those of its members in various coalitions, and when faced with opposition South Africa proved adept at forming issue-based alliances which served its needs. Thus Pretoria stayed out of the Like-Minded Group and forged alliances with India and Brazil on the TRIPs and public health issue. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 169)

South Africa also adopted a stance which differed significantly from the position adopted by the Africa Group in the WTO. Whilst the Africa Group withheld support for negotiations on new issues until the implementation issues from the Uruguay Round had been addressed, South Africa sought movement on the Singapore Issues in return for movement on the new issues. Yet as Dot Keet observes, South Africa threw away considerable bargaining leverage by committing itself to the Singapore Issues publicly before the Seattle Ministerial. "The government missed the strategic importance of adopting an initial advanced bargaining position in order to try to alter the terms of the debate and the balance of power before accepting formal negotiations, even if it is what is ultimately expected." (in Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 170)

South African officials thus diluted key principles in ever-broader terms as the negotiations proceeded, write Lee et al. (2006 : 212 - 213) For example in the Doha negotiations key principles on development in general and agricultural trade reform in particular were abandoned by South African delegates in the hope of reaching a compromise solution on the Singapore Issues. "Yet this bridge-building strategy failed miserably. South Africa lacked the diplomatic know-how and capability to carry its developing country partners in the negotiations, and it was equally constrained by the lack of a viable alternative to neo-liberal strategies within the WTO writ large." (Lee et al. 2006 : 212 - 213)

Due to its dual nature as the supposed symbolic leader of Africa and a major exporting country, South Africa has had to develop what Lee terms a “promiscuous diplomatic strategy” vis-à-vis various WTO members and groupings. Yet this promiscuity presents a range of strategic dilemmas, not least of which is that South Africa’s negotiating and alliance partners within the WTO are politically and economically diverse. This can leave South Africa isolated when differences arise between various groupings. (Lee, 2006 : 67) In this light, for example, South Africa was isolated within the G20+ in Cancún due to its continued support for the inclusion of the Singapore Issues after the G20+ had stated that it would not accept the draft Declaration. Similarly, South Africa has remained isolated in the Africa Group over its stance on the key issues of launching a new round of trade negotiations and later on cotton. (Lee, 2006 : 67)

South Africa has also become isolated within the Africa Group over policy differences in agriculture since Doha. African countries, among the most vocal of them Kenya, Uganda, Senegal and Nigeria, have continuously argued against the total liberalisation of agricultural subsidies as they rely on imports of subsidised food and enjoy access to EU markets through existing preferential trade agreements. South Africa however has sought greater access to agricultural markets and therefore has supported the removal of subsidies and anti-dumping measures and argued for increased market access in the developing world. Many of the less developed countries within the Africa Group have thus remained deeply suspicious of South Africa’s position in WTO agricultural negotiations as they already experience the dumping of South African products onto their markets. (Lee, 2006 : 68)

South African policy at the WTO, therefore, can best be described as inconsistent with the image South Africa has publicly presented of itself as a bridge-builder. South Africa emerged in the early days of the WTO as the possible standard-bearer of the African continent in WTO negotiations, just as it did in other multilateral fora such as UNCTAD, the NAM, and the G8. This position for South Africa was recognised by Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma when she openly asserted that the responsibility to address the process of developing a new world agenda with sustained African development at the centre had devolved to South Africa, and President Thabo Mbeki claiming that a big

burden had been placed on South Africa in terms of trade negotiations. (Taylor, 2001 : 73)

Yet increasingly policy statements and statecraft became diluted by realist policy choices, and South Africa has consistently found to be drifting towards the developed world, and to drop the rhetoric of African solidarity and compensatory globalisation in favour of increased market access for its own goods both to the African market and the markets of the European Union and the United States. South African trade officials have also proved keen to appease the European Union and the United States in WTO negotiations, at the expense of the interests of African nations. Indeed, South African trade policy has at times even been imbued with a degree of paternalism, with South African officials claiming that opposition to the Singapore Issues by African countries was due to a lack of understanding of the issues at stake or lack of capacity to implement the agreements reached, and not due to fundamental opposition to the issues themselves.

South African Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin's repeated attempts to garner the support of the Africa Group in Doha and in Cancun despite their fundamental objections to the draft Ministerial Declarations and consistent breakaways by South Africa from all-Africa positions in WTO negotiations writ large have served not only to weaken African unity in the WTO, but also to alter the bargaining positions of African states. Indeed, South Africa's support for the launch of a new round of trade negotiations before the Seattle Ministerial made it difficult for other African states to hold out. South Africa's cajoling to receive the endorsement of the Africa Group for the Doha Ministerial furthermore altered the playing field for African countries in WTO negotiations, as movement on items of importance to the Africa Group had now irrevocably become linked to movement on the Singapore Issues, to which the Africa Group remained opposed.

The findings generated in this chapter reveal that South African engagement at the WTO differs substantially from South African behaviour at other multilateral fora, and indeed is in no way in keeping with the middle power niche which South Africa has so arduously carved for itself. South Africa can by no means be considered to be the voice of Africa in

the WTO. On the contrary, South Africa acts more as the voice of the Washington consensus in WTO negotiations than any other developing country. As Lee, Taylor and Williams observe, compared to its more assertive pan-Africanist stance within other multilateral institutions, it is not unreasonable to ask what the South African government's policy priorities and values actually are, as on trade policy these can be considered contradictory and opaque. (Lee et al. 2006 : 213)

4.5 Conclusion

The analysis of South African engagement with the WTO presented in this chapter reveals that whilst consistent with a belief in neo-liberalism South African policy choices have continually been in opposition to those of the other African states, which South Africa has claimed to lead. Indeed, this chapter has shown that South African rhetoric surrounding the need to establish Southern bargaining coalitions and to campaign for the interests of the developing countries in the WTO has been matched by policy choices which undermine the interests of developing countries and which hamper Southern unity. On the African front the picture appears even bleaker. South Africa has consistently acted in a manner contrary to the interests of the African Group, the ACP Group and the LDCs, and instead of supporting these groupings has actively pursued its own agenda to their detriment in WTO negotiations.

As Mzukisi Qobo concludes that the moral sentiment of uplifting Africa was easily shipwrecked by the narrow pursuit of economic self-interest in the case of the negotiations for the SA-EU Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement (2006 : 148), so too have South Africa's noble notions of representing the African continent in WTO negotiations been shipwrecked by the possibilities of the opening up of markets to South African goods. Particularly the African market, which South Africa is strategically poised to exploit.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study has utilised the behavioural approach of middle power theory to investigate South Africa's role at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in order to ascertain whether or not the country has been brokering African interests within the multilateral trading regime embodied by the WTO. This chapter will revisit the findings generated in each of the preceding chapters, before examining aspects which require further research. The chapter will then proceed to discuss South Africa's possible future role in the WTO, based on the findings of this study.

Chapter 2 attempted to provide a comprehensive review of middle power theory and the two dominant approaches utilised to identify and analyse middle powers in the international system; the aggregate and the behavioural approach. The aggregate approach, it was argued, proved useful in terms of identifying middle powers in the international system on the basis of empirical criteria such as Gross Domestic Product, population size, geographical attributes and relative military prowess, yet proved of limited use for understanding the behaviour of middle powers within the international system. The behavioural approach, on the other hand, whilst more obfuscated in terms of identifying middle powers, proved more useful in terms of understanding the behaviour of middle powers and in terms of generating relative predictive capability for middle power behaviour.

First, based on the criteria of middlepowermanship constructed and employing a behavioural approach, it was argued that if states have through their foreign policy choices at the multilateral level demonstrated the capability and the willingness to act as middle powers, have acted as middle powers through the process of creating distinct niches for themselves within the international system, and have been recognised as middle powers by other actors in the international system, and particularly the policy

niches which middle powers have created for themselves have been recognised, then such states can be classified as middle powers. Second, it was argued that if middle powers fulfil all of the above criteria and have invested considerable resources and diplomatic effort in constructing their niches within the international system, it could then be expected that middle powers would act in a consistent manner in their engagements at the multilateral level across a range of multilateral institutions and fora. This consistency in the behaviour of middle powers at the multilateral level is what Evans and Grant (1995 : 347), and later Ravenhill (1998 : 313), termed “credibility”.

Based on this understanding of middlepowermanship the argument was advanced that if it could be shown that South Africa fulfilled the criteria of middlepowermanship (capability, willingness, acting as a middle power and recognition) then it could be expected that South Africa would act in a manner consistent with the niche which it had created for itself and which had contributed to its establishment and recognition as a middle power in the international system.

Chapter 3 proceeded first to establish that South Africa indeed met the requirements of a middle power as set out in Chapter 2, and then continued to show how since 1994, but particularly under the Presidency of Thabo Mbeki, South Africa has consciously and actively created a niche for itself as “the voice of Africa” in international relations. This is to say, South Africa deliberately portrayed itself as being representative of Southern interests, but particularly of African interests, within the international system. This positioning of South Africa as a Southern state campaigning for the interests of other African states can be witnessed particularly at the multilateral level, where South Africa has successfully portrayed itself, and broadly been recognised by other states (although less so by other African states) as representative of the interests of the African continent.

Chapter 3 then proceeded to investigate whether or not South African policy choices were in fact consistent with the niche which the country had created for itself in international relations. It was found that at the level of established multilateral institutions South Africa has acted as the “voice of Africa”, and has advocated and supported the

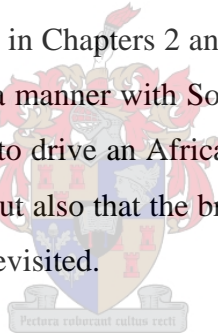
interests of the African continent in fora such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the G8. Indeed, at the multilateral level South Africa has proven to be instrumental in the propogation of the African Renaissance and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. South African officials were furthermore found to have actively portrayed South Africa as a champion of African interests, and indeed positioned South Africa as the quintessential go-between for the North and the South at almost any level of multilateral engagement. Whilst inconsistencies in South African middlepowermanship could be found in the cases of the NPT renewal process, the Nigerian crisis and the SA-EU Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement, these inconsistencies were found to have occurred early in the process of South Africa's re-integration into the global political economy. Indeed, early policy vacillations and incongruities were seemingly replaced by a more principled middle power approach which proved consistent, reliable, and to a degree predictable. Based on these findings it was postulated that if South Africa has acted as a consistent middle power in terms of its niche-building activities it could be expected that South African engagement at the WTO would not prove to be significantly different compared to other multilateral institutions.

Chapter 4 proceeded to investigate South Africa's engagement at the WTO since joining in 1994, and focused particularly on South African behaviour throughout the Doha Round of trade negotiations, also known as the Doha Development Agenda. The focus on South African policy choices during the Doha Round was of particular significance, as this round of trade negotiations was since its inception intended to be a "development" round in which implementation issues stemming from the Uruguay Round and in particular the concerns of developing countries could be addressed. Indeed, the Doha Round was intended specifically to promote development in developing countries. Thus this round of trade negotiations was of importance to developing countries, and African countries in particular, and this made the analysis of South African engagements throughout the round relevant to the research question.

The findings generated in Chapter 4 reveal that whilst publicly South African policy-makers portrayed South Africa in accordance with its stated niche, behind closed doors South African trade officials repeatedly and consistently sidelined their African

counterparts, enacted policies which were directly counter to those of other African states, and indeed served to undermine African solidarity within the WTO. South Africa even took a somewhat paternalistic stance towards the other African members of the WTO, and attempted to either bypass or override African interests in favour of its own perceived direct interest. Therefore, whilst publicly proclaiming to uphold a multilateral trade policy driven primarily by Southern and African interests, South Africa could time and again be seen to be pursuing a narrowly defined self-interested multilateral trade agenda which more often than not, indeed overwhelmingly, is directly contrary to the interests of other African members at the WTO.

This means that South African middlepowermanship at the WTO is not consistent with South Africa's middle power behaviour at other multilateral organisations or with the niche which South Africa has created for itself in international relations. This not only means that the assumption generated in Chapters 2 and 3, that South African engagement at the WTO would be consistent in a manner with South African engagement elsewhere, and that South Africa was expected to drive an Africanist trade agenda in solidarity with other African states, was incorrect, but also that the broader theoretical framework within which this study is located must be revisited.



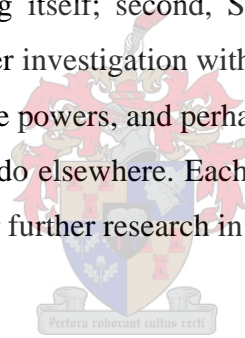
5.2 Prospects for Further Research

Middle power theory, as employed in this study, proved effective in terms of identifying middle powers and in terms of understanding how middle powers operate at the global level to increase their limited power in the international system. Using middle power theory South Africa could be identified as a middle power, after which South African use of multilateralism in the international system since 1994 could be located and understood as a means for the country to maximise the benefits of the use of its limited resources in the international system. Indeed, by portraying itself as the voice of the African continent in international affairs South Africa was able to enlarge its stature and prestige in international relations well beyond what its limited resource base would normally have allowed. So as to operationalise this middle power strategy, South Africa created a

recognised niche for itself as the voice of Africa at international fora, and this allowed South African officials to enhance South Africa's importance within the international system.

Based on this understanding of South African middlepowermanship it was postulated that South Africa's engagements at the WTO would be similar in nature to South Africa's multilateral engagements elsewhere, and that South Africa would be found to be promoting, or at the very least not acting in a manner contrary to, African interests. Yet this was not found to be the case. The question which therefore remains to be answered is why this is so.

Three primary causes can be identified here, and these are areas of interest which need to be further investigated in the future. First, the fault could lie with middle power theory and the concept of niche-building itself; second, South African middlepowermanship may be unique, and requires further investigation with a focus on South Africa's attempts at niche-building; and third, middle powers, and perhaps all states for that matter, may act differently at the WTO than they do elsewhere. Each of these three areas will briefly be discussed below, and prospects for further research in each will be investigated.



5.2.1 Middle Power Theory and Niche-Building Diplomacy

The middle power approach initially appears useful for identifying states which are neither great powers nor small and relatively powerless players in the international system, and for gaining insight into the contributions such states can and do make in the international system with respect to global governance. Middle power theory also generates a useful understanding of how all states interact with one another and fit into a general hierarchy of power and capability within the global political economy. Indeed, fusing, but not confusing, the middle power approach with an understanding of world systems theory, whereby states are envisioned as belonging to a hierarchy of power and interaction characterised by a core, a semi-periphery and a periphery, provides valuable insight into the manner in which states interact at the global level and the manner in

which medium-sized states attempt to maximise the benefits of potential outcomes of interactions at the multilateral level.

Yet the middle power approach appears to remain limited to generating retrospective insight, and its predictive capacity is limited. The adapted middle power approach generated in this study, and the inclusion of the notion of “credibility”, that middle powers should be expected to act in a consistent manner once they have established themselves so as not to lose credibility with other states and thereby weaken the value of their middle power status, appears to hold both greater value in terms of generating an understanding of how middle powers operate and why they make the policy choices they do, and in terms of generating predictive capability. Whilst this approach appeared to generate consistent results when applied to certain multilateral environments in the case of South Africa, however, it did not generate consistent results in others.

This would seem to confirm the argument advanced by Henrikson, who writes that middle powers simply are not reliable, and that sometimes “they simply want to be there.” (1997 : 55) Middle powers therefore, it could be argued, strategically employ middlepowermanship to generate desired policy outcomes which are of benefit to themselves, and that sometimes this can be consistent with certain publicly stated policies and objectives, and at other times not. South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sue van der Merwe, for example, stated in June 2006 that South Africa’s foreign policy was guided by the vision of a better South Africa, in a better Africa, in a better world. (2006 : 3) Van der Merwe continued to claim that South Africa’s objectives included placing Africa at the centre of the global development discourse, including the Doha Development Agenda. (2006 : 14) Finally, van der Merwe expressed regret at the limited outcomes of the 60th Session of the United Nations. “The outcomes of the Summit were a huge disappointment to us because the core developmental issues that we are concerned about were sacrificed as a result of narrow self-interest.” (Van der Merwe, 2006 : 2) Yet this study has revealed that whilst South African middlepowermanship has been guided by an Africanist agenda at times, it has also been guided by such narrow self-interest in the field of trade negotiations.

Middle powers therefore cannot be conceived of as selfless benevolent actors in the international system. Similarly, middle powers appear not to be consistent actors in international relations, acting in a consistent manner only as and when it suits their perceived state interest. As George Washington once put it: “There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favours from nation to nation.” (in Jawara and Kwa, 2003 : 148)

The current understanding of middle powers in international relations is of too limited a nature to generate accurate insight into how middle powers operate, or why they choose to operate in the manner they do. Furthermore, the predictive capability of the middle power approach is too low to be of true value in international relations discourse. The middle power approach needs to be revisited and investigated more thoroughly. Whilst the study of middle powers conducted by Cooper, Higgot and Nossal (1994) and Cooper (1997) provided a comparative basis for a greater understanding of middle powers, the analyses were limited primarily to the study of Australia and Canada as middle powers in the international system in the immediate post-Cold War era.

Similarly, Robert Cox’s writings on middlepowermanship are limited primarily to a conceptualisation of middle powers in the Cold-War and immediate post-Cold War era, and remain bound to Cox’s understanding of multilateralism at the time. Most if not all analyses of middlepowermanship since that time have been based on the writings of Cooper, Higgot, Nossal and Cox. Thus, the theoretical foundations upon which the middle power approach is based need to be revisited. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of middle powers in the contemporary era, including both middle powers in the developed and the developing world, needs to be conducted if the middle power concept is to be of value.

Additionally, whilst the concept of niche-building diplomacy is utilised widely by scholars writing on middle powers, and middle powers are recognised as having established niches in the fields of peacekeeping, conflict prevention, mediation, agricultural negotiation, trade liberalisation, the advancement of Southern interests in

multilateral fora or as bridge-builders between the global North and South, or in the case of South Africa as the “voice of Africa”, the theoretical underpinnings of the niche-building concept are relatively weak. Further research into the concept of niche-building is required to generate a greater understanding of how niches are constructed in the international system, of how and why middle powers make use of these niches, and of what consequence, if any, these niches are to the multilateral engagements of middle powers.

5.2.2 South African Middlepowermanship

Whilst the middle power approach itself requires greater investigation, South Africa’s role as a middle power also requires further academic analysis. South Africa appears to fulfil all of the requirements of a middle power, no matter which specific criteria are utilised under the broader rubric of the middle power approach. South Africa also appears to have established itself both as an African middle power and as “the voice of Africa” within the international system. Thus South Africa has established itself as a magnet for any nation interested in the African continent, and has simultaneously identified a common destiny for itself and the rest of the continent through the rhetoric of the African Renaissance. (Bischoff, 2003 : 185; 191)

Yet South African middlepowermanship has proven to be inconsistent, indeed uncoordinated and ad hoc. It would appear as though whilst publicly South African officials employ middle power rhetoric about the African Renaissance and African solidarity, when push comes to shove South African officials abandon notions of an African reawakening in favour of short-term narrowly defined state interests. This study has alluded to South Africa’s role at the United Nations, at successive G8 Summits and at the Non-Aligned Movement, among others, but has focused more specifically on South Africa as a middle power at the WTO. Further research is required on South Africa as a middle power, particularly in relation to the niche which it has created for itself as “the voice of Africa” and not just as a generic middle power, at other institutions of global governance. Such research would reveal whether South Africa is indeed an inconsistent

middle power (perhaps even whether the notion of the “credibility” of middle powers itself is of limited use), or whether the WTO is the sole case of inconsistency in South African middlepowermanship, beyond the early examples provided in Chapter 3.

5.2.3 Middle Powers at the World Trade Organisation

If it can be found that South African engagement at the WTO is significantly different from South African behaviour at any other multilateral institution, and indeed South African middlepowermanship is highly consistent across the board save for at the WTO, then middle powers at the WTO require further investigation. Such research is required to establish whether South Africa can be considered a unique case of a middle power consciously damaging its credibility in the international system, or whether other middle powers engage in similar behaviour. As Donna Lee writes, countries such as South Africa might have displayed more activism in the WTO in recent years, but the extent to which they can influence the major powers at the WTO rather than simply forcing a collapse of talks has as much to do with the hegemony of neo-liberalism as it does with the ability to form and sustain alliances and work cooperatively. (Lee, 2006 : 55) Thus the neo-liberalist form of trade liberalisation being advanced by the WTO may in fact directly affect the manner in which states operate at the WTO, but not at other fora such as, for example, the United Nations or the Non-Aligned Movement.

Whilst further research is required so that more conclusive insight can be generated on the matter, this study would postulate that South Africa is indeed a unique case among middle powers at the WTO. Middle powers which have similarly established themselves as leading developing states at the WTO and as champions of the poor in multilateral trade negotiations appear to have proven more consistent in their negotiating positions at successive WTO talks. Particularly India and Brazil come to mind here, both of which have proven to be important articulators of developing country interests and leaders of the developing world in WTO negotiations. Indeed, India proved critical to the promotion of developing country interests, and African interests in particular, at the Doha Ministerial. (Jawara and Kwa, 2003) South Africa’s increasing isolation from India and

Brazil, its partners of vital importance in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum and the G20+, since the Cancún Ministerial of 2003 appear to support the notion that South African behaviour at the WTO is unique among middle powers. Nonetheless, further investigation is required before such postulations can become empirical observations.

5.3 South Africa's Future at the World Trade Organisation

This study has investigated South Africa's credentials and role as a middle power in the international system before focusing more specifically on South Africa's middle power role at the WTO since joining the organisation in 1994. The study revealed a discrepancy between South Africa's middle power role across a range of multilateral institutions and South Africa's role at the WTO. Specifically, this study has found that South Africa does not act in a manner commensurate with the middle power niche as "the voice of Africa" which South African policy-makers have consciously and actively created for the country in the international system and at the WTO.

This particular inconsistency has highlighted the need for further research to be conducted in the three areas mentioned above; namely (1) middle power theory generally and the concept of niche-building diplomacy more specifically, (2) South Africa's role as a middle power in the international system, and (3) the role and behaviour of middle powers at the WTO specifically. The insights into South African middlepowermanship and South Africa's past behaviour at the WTO generated by this study, however, not only reveal the need for further research, but also generate insight into South Africa's possible future role at the WTO.

South Africa's accession to the WTO came at a time when the international community welcomed the country back into the international system fuelled by expectations that South Africa would come to play a significant role in the future of the African continent. Indeed, as the economic and political giant of the continent, South Africa was expected to exercise critical influence over other African states, and to act as bridge-builder between the North and the South. South African policy-makers quickly came to relish the prestige

which increasingly came to be placed upon the country, and having joined a plethora of multilateral institutions South Africa soon came to play an increasingly important leadership role within these institutions and the international system as a whole. Under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki South Africa also developed a more activist Southern identity, and came to be regarded as an advocate broadly for the interests of developing countries and specifically for the interests of the African continent. Over the course of little more than a decade South Africa had successfully engineered a transition from being regarded as an international pariah to becoming recognised as *the* indispensable African powerhouse.

Yet whilst consistency in South African middlepowermanship can broadly be identified, South African engagement at the WTO has proven to be consistent to the degree that South African trade officials time and again neglected the interests of their African negotiating partners, and pursued a narrowly defined self-interested multilateral trade agenda, repeatedly and to the detriment of the other African members of the WTO. South African officials have increasingly found themselves isolated within the Africa Group, the G20+ and the IBSA grouping. Whilst South Africa found itself invited to attend prestigious green room meetings and mini-ministerial meetings between the Seattle and Cancún Ministerial Conferences and being viewed as a critical negotiating partner by the United States and the European Union in particular, South Africa's failure to deliver to both other African states and other developing countries in WTO negotiations, particularly at the Cancún Ministerial meeting, as well as its tactics of attempting to appease members of the Quad and abandon its Southern negotiating partners, has left the country isolated within the WTO.

South Africa was pointedly not invited to attend mini-ministerial meetings following the collapse of Cancún, and was quickly replaced at such meetings by Botswana. South Africa has also become increasingly isolated in developing country bargaining coalitions, and appears to carry little weight in the Africa Group, the Cairns Group and the G20+, the three negotiating groups in which it holds membership. Therefore South African multilateral trade policy appears not to have achieved its stated objective of positively

affecting the multilateral trading regime in favour of developing countries or African countries in particular. South Africa has not acted as the bridge-builder between North and South which it proclaimed to be. Rather, it has come to be seen as an ineffectual middle power by the North, and as a mouthpiece of developed states and their trade interests by the South. South Africa's future role as a middle power in the WTO therefore appears to be in question.

Within the Africa Group South Africa's role is similarly likely to remain marginal. As Soko and Qobo argue, South Africa has proven that its trade interests have more commonality with those of the developed world than the developing world, and South Africa is more likely to find common ground with other emerging industrial economies than with the underdeveloped economies of Africa. Yet should South Africa continue to find commonality with more developed states, warn Soko and Qobo, continuing developments in the WTO would most likely serve to drive a wedge between South Africa and the Africa Group within the WTO system. (2003 : 53)

Recent developments in South Africa's multilateral trade policy outside of the WTO already appear to indicate that South Africa is becoming increasingly isolated from the remainder of the African continent and its interests. The Preferential Trade Agreement signed between the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and MERCOSUR, South America's largest trading bloc, in December 2004 which entered into operation in January 2006, was viewed to entail minimal benefits for SACU. Indeed, only South Africa, with its advanced industrial base, was considered to be in a position to benefit from the preferential agreement. (Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, 2005[a] : 3)

South Africa's role in the WTO to date has been opportunistic and defined by self-interest. The country has attempted to court both the developed and the developing world, positioning itself as the quintessential go-between for the North and the South. Yet this policy appears to have backfired, and left South Africa isolated within the WTO system, bypassed both by the developed and the developing world in ongoing multilateral trade

negotiations. John Holmes once wrote demurringly of Canada's roles in the world as peacekeeper and mediator that "Ours is not a divine mission to mediate, and the less that far too specific verb is used the better." (in Henrikson, 1997 ; 49) Perhaps one day Thabo Mbeki, reflecting on South Africa's role at the WTO, will write that "Ours is not a divine mission to act in the interests of the African continent, and the less that far too specific connotation is used the better." This is because, although acting as *the African middle power* within the international system, South Africa has acted as *the African muddled power* at the WTO.¹



¹ The term 'muddled power' was coined by Peter Vale and was used by Janis van der Westhuizen (1998) and Maxi Schoeman (2000).

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