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New Groups in the WTO Agricultural Trade Negotiations: Power, Learning and Institutional Design

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1.0 Introduction

For two decades agriculture has been the lynchpin of every meeting of the world's trade ministers. The Hong Kong ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2005 was no different. Once again, a multilateral trade round is blocked by failure to agree on reform of farm trade, a traditional sector representing less than 10% of world merchandise trade. But the current round differs from earlier rounds: a number of new political coalitions have formed, unformed and reformed, and the role of Canada seems obscure. The usual approaches to explaining international economic outcomes consider political economy factors. In this paper I ask if institutional factors are part of the problem, or the solution.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Europeans and Americans skirmished over agriculture within the GATT while other countries stood on the sidelines, hoping that there would be a transatlantic bargain, and that it would be beneficial for them. In the 1980s, smaller exporters banded together in the Cairns Group of "fair traders in agriculture" to demand a place at the table in the Uruguay Round, and an important role was played by the de la Paix group (a north/south group that pushed for a broadly based agenda), and the G-10 (Brazil and India in a blocking role). A group of developing countries with preferential access to EC markets were concerned that they would lose market access, and a group of mostly African countries was concerned that liberalization would increase world prices of key imported food products (Croome 1995, 113). In a harbinger of things to come, the 1988 and 1990 meetings of trade ministers ended prematurely when a group of Latin American countries walked out to protest slow progress on agriculture. Less visibly, an informal group of eight to ten of the main participants met regularly over dinner to find consensus amongst the various negotiating proposals that had been tabled (Croome 1995, 235).[1] Once a transatlantic understanding was reached at Blair House in 1992, the eventual multilateral deal on agriculture was brokered first among the four leading players in farm trade, Australia, the EC, Japan, and the USA.[2]

Press reports still include transatlantic recriminations about whether the EU or the USA is doing enough to make a new trade deal possible, and the Cairns Group still issues hortatory statements, but the stories now also refer to the differences between such new entities as the G-20, the G-33, the G-10, the G-11, the G-90, the ACP Group, and the African Group.[3] The original Quad (USA, EU, Japan and Canada) that met regularly at ministerial level from the end of the Tokyo Round in the 1970s through the lengthy Uruguay Round negotiations to the early days of the WTO has not met at

[1] The dinners hosted by a rotating chair included the original Quad plus Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, sometimes Switzerland (on market access but not domestic support), Finland (representing the Nordics) and Argentina.

[2] The original Quad also played an important role in 1993 in bringing the round to a conclusion. For a more complete story of the Uruguay Round, see (Wolfe 1998).

[3] For a glossary of the groups, see Annex A. For a list of all their meetings in 2005, see Annex B.

ministerial level since 1999. Efforts to craft a compromise take place as always in bilateral EU-USA meetings, but also in new cross-coalition groups such as the G-4, the FIPs, the G-4 plus Japan, the G-6, and the FIPs Plus.

Multilateral economic negotiations are often explained by such exogenous factors as the identifiable economic interests of participants, or their domestic industries, and the general political and economic context. I ask about endogenous factors: does the institutional design of the organization and the negotiating process affect the outcome? In common with utilitarian approaches, I think that negotiations contribute to *transparency* about actor intentions, but I also expect international organizations to provide a forum for the *legitimation* of the regime, and help in developing new *consensual knowledge* about how the system works (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986). To the extent WTO institutional design reflects these three factors, do they make a difference to the outcome?

The focus of this paper is the agriculture negotiations. I first establish the context by describing the evolution of the WTO negotiating process before describing the proliferation of small groups in the Doha round. The core of the paper is a consideration of factors that might explain the evolving institutional design of the negotiations. The penultimate section discusses the changing role of Canada. In the conclusion I speculate on the implications for the round, and for global governance.

2.0 Process in the World Talk Organization[4]

The general perception of WTO negotiations is of episodic ministerials at which all the work is done. Agriculture negotiations at these meetings are often reported as a standoff between subsidizing Europeans and free-trading North Americans with long-suffering developing country farmers on the sidelines. Close observers know that ministerials are the tip of an iceberg of diplomatic activity in and out of Geneva, and that the developing countries have been increasingly insistent on having a voice in that activity (Wolfe 2004).

The WTO is a forum not an “actor” in itself, and it is Member-driven. Unlike the IMF and the World Bank, it has a tiny professional staff whose role is to serve as a secretariat to the dozens of WTO bodies. Background papers can be commissioned from the secretariat, but negotiating proposals come from members. The WTO is a place to talk, and the talking is done by representatives of Members, both diplomats based in Geneva and officials from capitals, including ministers. They talk at the Ministerial Conference every two years and in the Council for Trade in Services. They talk in regular committees that meet two or three times a year, in the negotiating groups that meet every 4-6 weeks, and in the Dispute Settlement Body. They talk in hundreds of formal on-the-record meetings every year, and they talk in many hundreds more informal meetings (Wolfe 2004), which is not unusual in international organizations

[4] The WTO is a successor to what The Economist once called the General Agreement to Talk and Talk, a good assessment of the GATT.

(Prantl 2005; Sureda 2003). Most of the negotiating groups meet for a week at a time, but they only meet in plenary session at the beginning and the end of the week, and then only briefly, for transparency. The real work is done in informal meetings of the various small groups, or in restricted meetings organized by the chair, or in bilateral sessions. Some of these off-the-record meetings are held in the WTO building (e.g. so-called Room F and Green Room meetings), but others are held in the offices of delegations, or in mini-ministerials in Member countries. Annex B shows how many of these informal meetings related to agriculture were held in 2005. The norms governing all this talk have been the subject of considerable reflection since the third Ministerial Conference in Seattle in 1999, which clearly failed in part for institutional design reasons. Too many Members did not know what was happening, did not feel a part of the process, and did not see their issues being addressed.

Active procedural discussions among Geneva ambassadors were part of the response to Seattle.[5] Members now better understand the so-called "Green Room" process that involves 30 or so Members in searching for compromises in the overall negotiations. The secretariat is becoming more sophisticated at knowing which representatives of groups should be invited to participate in restricted meetings, and the groups themselves are better organized. Although it is impossible for an outsider to know who attends a Green Room meeting, we do know who attends mini-ministerials, and the principles are presumably similar. The members of the original Quad are always represented along with other leading traders, representatives of coalitions, and coordinators of the regional groups. These criteria are not written down, but everyone knows what they are (Blackhurst and Hartridge 2004: 712). It is important that everyone understand this process, and that it remain flexible to allow different configurations as the negotiating challenges shift. No group of countries should have to create negotiating obstacles only so that they can get a representative in the room, and no Member should have to block consensus because it did not know what was going on.

3.0 Proliferation of Groups: Agriculture in the Doha Round

The sixth ministerial meeting of the WTO in Hong Kong was an important way station in the current round of multilateral trade negotiations, launched at Doha, Qatar in 2001. The mandate for the agriculture negotiations, which actually began in 2000 in accordance with the Final Act of the Uruguay Round, is set out in paragraph 13 of the Doha Development Agenda. Negotiators had hoped to agree on a negotiating framework by the time of the Cancún ministerial conference of 2003, but it was only completed in the General Council as part of the "July Framework" in 2004. Subsequent negotiations attempted to prepare an agreement in Hong Kong on the multilateral "modalities", or how the actual negotiations on export subsidies, domestic support and market access will proceed.

The group process has been evolving since the creation of the WTO, especially since the 1999 Seattle ministerial conference, and new patterns of coalition activity were in

[5] For a discussion of WTO process and how it has evolved, see (Wolfe 2004; and, Wolfe 2005a).

evidence at the Doha ministerial, but the 2003 Cancún ministerial was a shock because it seemed to mark a clear break from the conventional pattern. The agriculture negotiations initially continued the late Uruguay Round pattern on the assumption that the process used by the first chair of the agriculture negotiations, Aart de Zeuw, in the late 1980s was still valid. In the two years after the Doha ministerial, the then chair of the agriculture negotiations, Stuart Harbinson, tried to force the pace of negotiations by using the traditional technique of producing a chairman's text. The Harbinson text of early 2003 was a negotiating disaster that forced its author from office just as de Zeuw and Arthur Dunkel had been forced out for similar efforts to advance the Uruguay Round process (Croome 1995, 238-9, 295-6). With no text on the table, the Montreal mini-ministerial of July 2003 asked the EU and the USA to produce a paper on agricultural market access. Their paper was loudly rejected by a seemingly new coalition of developing countries, the G-20. The rejection appeared to be the cause of the collapse of the ministerial, bringing the Doha negotiations to a standstill. Less noticed was the emergence at that meeting of other new developing country coalitions. At Doha, the African Group, the ACP Group and the LDC Group had been active. In Cancún, those three started acting together as the G-90, in part to block discussion of the so-called "Singapore issues", while new groups were active on agriculture, notably the G-33 and the G-10. Since Cancún, the old certainties about the structure and players in agriculture negotiations have been undermined.

The effort to restart the Doha round after the breakdown in Cancún required negotiations on agriculture within a 'non-group' (because not like-minded) of 'Five Interested Parties' (EU, USA, Brazil, India and Australia). Having played an essential role, the FIPs did not meet for more than six months after the new negotiating framework was agreed in July 2004. Negotiators waited for a new Commission to take office in Europe, and for a new US trade representative to be confirmed after the Presidential election. The new ministers, Peter Mandelson and Rob Portman, did not begin to pick up the pace until March 2005, and the limited usefulness of FIPs meetings was quickly apparent. The EU was especially sensitive to the concerns expressed by Members excluded from the FIPS, perhaps because it wished to dilute the group. Since then, as shown in Annex B, the FIPs have met on occasion, but in recent months these meetings have been accompanied by meetings of an expanded group (labeled FIPs Plus) that notably included Canada and members of the G-10. Other groups have also met more frequently and there have been meetings of a so-called "new Quad" or G-4 of the EU, USA, Brazil and India, and then of a G-6 that adds Japan and Australia. At the same time as these small cross-coalition groups proliferated, mini-ministerials continued, and capital-based "senior officials" began to meet again.

4.0 Explanations for the Elaborate Agriculture Process

The process of WTO farm trade negotiations is now marked by extensive discussion among groups with over-lapping membership in a way not seen before. Three interlocking factors help illuminate, if not explain, this phenomenon: a changing distribution of power in its various forms, new issues on the agenda, and the evolution

of the negotiating modalities. I address each factor in turn. In the subsequent section I discuss what all these groups do.

4.1 Whose power is determinative?

The familiar story about how the USA as the new hegemon rescued the world trading system from autarchy after the Second World War is not wrong, but was its role predicated on its military strength, the size of its market, or its ability to alter the terms of debate? That is, did its power depend on coercion, interests, or ideas? The answer is obviously, some combination thereof, but it is easy enough to see the GATT of 1948 as a public good supplied by the USA alone. By the 1960s the GATT could be seen as a bilateral agreement between Europe and the United States. That model was still a good approximation in the Tokyo Round of the 1970s. It was clear by the start of the Uruguay Round in the 1980s, however, that things had begun to change, not least because of the creation of the Cairns Group of agricultural exporters to create enough weight to be able to participate as equals in the agricultural negotiations (Higgott and Cooper 1990). Whatever the relative weight of the factors, the key deal making the round possible was nevertheless the Blair House accord between the U.S. and the EU. But now old ideas of power are losing their ability to illuminate negotiations.

Power is a problematic concept in international relations. Traditional definitions and the hierarchical classifications of actors associated with them are not always analytically helpful in the context of the WTO. For present purposes, I accept the definition proposed by Barnett and Duvall (2005: 3): “Power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate.” Two types of power are especially salient for the WTO. **Compulsory power**, they argue, “can be based on material resources, and on symbolic or normative resources.” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 14-15) In addition to states, international organizations, firms, and civil society organizations have the means to get others to change their actions in a favoured direction. The concept of **institutional power** is a reminder that the diffuse social relations shaped by institutions can also constrain behavior: the fact of the WTO’s normative framework is not easily changed now, and it has powerful effects on any country that accepts the terms of debate (Adler and Bernstein 2005).

In the standard approach, WTO rounds are said to be launched by crafting a package big enough to entice everyone to join the consensus, but are concluded on the basis of the power of the major countries (Steinberg 2002). It would be foolhardy to pretend that the Doha Round will end before the USA and the European Union are ready, but their agreement will be far from sufficient. The *power to coerce*, which many take as the ordinary meaning of the term, was used effectively by the United States and European Union in the final days of the Tokyo and Uruguay Rounds to convince less powerful member states to assent to their bilateral bargains. But even the USA now finds that it lacks coercive power. The Doha timetable is apparently driven by the approaching end in 2007 of U.S. President Bush’s trade promotion authority. A deal without the USA would not be worth having, but this powerful country cannot force a

consensus where one does not exist, and it less able to influence the shape of the deal than it was in the past.

Multilateral trade reform requires the supply of two collective goods, new rules and more open markets. No state can supply either of these goods alone, but the systemic good of an open liberal multilateral trading system does not require collective supply by all 149 members of the WTO. A great many developing country members can be free riders, as long as the non-discrimination norms are binding constraints. But how many Members are needed for "critical mass"? The idea of critical mass implies that the relevant process is of a sufficient size to be self-sustaining, whether it is a nuclear reaction or the wide diffusion of a social norm. Many applications in social science derive from Mancur Olsen's work on the provision of collective goods. Whereas Olson's work is pessimistic on the possibility of cooperation, other scholars explore the circumstances under which a group of sufficient size can be created to supply public goods (Oliver and Marwell 2001).

One dimension of critical mass is material. For example, Canada and the USA in a proposal for sectoral negotiations on Non-agricultural Market Access (NAMA) said that "critical mass represents a negotiated level of participation based on the share of world trade that interested Members determine should be covered in order for those Members to be willing to reduce rates in a given sector (WTO 2005)." But how much is enough? A manifestation of the decline of U.S. coercive power, understood as its share of the global distribution of power among countries and coalitions, measured as shares in global or sectoral transaction flows, is the observation in The Economist (2006) that the output of the 32 largest emerging economies is now equal to that of the rich countries. China, India and Brazil are especially significant both for their current size but also for the implications of their growth rates. Nevertheless, as Annex C shows, only China has entered the ranks of the top traders, with both Brazil and India being far behind Canada, for now. Both the EU and the USA have double the weight of Canada in world agricultural trade (Annex D), but Canada's trade is significantly larger than any of the other members of the FIPs. Yet neither China nor Canada is a member of the G-6, which in early 2006 was emerging as the central coordinating group for the Doha round. If material power determined the relative hierarchy of members of the WTO, this situation would be anomalous. So why are China and Canada excluded while Australia, Brazil and India play leading roles?

In the negotiations as a whole, critical mass implies that emerging markets that represent a significant share of global production and consumption should help to supply the systemic public good by improving access to their own market. The leading emerging markets have a broader role. A study of the systemic role of four emerging powers (China, India, Brazil and a non-WTO member, Russia) argues that these countries may not be powers on a scale with the USA, but they have the strength and desire to challenge the established order. (The four country papers are introduced in Hurrell 2006). Unlike other second tier states, they were on the margins of the Atlantic order that dominated the international organization of the second half of the twentieth century, and they do not necessarily accept its premises. They now have the material

weight to pursue a different agenda, and other developing countries accept the legitimacy of their leadership role. Brazil and India in particular are able to play a more active role in the WTO than China, whose restraint shows awareness of fears of smaller trading partners about its export success.

The rationale for Australia and Brazil's membership in the FIPs becomes clearer when the share of agriculture in a country's exports is considered. Their role may reflect a combination of the salience of the issue for them and their relative share in world markets. India does not figure among the major exporters, and agriculture, while a major share of its workforce, is not a major share of its exports, but Indian participation increases the legitimacy of the process in the eyes of other developing countries in the G-33 concerned about the ability of their small farmers to withstand global competition.

The traditional leading players in the WTO still deploy powerful normative resources in the ideological hegemony of the liberal view of the value of trade liberalization, the evils of protectionism and the benign character of globalization. It is possible that the EU and the USA could so organize the WTO as to extract all possible benefits for themselves, although it is not clear what those benefits might be beyond the mere existence of an open liberal multilateral system of trade and payments in which their exporters have reasonable access to the world's markets. That they do not try to run the system for their exclusive benefit is obvious, however the system is assessed, and however unfair the system may still be for some countries. Ideas of creating a system that is fair to all matter a great deal (Kapstein 2005, 97). The coercive power of the largest markets is also limited now by equally powerful normative claims based on justice for developing countries, in general but especially for the poorest. As Alain Noel shows, in recent years the discursive use of "poverty" has been changing (Noël 2005). After the Cold War, poverty replaced "east/west" or "north/south" as a way to frame left/right debate. Such normative change can alter the balance of power if claims on behalf of poverty have weight in negotiations. Public recognition of the G-6 signals acceptance of a changing configuration of world politics, giving developing countries confidence that they are at the heart of the process.

Their growing awareness of their institutional power reinforces that centrality. Two norms of the trade regime – the Single Undertaking and consensus decision-making – create specific opportunities for relatively weak states to use institutional power effectively. An example is the *power to block consensus*, used effectively by Latin American countries during the Uruguay Round and by the G-20 group of developing countries at the Cancún Ministerial. Another example is the *power to influence* the negotiating mandate of the round, used effectively by members of the Cairns Group of agricultural exporters in the lead up to the Uruguay Round.

4.2 Changing issues

In the aftermath of the Uruguay Round, countries whose agriculture is dominated by small-scale farmers oriented to domestic production discovered that they have a different interest in trade reform than do those countries whose farmers operate at large

commercial scale oriented to world markets. As Members began thinking about how to frame the Doha negotiations, many developing countries argued that "food security" should be a legitimate reason to undertake lesser liberalization obligations in any new deal. The concepts became more sophisticated when with NGO help many developing countries began to promote a "development box" as an alternative to the Green Box in the Uruguay Round agriculture agreement that was said to only benefit rich countries. By Cancún, the idea of "special products" had taken hold.

At the same time, some of the rich countries whose small-scale highly protected farmers feared further liberalization began to promote the idea that some products are too "sensitive" for real reform. And then producers of cotton and bananas realized that a simple formula approach to tariff reduction would not necessarily advance their interests. Sugar producers dependent on preferential access to the EU market worried that they could be wiped out by real liberalization of the EU subsidy regime. Countries that are net food importers were not at all in favour of an end to subsidized exports from rich countries, which has given them food at below market prices. As Members became aware of this growing complexity, in part through discussion in existing groups, they reconsidered their allies, which led to the formation of new groups, and to the participation of many countries in more than one group.[6]

4.3 The effect of modalities on institutional design

The proliferation of small groups is also due to change in how the negotiations are conducted. Tools of public action structure relations among actors (Salamon 2002). It follows that negotiating modalities have institutional design implications.

During the Kennedy Round of the 1960s, GATT Contracting Parties developed a number of informal negotiating devices. One was the practice of negotiating *market access* bilaterally on a "request and offer" basis among "principal suppliers" and then extending the results to all participants through the "most favoured nation" principle (MFN). This process limits the interest of Members with large markets in negotiations with small market Members. Deals negotiated with "principal suppliers" do benefit small Members, who can act as free riders, but the practice also hurts them by limiting their ability to negotiate on subjects of greatest interest to them. Given the large difference in economic weights of participants, some major deals began life in small meetings of the most significant participants—the so-called "bridge club" of the US, the EEC, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Canada. Even then, delegates from smaller Contracting Parties felt excluded (Winham 1986). *Trade rules* and *domestic policies* began to come to the fore in the Tokyo Round, but the decision-making structure was still "pyramidal" (Winham 1992), with the largest players still negotiating agreements among themselves, then discussing the results with others. This "minilateral" process

[6] Two factors not addressed in this paper are also salient. First, over the past 25 years, developing countries have learned that trade and their participation in the trading system matter for them. Second, they have learned that the rules of the trading system matter for them, although officials and analysts are often misled by the apparent strengthening of the WTO's dispute settlement system (Wolfe 2005b).

conserves negotiating energy, but makes it impossible for smaller countries to influence the results. Not surprisingly, therefore, most developing countries did not sign the minilateral “codes” that came out of the Tokyo Round. The Tokyo Round agricultural negotiations were effectively bilateral, which might be one reason that aspect of the Tokyo Round was a failure. In consequence of increasing substantive and geographic scope, the Uruguay Round agriculture negotiations were formula-based: negotiations on thousands of individual tariff lines with two or three dozen significant trading partners was not feasible.

Many of the Uruguay Round agreements were explicitly designed as new understandings of GATT rules, for example on subsidies. These aspects of trade negotiations are inherently multilateral. Once a domestic policy is changed to meet trade obligations, all trading partners can take advantage of the new rules, so bilateral negotiations on rules issues are rarely successful. Negotiations on a multilateral tariff-reduction formula, or on multilateral subsidy rules, create something on which any Member can have influence because agreement is subject to consensus, unlike a bilateral request and offer bargain. Blocking consensus alone is relatively easy, in principle, but shaping an outcome requires allies. In the Uruguay Round, large numbers of developing countries thought that they could safely ignore some new rules because of the many Special and Differential treatment provisions in the agreements. They were shocked by the difficulty of adapting to the new rules. In the Doha Round, they organize to make sure that their interests are protected.

In sum, the negotiating process evolved to accommodate a changing configuration of power, more complex issues, and new modalities. Power is still highly salient for understanding the institutional design of multilateral trade negotiations, but analysts need a subtle conception of its dimensions if we are to understand who has it, how it changes, and how much critical mass is needed for any aspect of the negotiating process. Most important, these changes are endogenous: the objective interests of the actors have not changed nearly as much as their understanding of their interests, but institutional changes affect how countries organize themselves to participate in negotiations. An organization with 149 Members requires small groups. Their overlapping interests means each Member will participate in multiple groups (including different groups in other sectors of the round).

5.0 Coalitions and Learning: Lessons from Small Group Theory

The proliferation of small groups in the WTO is relatively new, but should not be surprising. n any organization of 149 members, but especially in the WTO where the negotiating agenda is very broad and members vary greatly in terms of the expertise and material resources they devote to negotiations, plenary discussions are an inefficient means of negotiation. Small group meetings, an example of the traditional “expanding-and-contracting-concentric-circles” approach, are an attempt to find a legitimate middle ground between negotiating efficiency and effectiveness. The Green Room is a large group for a negotiation, but all key players plus all groups are represented, ensuring that it is transparent, legitimate and effective. Members in the

Green Room need to be sure that they hear all views, and their discussions have to be faithfully reported to all interested members in what some negotiators refer to as a transmission belt. One obvious benefit from all the new groupings therefore is that Members can work together to share information, develop positions and proposals, and decide who should be in the Green Room.

Since the WTO does not have a formal constituency system, even for electoral purposes (that is, groups of countries whose main purpose is to elect a representative to sit on a committee, as in the UN system. See Walker 2004), groups have formed on an *ad hoc* basis. These groups coordinate among Geneva ambassadors, and they have ministerial meetings. The small groups relevant to the agriculture negotiations come in many varieties (see Table 1).[7] It has been conventional to refer to groups as "coalitions", but I am using the term "groupings" here. Hamilton and Whalley (1989) distinguish between groupings created to move the agenda, make proposals, block others, and negotiate. Most groupings can do any or all of these things, but some characteristics make a group (or coalition) better suited to one or the other. Some of the developing country groupings are based on **common characteristics**, such as regional groups. By working together, these countries can share technical expertise, they can aggregate such market power as they possess, and they can use their collective moral authority to insist on recognition of their concerns. Other groupings are organized on an **issue-specific** basis, such as the Cairns Group. Such groupings can pursue either an offensive or defensive agenda, meaning that they seek improvements in their market access position abroad, or seek to minimize the disruptions for their own farmers. The effectiveness of these groups was obvious in Cancún, although the disparate basis of the geographic and sectoral groupings made it easier to oppose than propose. Many groups are essentially homogenous, but some groups are heterogenous, because they **cross groupings**. Finally one type of closely related small group meeting plays an essentially **managerial** role in attempting to build packages that cross the various negotiating areas of the round, including trade in goods and services as well as agriculture.

[7] For a discussion that separates such developing country groupings into formal groups or alliances, informal issue-based groups, and "grand alliance" inter-group alliances, see (Bernal, et al. 2004, 12ff). On WTO coalitions, see also (Drahos 2003; Draper and Sally 2005; Narlikar 2003).

Table 1: Small Groups Relevant to Agriculture

Regional groups (S/S)	**Cross-coalition**
ACP	G-4
African Group	FIPs
LDCs	G-6
G-90	FIPs Plus
Offensive Coalitions	**Managerial for a**
C-4	Mini-ministerials
G-11	Green Room
Cairns Group (N/S)	"senior officials"
G-20 (S/S)	
Defensive coalitions	
G-10	
G-33	
RAMs	
SVEs	

Are all these groups best described as "coalitions"? Odell and his colleagues in a new book on developing countries in the WTO define a coalition as "a set of governments that defend a common position in a negotiation by explicit coordination. We do not include in this category … a set of delegations that exchange information and meet to seek compromises but do not defend a common position (Odell 2006)." This framework sees coalitions as homogenous, which would seem to leave out cross-coalition heterogeneous small groups. In small group theory, which is based on the assumption that small groups naturally emerge in any social arrangement, groups of individuals (and presumably of diplomatic representatives) can be homogenous or heterogeneous. Similarity in skills, background and other attributes can facilitate the work, but if the task requires exploring new ideas, then diversity is a virtue (Rubin and Swap 1994: 135). Homogenous coalitions therefore have a role, but heterogenous or cross-coalition groups may be essential for finding a consensus. Although a group whose members are heterogenous is less likely to reach agreement than a more homogenous group, if and when agreement is reached, it is more likely to be persuasive.

The usual assumption is that coalitions defend an interest-based position, but they could also offer opportunities for learning by their participants. Cross-coalition groups might be especially important, since learning cannot occur unless the dominant coalition changes to include those former antagonists who play a central role in the problems that confront the membership (Haas 1990: 128). The G-6, it follows, is not a coalition—the Members do not have a common interest in finding some basis for compromise with other groups, but they are the principal antagonists. Rubin and Swap conclude (1994, 147), with specific reference to the Uruguay Round, that "most of the work in multilateral exchanges does not involve negotiation at all. […] It is not the staking out of positions, from which concessions are subsequently made, that best

characterizes the work that takes place in multilateral encounters. Building group consensus, through the dynamics of group process, is the key feature."

When we look at other negotiating areas where the new dynamic is less evolved, Ricardo Melendez Ortiz and his colleagues at the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) in Geneva suggest that many of the new groupings cannot be thought of as negotiating groups at all. Such entities as the NAMA-11, or the Friends of Ambition in NAMA clearly work together, but they do not meet at ministerial level (yet), do not necessarily adopt common positions in the negotiations, and do not even see themselves as a "group", let alone as a "coalition". More work is needed to refine the typology of groupings, and to consider whether the relative informality of fluidity of the groupings in NAMA or services as compared to agriculture makes a difference to the negotiations.

6.0 Where is Canada?

Many observers have noticed Canada's absence from the most prominent small groups, such as the G-6. Why has this happened, and has Canada lost important influence? It should first be stressed that while the eclipse of the original Quad is new, Canada's role has not changed since the end of the Uruguay Round when Australia, not Canada, was engaged in the final bargaining on agriculture. Factors to consider in understanding this reality include the country's credibility, relative power, and contribution to legitimation of the changed WTO process.

The lack of clarity in Canada's agriculture position in its awkward balance between export-oriented and supply managed sectors has affected the country's place in trade negotiations since early in the Uruguay Round. Nevertheless, over the past couple of years, and probably until the end of this round, ministers and officials might be just as happy to fly below the radar during a minority parliament, given the intense scrutiny they face from Canadian farm organizations both at home and at international meetings. Bizarre resolutions in the House of Commons that call for increased market access abroad while offering none in Canada (Canada 2005b, 9960, 10017) do not help Canadian credibility, but also do not further diminish Canada's role.

Although not a member of the G-6, Canada is still a participant in the key negotiation forum, the Green Room and the mini-ministerials. It is included in the FIPs Plus and plays a leading role in informal meetings of senior officials. If material power determined the relative hierarchy, this absence from the G-6 would be anomalous, as discussed in section 3.1 above. But other forms of power are also salient, and might provide more analytic leverage.

Canada may be absent from the smallest cross-coalition groups because they must include the principal antagonists, if a consensus is to be found. It is noteworthy that in an assessment of progress in the negotiations, American politicians observed that "we're delighted by the fact that Brazil and the EU are both working together to try to figure out a way to allow Brazil leading the G20 countries to agree to reducing

barriers on manufactured products in exchange for the European Union agreeing to reduce barriers on agricultural products." (USDA 2006) Brazil and India have made themselves part of the problem, this time, and so they have to be part of the solution. Canada, it seems to me, is not a large problem for most WTO Members. It would follow that Canada is not needed in the smallest groups. Canada does have to be kept closely associated with the process, however, because as one of the largest traders Canada will have to make a contribution to the outcome—negotiators need to feel that the pain of farm trade reform is shared equally.

Can Canada without its old role in the Quad still influence the outcome on agriculture? I accept the assessment of officials, who argue that "Canada is widely respected as one of the most active and influential players in the negotiations. The source of our strength has been our ability to bring practical, creative, and credible ideas to the table to build bridges and to move issues forward. Looking ahead, our ability to influence the negotiations will continue to be directly related to our ability to generate constructive ideas, and to work on building consensus around ideas that ultimately help to advance our own negotiating objectives." (Canada 2005a) Officials observe that many aspects of the Hong Kong text, notably the language on state trading and the sections on a safe box for food aid, modalities for sensitive products, and tiers for domestic support, began as Canadian ideas, and reflect Canadian objectives.

7.0 Conclusion: The Significance of the Process

Agriculture negotiations are different now. The EC and USA dominated the Tokyo Round process, and the agriculture modality was bilateral bargaining. In the pre-Uruguay Round period, the Cairns Group mobilized to ensure its members would have a voice, a particular Australian concern after their minister was left out of the key meetings during the 1982 GATT ministerial. During the early stages of the Uruguay Round, the new domestic dimension of trade policy needed new ideas, which created an opening for policy entrepreneurs. In the process of learning, frequent informal dinners among the lead negotiators were invaluable, though most participants were from OECD countries, except for Brazil. Now in the Doha round, groups have proliferated, for at least three reasons.

First, the growing number of Members, each of whom has the institutional power to block consensus, created the need for the leading Members to meet in small groups to manage the process. Second, the WTO unlike the GATT is a "Single Undertaking", which means Members can accept the entire package, or nothing. Members have gradually understood the implication, that all aspects of the system are connected: in the Doha Round, Members are highly conscious of the interaction between negotiations on goods, agriculture, services, and rules. In this inherently multilateral process it is easier for small states to aggregate their material power in coalitions than to work alone. Power and learning are not opposed concepts: the ability to make ideas effective depends on power, but changing modalities mean different forms of power can be salient. Third, the most significant change might be in the modalities for the negotiations. Multilateral modalities such as formula approaches to tariff rate reductions

or new rules for domestic support provide more opportunities to block consensus than bilateral modalities such as “request and offer”. But these modalities also require a high level of engagement and negotiating resources because the agreed formulae or rules usually require domestic regulatory changes by Members and, once agreed by all, apply to all. As trade policy moves behind the border, voice becomes more important, and it becomes all the more important as exit becomes less plausible for any country.

The complex pattern of meetings shown in Annex B is directed to a simple goal, finding a consensus on a deal to reform global farm trade as part of a Single Undertaking package for the WTO Doha round as a whole. But that goal is anything but simple, because the deal must accommodate the interests of large commercial farmers in Europe and Brazil with those of small rice farmers in the Philippines and dairy farmers in eastern Canada. The current process has emerged as a means to help everybody learn about the issues and the technical complexities of the possible solutions. At its periphery it includes consultations on the issues with farm organizations. At its core are discussions among a small group of Members on the elements of a compromise. In Hong Kong, delegations were happy with the so-called “bottom up” process (inputs coming directly from members rather than from above), but the challenge in 2006 is moving to a “text-based” process. Will the Members in the small groups, like the Green Room, be able to explain to those they represent the basis for the text that emerges, and will it be seen to be a legitimate compromise?

The agriculture process evolved to accommodate changing configurations of power, more complex issues, and new modalities. The WTO will always face the institutional design task of providing a forum for all 149 Members to understand the intentions of all other Members (transparency), and to learn about complex new issues (new consensual knowledge for the public and officials), a forum where all Members have a voice (legitimation). The challenge is squaring the circle of the formal equality of members, and their practical inequality in capacity to participate in negotiations or contribute to the outcome. The evolving process for farm trade negotiations may provide a model. If agriculture is able to contribute to a successful Doha outcome, this new process, however complex and cumbersome, will have proved its worth, and may suggest new avenues for future research on the contribution of institutional design, in contrast to the usual political economy approaches to explaining international economic outcomes. And if the round fails, the evolving process may still prove its worth. The lessons GATT Contracting Parties learned in the Tokyo Round on how to negotiate domestic issues only paid off in the Uruguay Round. The lessons now being learned in the Doha round on how to ensure all Members of the WTO are part of the process may also pay off only in a subsequent round.[8]

[8] This idea was suggested by Gilbert Winham during a panel at the International Studies Association meeting in San Diego, March 2006

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Annex A: Glossary of WTO Groups Relevant to Agriculture

Name (date formed)	Description	Membership
ACP	Group of 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (56 WTO members) with preferential trading relations with the EU	Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
African Group	Holds joint positions in many negotiating issues.	All African Union countries who are also WTO members, currently 41 countries.
Cairns Group (1986)	Group of agricultural exporting nations lobbying for agricultural trade liberalization.	Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Uruguay.
C-4 (2003)	"Cotton Four" group of countries with specific interest in cotton	Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali.
FIPs (2004)	Five interested parties	Australia, Brazil, EU, India, USA
FIPs plus (2005)	FIPs plus friends	FIPs plus Argentina, Canada, China, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland.
G-4 (2005)		FIPs less Australia
G-4 plus Japan (2005)		G-4 plus Japan
G-6 (2005)		FIPs plus Japan
G-10 (2003)	Importers. Multi-functionality of agriculture and need for high levels of domestic support and protection	Chinese Taipei, Rep of Korea, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Norway and Switzerland.
G-11 (2005)	Full liberalization in tropical products	Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.
G-20 (2003)	Elimination of export subsidies and domestic support and liberalization of market access in agriculture	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.
G-33 (2003)	Developing country importers. Differentiated treatment of developing countries on basis of food security, sustainable livelihoods and rural development needs - Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanisms (SP/SSM)	Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, DAntigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Rep. Korea, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

G-90 (2003)	Coalition of African, ACP and least-developed countries (currently 64 members of the WTO)	African Group, ACP and LDCs
Mini-ministerial	Regular participants at mini-ministerials in 2005. (For an analysis of the principles of selection, see Wolfe, 2004.)	Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, EU, Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Rwanda, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, USA and Zambia.
LDCs	Least developed countries according to the UN definition (currently 32 members)	Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia.
Quint (1989)		Australia, Canada, EU, Japan, and USA.
RAMs	Recently acceded members	Albania, Croatia, Georgia, Jordan, Moldova and Oman.
Senior officials	Regular participants at meetings of senior officials in 2005.	Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, Hong Kong (China), India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, South Africa, USA, and Zambia.
Senior officials	New group in 2006	G-6 (Australia, Brazil, EU, India, Japan, USA) plus Canada, Egypt, Malaysia and Norway
SVEs (2003)	Small and vulnerable economies	Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.

Annex B: Informal Meetings Related to WTO Agriculture in 2005

Meetings of WTO agriculture-related coalitions (offensive and defensive) are listed in the rightmost column. Non-WTO meetings are listed in the middle column and cross-coalition meetings are listed in the second column from the left. "Agriculture Week" negotiating sessions are noted in the second column as well.

Date & Location	Meeting		
	Cross-coalition	Non-WTO	WTO Coalition
14 Dec, Hong Kong			Small, Vulnerable Economies Ministerial
14 Dec, Hong Kong			G-33 Ministerial
14 Dec, Hong Kong			Cairns Group Ministerial
14 Dec, Hong Kong	Ministerial Conference Agriculture: Informal Meeting		
13 Dec, Hong Kong			G-10 Ministerial
2-3 Dec, London		G-7 Finance Ministers	
2-3 Dec, Geneva	G-4 plus Japan meeting		
30 Nov, Brussels			G-90 Ministerial
29 Nov, Brussels			ACP Ministerial
23-24 Nov, Arusha		African Union 2nd Extraordinary Session of the Conference of Ministers of Trade	
22 Nov, Geneva	Agriculture negotiations Chair's informal "clinic" (for exchanging information)		
22 Nov, Geneva	G-4 plus Japan meeting		
20 Nov, Geneva	FIPs plus friends meeting		
15-16 Nov, Busan		17th APEC Ministerial	
12-13 Nov, Dhaka		13th SAARC Summit	
11 Nov, Geneva	Agriculture negotiations Chair's informal "clinic" (for exchanging information)		
9 Nov, Geneva			G-20 ministerial
8-9 Nov, Geneva	Geneva mini-ministerial		

7-9 Nov, Geneva	FIPs meeting		
7 Nov, London	G-4 plus Japan meeting		
7 Nov, Geneva	Agriculture negotiations Chair's informal "clinic" (for exchanging information)		
31 Oct, Geneva	Agriculture negotiations Chair's informal "clinic" (for exchanging information)		
27 Oct, Cairo			Nine African Members (Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.)
21 Oct, Geneva			G-20 meeting
20 Oct, Geneva	FIPs plus friends meeting		
19 Oct, Geneva	FIPs meeting		
14, 18 and 21 Oct, Geneva	Agriculture negotiations Chair's informal "clinic" (for exchanging information)		
12 Oct, Geneva	FIPs plus friends meeting		
12 Oct, Geneva	FIPs meeting		
12 Oct, Geneva	G-4 meeting		
11-12 Oct, Geneva			G-20 ministerial
10 Oct, Zurich	Zurich mini-ministerial		
9-10 Oct, Zurich	Senior officials meeting (host USA)		
30 Sep, 4, and 7 Oct, Geneva	Agriculture negotiations Chair's informal "clinic" (for exchanging information)		
29-30 Sep, Geneva	Senior officials meeting (host Japan)		
24 Sep, Paris	FIPs plus friends meeting		
23 Sep, Paris	FIPs meeting		
23 Sep, Paris	G-4 meeting		
13-16 Sep, Geneva	Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture		

9-10 Sep, Bhurban			G-20 meeting
19-20 Aug, Sanctuary Cove	6th Quint ministerial		
26 July, Geneva	Consultations between the Chair and Heads of Delegation to the agriculture negotiations		
18-20 Jul, Dakar		African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum	
11-12 Jul, Dalian	China mini-ministerial		
8 Jul, Gleneagles		G-8 Summit	
7 Jul, San José			Latin American Banana Exporters
4-6 Jul, Geneva	Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture		
4-5 Jul, Sirte		Assembly of the African Union, 5th Ordinary Session	
4 Jul, Geneva	FIPs plus friends		
27 Jun, Livingstone			LDC meeting
20-21 Jun, Geneva	Senior officials meeting (host EU)		
14-15 Jun, Paris		OECD Agriculture Committee (also attended by Brazil, China, South Africa)	
11-12 Jun, Jakarta			G-33 ministerial
8 Jun, Cairo		Third African Union Conference of Ministers of Trade	
2-3 Jun, Jeju		APEC Trade Ministers	
30 May-5 June, Geneva	Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture		
4 May, Paris	FIPs meeting		
2-4 May, Paris	Paris mini-ministerial		
2 May, Paris			G-10 Ministerial
18-19 Apr, Geneva	Senior officials meeting (host Canada) (This one had broader participation than others		

	— a mini-ministerial at senior official level.)		
13-19 Apr, Geneva	Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture		
1 Apr, Cartegena			27th Cairns Group ministerial
18-20 Mar, New Delhi			G-20 Ministerial
14-18 Mar, Geneva	Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture		
2-4 Mar, Mombasa	Kenya Mini-Ministerial		
25 Feb, Geneva	Agriculture consultations with the Chair of the negotiations		
12 Feb, Geneva	Senior officials meeting (host USA)		
7-11 Feb, Geneva	Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture		
3-4 Feb, Dakar		Dakar Agricole Forum (Meeting about agriculture organized by Senegal; included ministers from Canada, US, France, India, etc)	
30-31 Jan, Abuja		Assembly of the African Union, 4th Ordinary Session	
29 Jan, Davos	Davos mini-ministerial		
29 Jan, Davos			G-20 meeting in advance of World Economic Forum
27 Jan, Quito			Latin American Banana Exporters

Annex C: Leading Exporters and Importers in World Merchandise Trade (excluding intra-EU (25) trade), 2004

(Billion dollars and percentage)

	Exporters	Value	Share
1	Extra-EU (25) exports	1203.8	18.1
2	United States	818.8	12.3
3	China	593.3	8.9
4	Japan	565.8	8.5
5	Canada	316.5	4.8
6	Hong Kong, China	265.5	4.0
	domestic exports	20.0	0.3
	re-exports	245.6	3.7
7	Korea, Republic of	253.8	3.8
8	Mexico	189.1	2.8
9	Russian Federation	183.5	2.8
10	Taipei, Chinese	182.4	2.7
11	Singapore	179.6	2.7
	domestic exports	98.6	1.5
	re-exports	81.0	1.2
12	Malaysia	126.5	1.9
13	Saudi Arabia	126.2	1.9
14	Switzerland	118.5	1.8
15	Thailand	97.4	1.5
16	Brazil	96.5	1.5
17	Australia	86.4	1.3
18	United Arab Emirates	82.8	1.2
19	Norway	81.8	1.2
20	India	75.6	1.1

	Importers	Value	Share
1	United States	1525.5	21.8
2	Extra-EU (25) imports	1280.6	18.3
3	China	561.2	8.0
4	Japan	454.5	6.5
5	Canada	279.8	4.0
6	Hong Kong, China	272.9	3.9
	retained imports	27.3	0.4
7	Korea, Republic of	224.5	3.2
8	Mexico	206.4	3.0
9	Taipei, Chinese	168.4	2.4
10	Singapore	163.9	2.3
	retained imports	82.8	1.2
11	Switzerland	111.6	1.6
12	Australia	109.4	1.6
13	Malaysia	105.3	1.5
14	Turkey	97.5	1.4
15	India	97.3	1.4
16	Russian Federation	96.3	1.4
17	Thailand	95.4	1.4
18	Brazil	65.9	0.9
19	South Africa	57.1	0.8
20	Indonesia	54.9	0.8

Source WTO, (2005) International Trade Statistics, 2005 (Geneva: World Trade Organization). Table I.6

Annex D: Exports of Agricultural Products of Selected Economies, 2004

Rank by Value (million dollars)			Rank by % share in economy's merchandise exports		
1.	United States	79567	1.	New Zealand	59.7
2.	extra-EU (25) exports	78410	2.	Argentina	49.6
3.	Canada	40100	3.	Brazil	32.0
4.	Brazil	30853	4.	Australia	22.8
5.	China	24121	5.	Canada	12.7
6.	Australia	22101	6.	India	11.6
7.	Argentina	17082	7.	United States	9.7
8.	New Zealand	12157	8.	South Africa	7.9
9.	Mexico	11358	9.	extra-EU (25) exports	**6.5**
10.	India	8964	10.	Mexico	6.0
11.	Japan	5468	11.	China	4.1
12.	Korea, Republic of	4984	12.	Korea, Republic of	2.0
13.	South Africa	3619	13.	Japan	1.0

Source WTO, (2005) International Trade Statistics, 2005 (Geneva: World Trade Organization). Table I.9