Ideas within a context of power: the African group in an evolving UNCTAD

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the diplomatic strategies of African states within an evolving United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It proposes that the prominence of certain ideas about economic development rises and falls not so much as a result of the nature of the ideas themselves, but as a result of opportunities made and unmade by the world economy. The world economy in turn changes the work mandates of international economic organisations like UNCTAD. The trajectory of African diplomatic strategies is important because it calls into question recent literature in international relations theory focusing almost exclusively on the experiences of industrialised states. In the case of African ideas in UNCTAD, underlying variables associated with the world economy destroyed the remnants of the Group of 77 coalition which had served as an agent for African representatives in UNCTAD. African diplomats have tried to realise whatever objectives they can in the changed circumstances without necessarily changing their ideas about development.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most immediate and profound influences that African states exerted in international organisations (IOs) at independence was ideological, and became associated with the Group of 77 (G77) coalition. From the 1960s through the 1970s the coalition took a moral 'high ground' against the imperialism of the West (Furedi 1977). With an ideology based on notions of exploitation of poorer countries by wealthier ones, and unequal exchange between rich and poor in the face of market forces, the G77 argued for a 'New International Economic Order' (NIEO), which would restructure the entire trading

system for the betterment of the coalition. The end of the radical-reformist G77 agenda curtailed Africans' ability to participate in the continuing ideological discourse on development taking place in IOs.

The lack of success of this project and African states' coterminous economic, political and intellectual marginalisation calls into question recent literature in international relations theory on ideas and international institutions that posits *ideas* themselves to be causal variables within international institutions (Goldstein & Keohane 1993). First of all, the problem that African states are reified at the international level by conventions on state-sovereignty and, to use Rothchild and Chazan's (1988) term, 'precariously balanced' with society makes state-based international institutions poor conduits for the diffusion of ideas into or out of African societies. A second problem exists with this literature's incomplete understanding of international organisations. IOs have nation-states as members yet facilitate international capitalism. Hence, they comprise two frequently antagonistic social systems (Groom 1978; Ansari 1986; Murphy 1994). Africans lost ideological influence in IOs both for reasons connected to the 'precariously balanced' nation-state and for reasons connected to the structure of the world market. As the structure of the world market changed, the context within which all states make decisions in international space changed. That is, the ideas of individual African representatives to IOs did not change as much as the context changed, the broader G77 coalition had little to keep it together, and Africans lost their input into any broader coalition.

To get at the issue of African states' participation in international organisations, this article will consider the case of the African group of states in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). While there is certainly not one 'African' set of ideas, the African group does represent a significant, negotiated effort to advance a set of African interests within the United Nations system and broader diplomatic circles. The group sought to articulate broad African goals and strategies for development *vis-a-vis* the international trading system even when individual states pursued diverse development approaches themselves.

This article proceeds in three sections. The first considers African states in international and domestic space, and how conceptions of states alter our understanding of the role of ideas in international space. The second section initially seeks to establish the input of African ideas into the G77 coalition in UNCTAD. The summary of input demonstrates that competing ideas about development have existed

across time. The persuasiveness of an idea or the hegemonic ideology of the institution are not enough to explain which ones 'carried the day' at a particular moment. The section then goes on to consider the broader context within which the G77 ideological coalition rose and fell. When the coalition disbanded, African input into the discourse on development was lost, even if it had not been definitive before. The third section concludes that in this example African states did not lose influence at the international level because certain ideas carried the day, but because elements of both the nation state system and international capitalism altered the context within which states make decisions.

whose ideas matter in international space?

This article does not seek to refute completely the notion that 'ideas matter'. Rather, it seeks to explain why certain ideas about development have been persuasive at certain times, and to consider how the holders of these ideas connect to the structure of power at a given time. The contribution of African representatives to UNCTAD makes a particularly good case study of the influence of ideas about development over time because African representatives were never among the most powerful members of either the organisation or the wider international community. Nonetheless, their contributions did carry weight at times. As part of the broader G77 coalition, Africans participated in formulating an agenda that challenged the very norms and principles underpinning the liberal trading regime (Krasner 1985).

Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 3) argue that the content of ideas themselves makes them persuasive. For them, ideas matter the most when the principled or causal beliefs they embody provide road maps that clarify actors' goals or ends-means relationships, when they affect the outcomes of strategic situations in which there is no unique equilibrium, and when they become embedded in political institutions. If this is the case, ideas associated with the radical-reformist G77 agenda would have been influential because they were persuasive 'road maps' that clarified actors' goals and became embedded in political institutions. Studies of UNCTAD's early years, however, have argued that even when the coalition's ideology was embedded in the UNCTAD secretariat, individuals from the West opposed to this ideology were only marginally less influential in UNCTAD than in other organisations like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Cox & Jacobson 1973: 423).

Another approach to the study of ideas considers them to be held in epistemic communities of individuals, i.e. professionals who share normative and causal beliefs, notions of validity, and a common policy enterprise (E. Haas 1990; Adler & Haas 1992; P. Haas 1992; Drake & Nicolaidis 1992). In a time of uncertainty, policymakers turn to these networks for their expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain. Since the ideas which carry the day are generated within the network, the epistemic communities approach goes even further than Goldstein and Keohane in seeking to find nonsystemic origins for state interests. The approach overtly seeks to find a dynamic for persistent cooperation *independent* of the distribution of international power, wherein the epistemic community provides meaning to structural changes and alternative strategies to frame political and economic reality.

The epistemic communities approach is important for the light it sheds on networks of policy professionals transcending individual international organisations. Indeed, policymakers do turn to networks of professionals and not necessarily one organisation over another for advice in times of uncertainty. However, the network that carries the day, or shapes the meaning of structural change, is not so easily divorced from its connection to structural power because its very configuration depends on it. In many cases, a direct link exists from a material source of funding to policymakers in a given network. Epistemic communities not sharing the normative or causal beliefs of the dominant states certainly exist, yet are generally not well funded. Thus, they have little opportunity to shape economic or political meaning (unless they find alternative funding) however expert or competent they may be.

Unlike Goldstein and Keohane's and the epistemic communities approach's disarticulation of ideas from structural power, the Italian school of international relations theory firmly attaches the two (Augelli & Murphy 1988; Gill 1990; Gill 1991; Cox 1977; Cox 1991).[1] The Italian school draws on Gramsci's conception of hegemony, i.e. a relation between social classes, in which one class fraction takes a leading role by gaining the active consent of other classes through ideology (Gill 1990: 42). Transferring Gramsci's idea to the international system, writers in the Italian school argue that a state is hegemonic in the international system when it founds and protects a universal world order characterised by popularly conceived common interests. Thus hegemony entails a globally-conceived civil society, i.e. a mode of production which brings about links among social classes of

the countries encompassed by it. It is in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal (or national) hegemony of the dominant social class (Gill 1990: 47; Cox 1991: 61). When Gill (1990: 50–51) considers the role of ideas in international relations he concludes:

In the current historical conjuncture the tensions involved in moving towards a transnational hegemony can be related to the international spread of 'monetarist' and liberal free-market ideas, and the way they interact and conflict with productive interests and with nationalist and mercantilist modes of thought. In so far as these 'monetarist-liberal' ideas spread in the advanced capitalist countries, it can be argued that the structural power of internationally mobile capital, particularly financial capital, notably international banks, will tend to increase. Economic policies will come to reflect an international bankers' view of the 'correct' mix.

International institutions play an important role in hegemony thus conceived; they express universal norms, embody rules, and ideologically legitimate the hegemonic order. As products of hegemony, they co-opt both elites from peripheral countries and also counter-hegemonic ideas. The co-optation takes place on a number of levels. On one level, talented individuals employed in international institutions, even those who hope to change the status quo, are at best only able to transfer some elements of their agendas to the peripheries. To be effective, these agendas must be in the interests of established local powers, severely limiting their range of possibilities. On another level, institutions co-opt ideas that challenge the world economy by transforming ideas to make them consistent with hegemonic doctrines. Finally, (and related to the first two) even if third world radicals were able to control particular international institutions, such control would not benefit the radicals' cause because these individuals would have to be connected with a popular domestic political base. Cox (1991: 64) considers any such connection to be inadequate at present.

While these observations are insightful, this article rejects the Italian school's element of 'consent' and favours instead a more overtly coercive characterisation of hegemony. The Italian school's problem is that merely demonstrating the existence of a hegemonic ideology and lack of an alternative does not demonstrate either the ideology's acceptance, or 'consent'. Rather, this particular ideological constellation more appropriately raises questions such as those posed by Callaghy and Ravenhill (1994: 527) in reference to structural adjustment ideology's influence in Africa: 'influence with who? technocrats? rulers? government officials? politicians? leaders of groups in civil society? or the mass electorate under democratic conditions?'.

Recent work on international organisations posits that it is not enough to examine only what occurs within the international and domestic spheres, but that it is also necessary to examine what occurs across the domestic-international divide (Krause & Knight 1995: 4). In looking across the domestic-international divide, and particularly in looking at the transmission and role of ideas as causal variables, theory must take into consideration a variety of state structures. States are the members of IOs and articulate policies within them. Nonetheless, politics, power and control are not necessarily coterminous with the state in Africa (Deng 1984; Chazan 1988: 123; Deng, Kimaro, Lyons, Rothchild & Zartman 1996). Given 'weaker' state structures, certain societal elements such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) based either in the North or the South could more readily enter, or exit, international space beyond the confines of the state.

African states' relations to African societies differ between African states and from state-society relations in the West. These differences affect how ideas are transmitted, and which ideas are persuasive to African societies. Callaghy (1984) conceives of African states competing with other societal organisations for power and compliance. Rothchild (1984) depicts an overall lack of acceptance of organising rules governing state-society relations, resulting in the state's 'fragility'. Sandbrook (1985) points to major ethnic and religious schisms which pose a serious obstacle to capitalist development. Azarya (1988) and Chazan (1988) detail patterns of simultaneous incorporation and disengagement wherein incorporation refers to the state's attractiveness to societal groups as a means of resource allocation, and disengagement refers to societal groups' withdrawal from the state as a hedge against its instability and resource base. The vast differences between states' capacities to organise power and institutionalise authority prompted Jackson's (1990) characterisation of certain states as 'quasi-states': territorial jurisdictions supported primarily from above by international law and material aid and more relevant in the international arena than within their own territorial borders. Clapham (1996) likewise argues that international conventions designed to uphold state sovereignty have been appropriated and subverted by rulers to enhance their domestic control while guerrilla insurgencies undermine these same rulers' regimes.

Taken together, this body of literature on the nature of African states makes it difficult to argue that state-based international institutions would be good conduits for the diffusion of ideas into or out of African societies. What the history of African ideas in UNCTAD shows is that

the actors with the ability to finance a given policy area are the actors whose ideas carry the day in certain circumstances of grossly asymmetrical power relations. In other circumstances, actors who can use an idea to gain an advantage (e.g. unify a coalition, gain development monies, etc.) have a better chance of having their ideas embodied in policies. Therefore, the following case shows that the answer to Goldstein and Keohane's question 'do ideas matter?' actually runs along a continuum, with the normative power of ideas having causal force at one end, and economic compulsion imposing ideas at the other. African representatives did not call for the end of the radical-reformist agenda of the G77. Nonetheless, the agenda ended.

IDEAS AND STRUCTURAL POWER: AFRICAN STATES IN UNCTAD, 1964–1994

To understand why certain ideas about development have been persuasive at certain times and to place these ideas in their contexts, it is first necessary to establish the trajectory of African contributions to the G77 in UNCTAD over the coalition's history. The G77 and UNCTAD have a common beginning. The African, Asian and Latin American blocs joined forces at the first conference after which member states established an UNCTAD secretariat in Geneva. During UNCTAD's first two decades a somewhat unified development ideology emerged among the G77. It was based on notions of exploitation of poorer countries by wealthier ones, and unequal exchange between rich and poor in the face of market forces. UNCTAD aspired to become an alternative to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that would restructure the international trading order and facilitate economic development in poor countries. UNCTAD's ideology informed all aspects of its programmes, conference agendas, and personnel appointments even when members of the G77 coalition disagreed among themselves. The upshot of this development ideology and UNCTAD's one-nation, one-vote system was a politicisation of economic relations between North and South in the organisation.

The key ideological feature which cemented a strikingly heterogeneous institutional alliance was not a point of theory upon which all *agreed*, but rather one upon which all agreed *not* to agree. The third world institutional alliance was grounded in developing countries' refusal from the start to accept a universal model of development; thus, it transcended even Prebisch's (the first secretary general of UNCTAD)

T A B L E 1

Summary of Examples of African Input to G77

Conference Location Year	Ideas of Import to Africans	Ideas of Import to G77[a]	Conference Results[b]	Reasons Given for Resolution of Differences[c]
First Geneva 1964	GSP, 'African 18' (mostly francophone countries) sought GSP but without abolishing preferences they received under EEC agreements	GSP and Services	Passage abolishing 'African 18' preferences was removed	African 18 had refused to sponsor programme in first committee negotiations without removal of clause. Their support was needed to move programme.
Second New Delhi 1968	Africans wanted a delegation to take negotiating issues to developed countries before the conference so they would arrive 'ready to bargain'. African group also sought processed agricultural goods inclusion in GSP. They also sought to discourage production of synthetics competing with natural products African countries export.	Latin American group opposed the delegation to take Algiers Charter to developing countries before the conference. They sought to press for preferences on manufactured goods in GSP. Synthetics statement included in G77 Algiers Charter.	Delegation prior to the conference went ahead. GSP implemented in some countries, although not uniform results as each trading block implemented its own, on its own schedule. For example, the EEC implemented its GSP in 1971 and the US in 1975. No action on synthetics.	Latins gave in to mission 'in deference' to views of Africans and Asians. GSP issues not resolved uniformly.
Third Santiago 1972	Africans sought special status, particularly with respect to new 'least developed country' (LDC) classification of the UN. In addition, they sought a special industrialisation and technical cooperation fund in conjunction with GSP. Finally, some African states sought to include the economic effects of the closure of the Suez Canal in UNCTAD's domain.	Developing, yet non-LDC states, fear that LDC classification would divert aid from themselves. World monetary crisis was on every bloc's agenda. G77 supported efforts of UN and OAU to reopen canal.	Resolution on LDCs passed. Fund not established. Delegates divided on issue of whether or not Suez fell within UNCTAD's mandate.	Africans refused to proceed on any agenda item until an agreement on LDCs was reached. The resolution passed, albeit subject to interpretation. Technical cooperation fund was not a priority. Suez issue was not resolved as various states took various sides. Zaire, e.g. sided with OECD that it was outside UNCTAD's mandate.

Fourth Nairobi 1976	Africans were critical of Common Fund because it was not a truly 'revolutionary' programme, and because it relied on buffer stocks which are not suited to African climates. They sought to include coffee in negotiations to expand their world quota.	G77 sought an Integrated Programme for Commodities with a US $6 billion Common Fund to deal with commodity supplies, pricing, etc. Buffer stocks would be used to stabilise prices. Latins insisted coffee be kept in International Coffee Association.	Common Fund was established at UNCTAD IV, but only US $156 million raised. Most of the money came from the Philippines, India, Indonesia and some from Norway. The agreement was ambiguously worded and lacked unmitigated acceptance of Common Fund.	Africans accepted Common Fund with reluctance and misgivings. Commodity price boom made developed countries insecure about sources of commodities, and hence, more amenable to the plan.
Fifth Manila 1979	Africans sought a 'second window' of the Common Fund which would work for earnings stabilisation, diversification, productivity improvements and other aspects of commodity trade not covered by the original.	G77 continued to work for the Integrated Programme for Commodities and the Common Fund.	US $750 million raised for Fund. US $400 million went to first window buffer stock programme, and US $350 million to 'second window'.	Africans would only support Common Fund if it included 'second window'.
Sixth Belgrade 1983	Africans object to content and ideology of structural adjustment lending	G77 continued to seek Common Fund, stabilisation of commodity markets, link between SDR creation and development finance. The G77 argued that the World Bank should revise structural adjustment conditions.	Limited Conference results.	Full agreement could not be reached
Seventh Geneva 1987	Africans argued for inclusion of textiles and agriculture in the GATT negotiations. They sought to keep framework for services in UNCTAD and not the GATT.	The G77 blamed the lack of growth placed on the West and criticised structural adjustment. However, no specific reference to New International Economic Order for the first time. Special mention for Africa in commodities area.	Conference not as confrontational as Belgrade. Final document acknowledged that debtor developing countries needed to pursue/intensify efforts to increase savings and investment, lower inflation and increase efficiency	No G77 universal strategy promoted for development. Conference agenda was limited to four items and produced a consolidated document, as opposed to a variety of separate resolutions that often had been previously adopted without the full support of industrial countries. Meetings were held in informal groups and not blocs.

T ABLE I (*cont.*)

Conference Location Year	Ideas of Import to Africans	Ideas of Import to G77[a]	Conference Results[b]	Reasons Given for Resolution of Differences[c]
Eighth Cartagena 1992	Africans did not seek institutional reform of UNCTAD. They continued to blame the West for economic problems. They argued that UNCTAD should strengthen, not weaken, its negotiating role.	Developed country representatives (exclusive of US) were invited to the session. The Tehran declaration was approved with the proviso that G77 should not interfere with Uruguay Round negotiations.	Group membership was not even listed in *Proceedings*. Conference positions were drawn from groups.	Africans agreed to additional reforms partly out of fear that UNCTAD would be disbanded entirely, and partly in deference to Boutros Ghali and Dadzie, themselves Africans. The Latin American delegation refused to sign Tehran declaration without GATT exception proviso.
Ninth Midrand 1996	Africans sought a reversal in declining trend of official development assistance. They also sought a reduction in the multilateral debt burden of African states.	G77 did not meet prior to the conference. The group met briefly during the conference and issued a short (2 page) statement.	UNCTAD to continue to be 'complementary' to the World Trade Organization.	Rival development strategy was not presented.

Sources: UNCTAD I: 'Niamey Resolution' as printed in Sauvant and Muller (1995); UNCTAD II: 'African Declaration of Algiers' ECA/OAU (1967); UNCTAD III: ECA/OAU preparatory documents in Sauvant and Muller; UNCTAD IV: Addis Ababa preparatory documents as printed in Sauvant and Muller (1995); UNCTAD V: Addis Ababa preparatory documents as printed in Sauvant and Muller (1995); UNCTAD VI: 'Memorandum of Libreville' in Sauvant and Muller (1995); UNCTAD VII: 'Addis Ababa Declaration' as printed in Sauvant and Muller (1995); UNCTAD VIII: 'Lusaka Declaration' African Ministers Responsible for Trade (1991); UNCTAD IX: 'Addis Ababa Declaration on UNCTAD IX' African Ministers Responsible for Trade (1996).
[a] Sources: G77 statements printed in Sauvant and Muller (1995), also printed in *Proceedings*.
[b] Sources: *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* (1964–97).
[c] Sources: UNCTAD I–III: *Proceedings*. UNCTAD IV (Ewusi conference doc.; Aziz memorandum; Corea 1992); UNCTAD V: Joshi (1980) UNCTAD VI: *Proceedings* 1983; UNCTAD VII: Boucher and Siebeck (1987) *Proceedings* 1989; UNCTAD VIII: Croft (1992); Interviews Geneva (1994); UNCTAD IX: *Proceedings* (1997).

philosophy. Third world governments argued that a country's economic system should reflect its cultural history. The only valid interpretation of a country's culture, according to this view, was a government's own (Murphy 1984: 40). Thus the operative principle was to maintain the world's cultural diversity as a value fostered by the global economic system. Economic principles such as 'free markets' promoting economic efficiency were not themselves universal values to be fostered.

The lack of a uniform development ideology is important, because in fostering *diversity*, the alliance had a built-in, prior moral justification for the inevitable disagreements that the members of the broad alliance would, and did, have. Rather than resolving differences, the preservation of cultural diversity provided a cooperative way to accept those differences. To put it another way, national economic and political ideologies did not threaten the alliance because moral principles justified the differences themselves. Even when countries were aware that real differences were less cultural than ideological, cooperating governments could invoke the 'right of states to chose their own development path' (Murphy 1984: 41).

African Contributions to the G77, 1964–1996

UNCTAD conferences are held every four years to direct the secretariat's work project. Prior to the main conference, each regional bloc of the G77 would meet to establish its priorities and objectives. Formerly, the G77 representatives met to develop a G77 position. The G77 did not keep records of its deliberations. Nonetheless, it is possible to compare the preparatory documents of the regional groups with the G77 platform prior to UNCTAD conferences. Table 1 details examples of African bloc input into the G77 coalition agenda throughout UNCTAD's history.

Many of UNCTAD's early proposals were for non-reciprocal tariff concessions, i.e. a Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). There was a broad degree of consensus among the G77 on the GSP issue, although divisions emerged over which items would be included or excluded, and whether or not pre-existing preferences would be taken into consideration. While the idea caught on, one universal GSP was never established. Some observers argued that developed countries did not so much accept the 'idea' of non-reciprocal concessions, as much as they feared the trading world would become segmented into blocs with a developed country core and satellite developing countries connected by

preferential access. A GSP would alleviate these groupings and so certain developed countries included them in their tariff schedules (Berger 1979).

Africans made other initiatives during the early years which were usually contained within the framework of the broader G77 agenda. For example, when the United Nations instituted a classification for least developed countries (LDCs), Africans successfully argued for a definition of this category that would include the greatest number of African states. Some African states sought (unsuccessfully) to use UNCTAD to leverage activity on the Suez issue despite the fact that the G77 was not unified on this issue. Taken together, the G77 negotiating process tended to result in the least common denominator of states' demands; hence, African ideas were incorporated into the broadest agenda even when they were not implemented.

Africans had argued for the creation of a special industrialisation and technical cooperation fund since the earliest conferences. When the G77 introduced plans for a Common Fund for commodities, Africans sought a 'second window' of the Common Fund which would seek to stabilise commodity earnings, encourage commodity diversification, and address other aspects not covered by the broader Integrated Programme for Commodities (IPC). On the related issue of coffee consultations associated with the IPC, Africans and Latin Americans disagreed. Latin Americans did not want coffee to be the subject of negotiations in UNCTAD, insisting that it only be discussed in the International Coffee Association. Africans sought to hold negotiations in UNCTAD where meetings would be open to all interested countries and where Africans could lobby in favour of greater quotas (Corea 1992: n. 43). Similar differences existed on the issue of buffer stocks in the IPC. West Africans argued that the mechanism of the buffer stock benefited consumers of primary commodities more than producers because the stocks decreased uncertainty of pricing, but did not guarantee high prices for producers. Since commodity storage costs associated with buffer stocks could be well beyond the capital resources of African countries, quota arrangements would be preferable for Africans (Ewusi 1976: 84).

When Africans and Latin Americans disagreed on many of the issues highlighted in Table 1, Africans were able to obtain concessions on some because they refused to support the broader agenda without inclusion. When Africans objected to the structure and content of structural adjustment loans in the 1980s, they were able to incorporate these criticisms into a broader G77 document which similarly criticised

the loans. While one set of criticisms did not 'carry the day', the coalition offered an outlet for expression of opposing views in the early years of the debt crisis.

Eventually the G77 ceased to advance a strategy on behalf of all of its members to change the structure of the world trading system. It ceased to issue declarations or even to meet prior to UNCTAD conferences. Once the G77 effectively disbanded, African proposals slid further from the conference agenda. For example, Africans did not seek institutional reforms at UNCTAD VIII, yet the institution was completely reformulated. At UNCTAD IX the African preparatory documents point to the declining trend of official development assistance and the need for debt forgiveness. These issues did not constitute Ministerial Roundtable themes, nor engender calls for action, albeit debt forgiveness has been discussed in other fora. The final outcome of UNCTAD IX emphasised the benefit of involving civil society in the work of the organisation. The conference documents promote competitiveness as an important new policy arena.

Taken together, the organisation experienced a great ideological shift, but not one explainable by persuasiveness of one idea over another, or 'consent' of the governed to either the 'old' or 'new' ideology. Rather, UNCTAD's bloc system broke down during these years due to changes in the structure of world politics and economics.

A SHIFTING CONTEXT FOR IDEAS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT IN UNCTAD

What factors set the context for the breakdown of the G77 coalition in UNCTAD? By the late 1970s, the OPEC states empowered by the oil shocks preferred the UN General Assembly in New York to UNCTAD as a forum for their political concerns. At the same time the G77 coalition had fanned out, creating loosely affiliated chapters in several cities and organisations. OECD states grew increasingly frustrated with UNCTAD and its ideology; and the rest of the G77 became bereft of a unifying ideology or favourable economic circumstances. Thus, UNCTAD began to decline in terms of prestige on the part of both developed and developing countries alike, since the institution grew less important to the coalition at the same time that the coalition grew increasingly strained.

The debt crisis exacerbated UNCTAD's decline. Although debt had initially revived the 'common front' of the South, since debtor-states shared the perspective that the situation was out of their control, it

failed to translate into any appreciable collective action on the part of developing states. Collective action failed due to the greatly diverging domestic causes for the crisis. To generalise, Latin American recipients used debt to finance additional export capacity, while African recipients did not; Latin American export volumes rose between 1977 and 1984 whereas they remained stagnant in Africa (Gordon 1994). The various strategies used by debtors to resolve their individual situations eventually exacerbated their differences. While the Latin American crisis threatened the international banking system in a more fundamental manner than the African one (because the sheer volume of the loans was greater, and the loans were due to private banks), the African crisis presented a greater threat to African states (because lower African GNPs relative to Latin American GNPs made debt service even more unmanageable).

Therefore, the results of the debt situation (as each state pursued its own strategy to deal with the crisis as necessary) translated into a new environment in UNCTAD. Tensions between regional blocs could no longer be papered over with rhetorical allegiance to dependency ideology or a 'common enemy' in the West, particularly when some states began to recover in the existing structure. Nonetheless, the overtly confrontational nature of 'North vs. South' relations persisted well into the early 1980s, since the G77 could at least agree to criticise the structural adjustment lending plans advanced by the Bretton Woods financial institutions.

In 1984 the Western countries (led by the US under the Reagan administration) established their own 'reflection group' to reconsider their attitude towards UNCTAD. The chief target of the US campaign was the director general of UNCTAD, Gamani Corea. A Sri Lankan national, Corea had assumed the UNCTAD helm in 1973. In a series of 'green papers' about UNCTAD reform, the US campaign argued that Corea had allowed the UNCTAD staff to become top-heavy with executives committed more to North-South confrontation than to fostering trade. Furthermore, the green papers objected to the committee structure of UNCTAD which the US felt was largely by-passed, and to UNCTAD's studies which the US felt were biased (BNA Daily Report, 29.8.1985).

When the end of Corea's tenure approached and the appointment of his successor was not resolved, Corea indicated privately to UN Secretary-General de Cuellar that he would be available to continue on a temporary contract pending appointment of a permanent successor. The US, however, flatly refused to accept this suggestion. On

19 December 1984, Alister McIntyre of Grenada was named 'Officer-in-Charge' of UNCTAD on a temporary and short-term appointment. McIntyre, the deputy secretary-general of UNCTAD since 1982 and previously head of its commodities division, had a reputation for being a pragmatic negotiator rather than a rhetorical spokesman. His appointment was not opposed by the US. In fact, McIntyre had been proposed as the leader of the interim government of Grenada following the US invasion of that island in 1983. Although he had first accepted the Grenada position, he eventually pleaded a diplomatic 'illness' and remained at UNCTAD.

McIntyre's view was that the 'overall macro-economic spin-off effects' (to use his term) of accelerated development in the South were not sufficient to win concessions from the North. Rather, both North and South had to recognise their divergent interests and demonstrate tangible economic gains for specific industrialised countries, e.g., from allowing manufactured goods from developing countries freer access to their markets, or from stabilising commodity prices. Therefore the South would have to 'face squarely the problem of what *quid pro quo* they could offer the North' (McIntyre 1984; Kaletsky 1985: 14). As part of the search for a *quid pro quo* UNCTAD must expand its activities beyond traditional areas and into new areas which could be offered: trade in services, direct investment, and the possibility of 'dialogue' on domestic economic policies with individual member countries.

Although the Uruguay Round had not commenced at this time, the US had already made liberalising trade in services and loosening restrictions on foreign direct investment top priorities. McIntyre and others at the UNCTAD secretariat hoped to seize on the American initiative and position UNCTAD as an organisation in this area. They believed that they were uniquely qualified to help developing countries prepare a reasoned response and turn the US desire for liberalisation into an effective bargaining counter. Therefore, while developed and developing countries may have retained differences in ideological approach, none could deny UNCTAD's historical experience and expertise in the fields of insurance and shipping services. The organisation could build in this area.

On the more immediate front, though, once in office McIntyre quietly removed several of UNCTAD's more anti-Western executives from front-line positions. Although he denied that the staff changes were made in response to repeated criticism from Washington that UNCTAD's management problems were deep-seated, he eventually 'reassigned' approximately thirty senior staff, prompting American

diplomats to remark that the moves resulted in a more balanced outlook in UNCTAD committees. McIntyre also headed-off potential anti-American disputes by derailing discussion of potentially explosive subjects. Eventually a Ghanaian diplomat, Kenneth Dadzie, became secretary-general. Since he was regarded by Western officials in Geneva as pro-Western, he was never popular with many third world delegates throughout his tenure (interviews, Geneva 1994). At a press conference in March 1986, he pledged that he would continue the management reforms begun by McIntyre and took a consciously non-ideological stance from the start (UNCTAD Bulletin 1986).

In sum, many states were frustrated with UNCTAD. The debt crisis propelled some developing countries to seek specific remedies not associated with group action in UNCTAD. The new ideas that McIntyre and later Dadzie introduced into the organisation did not spring from G77 initiatives. The new leadership was chosen because it was acceptable to the US government, and those persisting in contrary views left the secretariat either voluntarily or involuntarily. New ideas did not 'carry the day'. Rather, the secretariat remained divided between the 'old' and 'new' thinking. Moreover, certain delegations resident in Geneva (mostly African), yet not in the secretariat, remained committed to the old thinking.

At the same time that fundamental personnel changes were made in the embattled UNCTAD secretariat, problems arose in the GATT secretariat as well. The resolution of these problems would call for a dramatic restructuring of the GATT as an institution, and a broader inclusion of some developing countries in it. The structure of the world economy matters here, because changes in it rendered many GATT provisions ineffective in the mid to late 1980s.

First of all, a deeper and broader integration of world economic production occurred, exemplified by changes in the organisation of business operations. The increasing mobility of some factor endowments made it easier to transfer the skills, knowledge, management and R & D necessary to build and run a manufacturing operation. Advances in computer technology and telecommunications meant that a firm could trade skills internationally without physically relocating key employees. The integration of the world economy occurred simultaneously with differing demographic trends between the OECD and the rest of the world, making the developing world more important to GATT negotiations. Low growth rates in OECD countries had serious implications for national pension schemes. As for developing countries, of the nearly two billion people likely to be added to the world's

population between 1995 and 2015, 95% will be born outside the current OECD area. Thus, the GATT secretariat perceived a need for new jobs in the developing world, and for a shift in competitiveness in labour-intensive activities to high population growth countries (Sutherland 1994). To create these jobs and shift labour-intensive activities, developing countries would have to play a greater role in the GATT for the system to survive.

The inclusion of developing countries in the ensuing Uruguay Round negotiations, therefore, was by no means incidental. These efforts to incorporate developing countries into the system persisted throughout the negotiations. The OECD (1992) published a report stating:

> The main purpose of the study and the motivation behind the work which has been carried out by the OECD Secretariat over the period 1986–1990 has been to raise general awareness of the benefits which their (developing countries') greater integration into the international trading system could impart to all participants.

Yet all developing countries did not prompt the same urgency for inclusion into GATT discipline: of the top 17 developing country exporters among GATT contracting parties, only two (Nigeria and Egypt) were African. None of the top twenty exporters of manufactured items from the developing world were African (OECD 1992: 85).

While the GATT secretariat welcomed the increasing participation of developing states in the Uruguay Round negotiations, developing states themselves were motivated by new negotiating terms. The Uruguay Round effectively eliminated what had been a *de facto* contracting party (CP) option for developing countries. The negotiations were restricted to GATT contracting parties, and to developing countries committing themselves to becoming CPs.[2] Given that *de facto* status would not carry through into the World Trade Organisation (WTO), a number of countries become CPs in the final phase of the Round. Ten developing countries joined the GATT in 1993 and another nine joined in 1994 prior to the Marrakech meeting on 15 April.

In addition to the accommodating stance of developed countries and the elimination of *de facto* status, items on the negotiating agenda motivated participation. In particular, agriculture and textiles were included, providing an incentive for participation. The US and other developed countries sought to include these items for domestic political reasons. Finally, the Uruguay Round negotiations were significant for developing countries because trade liberalisation resonated with the

demands of international financial institutions to expand exports to repay external debt. Expanding exports meant that states would have to participate in the GATT system more fully. Finally, developing countries could participate more effectively in the negotiations because many received technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through UNCTAD that helped them to identify their interests and strengthen their position (Noyelle 1994). The GATT secretariat also expanded its own technical assistance programme.

The Uruguay Round cemented the direction of changing ideas at UNCTAD that the debt crisis had begun. Unlike the earlier Tokyo Round, the UNCTAD secretariat supported the Uruguay Round negotiations from their inception. The result was that the UNCTAD secretariat that emerged from the Uruguay Round acted as a 'coach' to developing countries in the new world economy. The role of coach, however, requires that the players and coach have agreed on the game to be played. Once UNCTAD took on this role, it could no longer serve as a voice for changing the structure of the international trading system. Hence, representatives lost a vehicle through which to express their views; they did not lose their views.

Therefore, in taking on the role of coach in the multilateral trade negotiations, the UNCTAD secretariat could not challenge the game itself, or advance the group interests of the G77. While the G77 as a whole supported technical assistance initiatives in UNCTAD, the UNCTAD programmes which resulted aggregated the needs of a region, or a state, and not the needs of the G77 as a whole. Hence, the G77 never functioned in the Uruguay Round. Broad and fluid alliances spanning the North-South divide emerged on issues which had not previously been under the GATT's purview. For example, fourteen agricultural exporters formed the Cairns Group of 'fair traders',[3] which provided powerful backing for the US demands on agricultural liberalisation. Conversely South Korea supported the EC's position on agriculture. Sub-Saharan African countries sought to maintain their preferences in Europe against encroachments from Latin America and Asia; agriculture was of paramount importance to African economies, given their dependence on this sector for export earnings in structural adjustment programmes (Watkins 1992). As Africans sought to maintain preferences the G77 continued its decline, and with it Africans lost any ability to articulate diverging ideas about development through it.

Two developments in the ongoing Uruguay Round negotiations

following the seventh conference reinforced the changed relationship between UNCTAD and the GATT, and the decline of the G77. First of all, developing countries were unable to act collectively on any issue. Secondly, it became increasingly evident that some sort of multilateral trade organisation would emerge from the Uruguay Round. With respect to the lack of collective action of the South, the term 'developing countries', although widely used, commonly referred to the actions of Brazil and India (Hopkins 1993). For example, the trade-related intellectual property (TRIPs) issue became an overwhelmingly US and EU vs. Brazil and India issue. Although the Brazilians and Indians were backed by some other developing countries, this support was not consistent. With respect to the growing sense that some sort of multilateral trading organisation would emerge from the round, UNCTAD as an organisation faced a more serious problem. As the number of contracting parties to the GATT steadily rose during the negotiations, the GATT soon challenged UNCTAD's historical advantage in having a more universal membership, meaning that ultimately the GATT would render UNCTAD redundant.

Overall then, while the Reagan initiatives had 'set the ball in motion' during the debt crisis, the Uruguay Round secured the direction of UNCTAD's change. Market considerations cannot be ignored at this juncture. The negotiating agenda for the Uruguay Round, in addition to agriculture and textiles, was heavily influenced by the needs of transnational corporations responding to changes in the international economy. As production and capital flows became increasingly global, transnational corporations (TNCs) needed stronger international regulations for certain aspects of their trade like intellectual property protection or services liberalisation. The TNCs that took the lead in introducing these items onto the GATT agenda were headquartered in the US. Hence, many of the new areas of the Uruguay Round (e.g. TRIPs, trade-related investment measures (TRIMs), and services) were associated with American initiatives. Nonetheless, TNCs in Europe shared the needs of American TNCs, since they operated in the same new global environment.

In addition to the role of transnationals, the debt crisis continued to pressure the strained UNCTAD bloc system into the 1990s. By the early 1990s, the 'debt crisis' was an overwhelmingly African crisis *vis-a-vis* official sources like the IMF and the World Bank. Unlike the Latin American crisis, the African crisis never threatened the private banking system, and it tied African borrowers into a different relationship with the official lenders than that with the Latins. Africans treat official

lenders as 'preferred creditors', meaning that they direct a larger portion of total debt service payments to meet these creditors than to the private or bilateral ones.

While Africans turned increasingly to the IMF and World Bank as 'lenders of last resort', a new pattern of foreign finance emerged in the late 1980s emphasising direct funding of developing country firms and not sovereign borrowing. Emerging debt and equity markets were concentrated in a few Latin American and Asian states. For a multitude of reasons, most linked to poor domestic political and economic performance, Africa has not been an attractive target for foreign direct investment outside the primary commodity sector. Capital market development on the continent has thus been minuscule compared to other parts of the developing world, and African states for the most part do not participate in increasingly important international service sector trade.

This situation meant that Latin American and Asian representatives each struggled to cope with the changing international financial environment in their own way. They perceived their former African allies as being atavistic. Privately they objected to many calls for 'special treatment' of African problems in the United Nations and elsewhere. Thus, the divisions seriously complicated any future collective action on the part of the South, and fundamentally changed the nature of an organisation like UNCTAD whose *raison d'être* had been Southern unity.

As discussed earlier, the G77 ideological coalition had persisted during the 1970s because its ideology placed each state's right to determine its own development strategy, be it capitalism, socialism or a combination of the two, ahead of other unifying principles such as market efficiency (Murphy 1984). Yet in the wake of the debt crisis of the 1980s, the economy of the early 1990s distributed real benefits to states which openly embraced liberalism – from benefits to a country's credit rating, to benefits from increased capital inflows from a variety of sources. It was therefore no longer strategic to value global economic pluralism above market efficiency, even though the former ideology had been so broadly defined.

When the Cold War ended in 1989, members of the former Soviet bloc hoped to join the GATT, and therefore pressured the UNCTAD secretariat for technical assistance similar to that received by the G77. The competition for UNCTAD's resources that ensued played a part in the ongoing UNCTAD reform efforts, but the end of the Cold War and Russia's subsequent petition for admission to the GATT only hastened

a process that had commenced earlier and had exacerbated Africa's economic and political marginalisation. By the early 1990s, even G77 rhetorical unity had vanished.

CONCLUSION: AFRICAN STATES, THE G77 COALITION AND HEGEMONY

The overall failure of the radical-reformist agenda, and African states' attendant intellectual marginalisation, speaks to recent literature in international relations theory on ideas and international institutions that posits that *ideas* themselves are causal variables within international institutions. Goldstein and Keohane (1993) argue that the content of an individual policymaker's ideas does matter, and is not merely epiphenomenal. Clearly, ideas supported by African representatives did not figure prominently in setting the agenda of international policymakers through most of UNCTAD's history. African *ideas* mattered most when they were incorporated into the broadest G77 platform, albeit little of the broadest G77 platform was ever enacted. When African ideas and Latin American ideas clashed, the Latin American ideas usually became the group's objective. Africans were able to participate in the global discourse on development only within the broadest platform of the G77.

Some ideas that originated within UNCTAD debates, such as ideas for preferential tariffs and debt forgiveness, have had influence in other fora, but not for the reasons that the ideas literature outlines. As discussed, some necessary components for the GSP ideas to carry the day were the commodity price boom of the 1970s, and anxiety over trading blocs. In addition, many ideas about debt forgiveness have carried the day recently because the discussions have moved out of a state-to-state context. The discussions persist in the Western industrial democracies and the IOs they control under the pressure of non-governmental organisations such as Oxfam, EURODAD, and Christian Aid's Debt Crisis Network (Callaghy 2000).

When the UNCTAD 'road map' began to disintegrate and many developing states within UNCTAD began to seek liberalised (as opposed to protected) trade relations as a component of development schemes, there was anything but universal acceptance of the ideas concerning the virtues of liberalisation on the part of the G77. Many representatives of poorer states in the international economy continue to perceive that gains from free trade accrue disproportionately to wealthier states. Poorer states cooperate (or enact a certain 'road

map') because the costs of their defection are unsustainable. The resulting cooperation among states is not based on a shared belief system.

For this reason, Rothstein (1977) deliberately avoided the ideological aspect of many discussions of North-South relations in his study *The Weak in the World of the Strong*. Instead, he relied on differences in power and state capacity, pointing out that even if all of the demands on the radical-reformist agenda were granted, fundamental problems in the system would remain because the benefits would accrue disproportionately to the 'most developed' within the 'least developed' category. Similarly in the contemporary situation, certain elements of the former G77 coalition (chiefly Africa) did not embrace the liberalisation ideas but were unable, as a result of structural considerations, to continue to exert the same leverage within the coalition they had enjoyed previously. At the same time, other elements of the G77 coalition (chiefly Latin America and parts of Asia) exhibited new preferences within international organisations not only because the *ideas* changed their preferences, but because the new world economy presented real structural opportunities for them to profit from.

The epistemic communities approach claims that policymakers turn to networks of professionals at times of uncertainty. Therefore, state interests do not necessarily result from international structures of power, but from networks of specific, technical knowledge in a given issue-area. However, the problem that certain networks of professionals are connected to sources of finance and individual states, and certain other networks are less independent of state influences and less well-financed, is recognised in the international community. In response to UNCTAD's ideological shift, Julius Nyerere and other leaders in 1987 formed the South Commission, as a 'counter-hegemonic' network of professionals to whom Southern policymakers could turn in times of uncertainty. Nyerere sought contributions to a capital fund, from which he hoped eventually to finance the Centre's annual operations, thus striving to achieve a degree of autonomy from the ideology even of the organisation's own member-states (South Commission 1990). This network, however, was never likely to achieve the authority that an effective epistemic community requires, or to be in a position to move beyond 'talk' to 'action'.

Finally, the Italian School would view UNCTAD's overhaul as part of a broader process of hegemonic-bloc formation and manufacture of 'consent' along Gramscian lines. Here, Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner's (1980: 168) critique of Gramsci is salient: 'There is an

important distinction between the acceptance of social arrangements because they appear just, and acceptance simply because they are there, or because they appear as a coercive external fact.' For Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980: 159), what partial coherence exists in society results from *non-normative* aspects of integration, regardless of any common values. Classes may have different ideologies but are bound together by a network of objective social relations. Economic compulsion is the most important element of this non-normative coherence.

Stressing that the relationship between the dominant ideology and the dominant class is crucial to understanding how ideology operates, particularly in late capitalism, Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980:166) argue that the ideology is generally directed at the dominant class itself. They distinguish between 'normative' acceptance, wherein the moral expectations of the dominant class are internalised, and 'pragmatic' acceptance. Pragmatic acceptance is not Marxist 'false consciousness' at all, but results from the coercion of everyday life and the routines that sustain it.

Transferring this analysis to the international sphere, the evolution of UNCTAD challenges the Gramscian view of consent because representatives of certain states, primarily in Africa, simply did not accept the dominant ideology, understood here as neo-classical development strategies. When this theoretical issue was placed within the context of domestic politics, representatives of African states in international institutions were forced to accept neo-classical strategies, because the debt crisis compelled them to work with international financial organisations. They did not 'consent' as the Italian school would posit, because they did not believe that the situation was just (Kargbo 1990; African Ministers Responsible for Trade 1991, 1996). Finally, the UNCTAD secretariat has not been *completely* transformed, and continues at times to issue criticisms of the neo-classical strategies of the Bretton Woods institutions (UNCTAD 1998).

The situation in UNCTAD does not completely refute the notion that 'ideas matter'. It does call into question the structural context within which ideas appear, and the specific objects that proponents of neo-classical development ideology seek to influence. This article argues that in the evolution of UNCTAD, one would expect advocates of neo-classical trade ideology to be far more interested in seeking to influence either the representatives of other industrialised states (e.g. France or Japan) or newly industrialising states (e.g. Brazil, India or South Korea) than representatives of most African states. As a result of

asymmetries of power among those who hold ideas about economic development, reasons for the influence of these ideas may vary from voluntary acceptance based on their merits at one extreme, to abject coercion at the other. In practice, the balance between acceptance and coercion varies over time, rarely falling at either extreme; but the demise of African ideas in UNCTAD falls closest to the coercive end of the scale.

NOTES

1. Stephen Gill (1991:21) refers to this body of literature as 'the Italian School', although many of the theorists are not Italian.

2. Many developing countries were *de facto* contracting parties to the GATT because it was possible to sidestep formal GATT membership if the General Agreement had been applied in a colonial territory. In this case the post-independence state could continue to apply the GATT on a *de facto* basis and postpone formalising its status.

3. The Cairns Group members are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Fiji, Hungary, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and Uruguay.

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