# MSc THESIS

# Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions: the potential of middle power

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## *List of abbreviations*

ADMM-Plus – ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus

AIIB – Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

ALP – Australian Labor Party

APEC – Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

ASEAN – Association of South East Asian Nations

Austrade – the Australian Trade and Investment Commission

CON – Congruence Analysis

DFAT – Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

ESCAP – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

EU – European Union

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

G20 – Group of Twenty

ICC – International Criminal Court

ICJ – International Court of Justice

MIKTA – Mexico Indonesia Korea Turkey Australia partnership

MP – Member of Parliament (of Australia)

MPT – Middle Power Theory

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

ODA – Overseas Development Assistance

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PICs – Pacific Island Countries

UN – United Nations

UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

US – United States

USA – United States of America

WTO – World Trade Organisation

# Chapter One: Introduction

Since the Middle Ages, states have been establishing diplomatic missions abroad (Cohen, 2013). Today, the number of embassies and consulates in the world is larger than ever before (University of Denver, 2016). Considering the number of countries that now exist, along with the rise of globalisation, this is not altogether surprising. Nonetheless, there exists significant variation between states in terms of the number of diplomatic missions each possesses.

Often, the states with the most diplomatic missions abroad are also the most powerful. This is exemplified by the US and China, which have the largest number of diplomatic posts abroad of any nation (Roggeveen, 2016). Further, the five countries with the largest diplomatic networks are also the five permanent members of the UNSC. Having said this, there are also several nations with relatively few missions abroad, a fact that appears rather counterintuitive considering their status on the world stage. For instance, the Netherlands has a diplomatic network more than 50 per cent larger than that of Australia, which has a larger population as well as a GDP nearly double that of its Northern European partner (Oliver & Shearer, 2011, p. 25).

This peculiar case of Australia forms the basis of further research herein. Canberra's diplomatic network is the smallest in the G20. Its world status is apparent in other areas however: it has the world's thirteenth largest economy, is the twelfth largest ODA donor, and is ranked number twelve in the world for defence spending (Oliver & Shearer, 2011, p. 3). Despite this, Australia's diplomatic representation straggles far behind the likes of Finland, Sweden and the Czech Republic, all with less than half its population. Moreover, it does not belong to any supranational body such as the EU, which has some 140 delegations worldwide that can assist their citizens by conducting cultural events, implementing rights and improving relations, as well as by providing consular services when a member state does not have a diplomatic mission in the host state (Kerres and Wessler, 2015). Further exacerbating Australia's lack of

diplomatic presence is its geographical position in a "relatively volatile external environment", making its small diplomatic network all the more striking.[1]

Canberra has historically always had a high level of involvement in the international sphere; for instance it held the first presidency of the UNSC in 1946, and was instrumental in the creation of multilateral forums such as the Cairns Group and APEC (Australian Government, 2012, p. x). The Cairns Group is a group of twenty agricultural exporting nations aimed at liberalising trade and providing a united front on such issues at multilateral forums. Similarly, APEC is a coalition of Asian and Pacific-bordering countries looking to stimulate regional economic growth. Australia's leadership in these groupings has resulted in highly productive negotiations and strong trade ties being created with economically powerful countries. Its diplomatic representation – or lack thereof – is therefore all the more puzzling.

In fact, Australia has been heavily criticised in recent decades for its small number of diplomatic missions abroad. Numerous independent reports as well as internal inquiries have described the situation as a "diplomatic deficit", "punching below our [Australia's] weight" and "diplomatic disrepair" (Broadbent et al., 2009; Australian Government, 2012; Oliver & Shearer, 2011). In recent years, Australia has actually increased the size of its diplomatic network somewhat, although this is still often considered to not be large enough (Oliver & Shearer, 2011). It is therefore interesting to investigate why Australia has elected to not invest as much as other nations in building diplomatic posts abroad. As such, this thesis has sought to address the following question: *Why does Australia establish diplomatic missions abroad?*

## 1.1 Methods and approach

In order to examine the development Australia's diplomatic network, this paper uses middle power theory as its framework. The shaping power of Australia's

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[1] For instance, five of the ten highest military spending nations are Australia's regional neighbours in the Asia-Pacific, as well as six of the world's ten nuclear-armed countries (Doherty, 2018). More than 45% of its exports go to China and Japan, and it also remains a key US ally in the military sense, especially with new security dialogues aimed at halting Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea.

self-identity as a middle power is studied over time so as to ascertain the influence of this on its establishment of diplomatic missions.

While the literature on the topic of establishment of diplomatic missions tends to be focused on the concept of power, the notion of the potential of middle power states such as Australia has not been explicitly studied. As such, using middle power theory provides a unique theoretical framework for this topic.

Middle power theory was selected as the basis for this study because it has often successfully explained various aspects of states' policy choices, such as a preference for multilateralism or soft power promotion. It is also particularly appropriate for Australia, which is considered a middle power due to its affinity for collective defence and multilateral institutions, as well as its relatively strong economy and position as a regional hegemon. While this framework has never before been applied to states' establishment of diplomatic missions, its appropriateness for the study at hand is dual: it successfully explains middle power states' policy decision-making in numerous areas, and it is closely associated with Australia.

This thesis focuses on the notion of middle power self-conceptualisation; that is, how Australia's self-identification as a middle power can and has shaped its establishment of diplomatic missions. In order to understand Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power, a content analysis of Australian policy documents has been conducted.

This in-depth case study on Australia was split temporally, where three distinct periods in Canberra's recent history were examined and compared. Due to the focus on Australia's self-conceptualisation, official government documents such as the *Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper* were used as data sources, as well as politicians' speeches and government statements. These were then examined using content analysis in order to quantify and interpret language relating to middle power self-conceptualisation.

These data were then examined via congruence analysis. This was carried out in order to examine whether variation in middle power self-conceptualisation in Australia is associated with a variation in its establishment of diplomatic missions over time.

## 1.2 Societal relevance

Australia has been under increasing scrutiny of late regarding its relatively small diplomatic network, making this thesis particularly timely. In particular, the rapidly changing environment in the Asia-Pacific has led to increased concern over Canberra's so-called under-representation. A report on Australia's diplomatic missions conducted by the Lowy Institute entitled *Diplomatic Disrepair* emphasised this uncertainty in Australia's immediate vicinity:

> "Shifting power balances in Asia are creating uncertainty about the future of the existing regional order and the open economic system on which Australia's security, prosperity and political autonomy have rested for decades. Unexpected developments in Indonesia, our sprawling northern neighbour, can have real ramifications for Australians – as demonstrated by the interruption to the $300 million live cattle trade. Political instability in Papua New Guinea, the continuing stand-off with the military dictatorship in Fiji and a growing Chinese economic and aid presence have underlined the continuing volatility of our immediate neighbourhood." (Oliver & Shearer, 2011, p. vi).

Such economic and security issues further emphasise the relatively small size of Canberra's diplomatic network. As such, research into Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions can assist in increasing understanding into their usefulness. Publically, states tend to profess that building new embassies promotes trade and prevents wars (Neumayer, 2008). For many states, the size of their diplomatic network can be seen as a statement on their diplomatic strategy and foreign policy more generally. A notable recent example is President Trump's decision to move the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This has been perceived as symbolic of US support for Israel over Palestine, as well as indicative of the President's desire to win over his domestic audience, among other implications (Plett Usher, 2018). This implies that the resident embassy continues to hold significant

relevance, further exacerbating the question of why Australia has chosen to invest so little in its diplomatic network.

As such, it is useful to understand how and why diplomatic missions are used by Canberra, especially in light in the recent expansion of its overseas network. Moreover, considering the current tumultuous nature of its immediate neighbourhood in the Indo-Pacific, how Australia chooses to frame its establishment of diplomatic missions would have particularly important economic and security implications.

Indeed, over the years the Australian Government has employed different types of rhetoric to frame its various foreign policies (Ravenhill, 1998). Different governing parties have used different types of words and phrases, begging the question of if and how this language has shaped actual change in the establishment of diplomatic missions. By examining the implications of such governmental rhetoric, the implications of language and its ability to effect policy change in the realm of diplomatic can be better understood. As such, this research has particular relevance for the Australian diplomatic service and government, as well as the Australian public as a whole.

By understanding why states such as Australia choose to invest in fewer or more embassies abroad, governments worldwide can re-evaluate and improve upon their own policies within this domain. In particular, this will enable a better understanding of the costs and benefits of their current diplomatic missions, and the potential to be gained from establishing new ones.

## 1.3 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis commences with a literature review in Chapter Two, focusing on studies of the different factors affecting states' establishment of diplomatic missions abroad. In Chapter Three, the theoretical framework is explained, looking specifically at the appropriateness of middle power theory for the case of Australia and the variables under examination. Next, the research design is discussed in Chapter Four,

including case selection, data sources and collection, and methods of analysis. In Chapter Five, the results of the case study are presented by looking at Australia's self-conceptualisation in the four time periods under examination. Finally, conclusions are presented in Chapter Six, which includes limitations of this research and the potential for further study.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

Diplomatic relations today have undoubtedly evolved since the time of official emissaries and clay tablets in Ancient Mesopotamia (Cohen, 2013). Nonetheless, the art of diplomacy has endured, albeit with new aspects such as social media and increasing involvement of non-state actors. Diplomatic missions still exist and continue to be built, remaining at the symbolic core of inter-state relations. This literature review will examine the role of these diplomatic missions, discussing and comparing academic studies on this topic, as well as the factors influencing the establishment of diplomatic missions. The gaps in the literature will thus be identified in order to determine grounds for further study.

For the purposes herein, the diplomatic mission is defined according to the 2009 official report on "Australia's diplomatic deficit", as the physical overseas representation of a nation's interests, encompassing embassies, high commissions, consulates-general, consulates, and permanent missions (Broadbent et al., p. 18).[2]

## 2.1 The role of diplomatic missions

Officially, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations outlines how states conduct diplomacy. This asserts that the functions of diplomatic missions consist of: "a) Representing the sending State in the receiving State; (b) Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law; (c) Negotiating with the Government of the receiving State; (d) Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State; (e) Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations" (United Nations, 1961). This Convention forms the basis of diplomatic immunity and has been signed and

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[2] Missions between Commonwealth countries are known as high commissions and not embassies, although their functionality is the same.

ratified by 191 countries, and as such is widely considered the cornerstone of diplomatic relations today.

In his extensively cited book, G. R. Berridge delves deeper into the functions of diplomatic missions, identifying nine key aspects: representation; promoting friendly relations; negotiation; lobbying; clarifying intentions; information gathering and political reporting; policy advice; consular services; commercial diplomacy; and propaganda (2015). He also identifies three "non-core functions" of embassies: the administration of foreign aid; political intervention; and providing cover for the prosecution of their wars (2015, p. 127). As such, it can be expected that states' decisions to establish diplomatic missions abroad would be based on such factors.

It thus follows that when a state decides to build a new diplomatic post, it is because it perceives that this physical location will fulfil these functions. Nonetheless, states have different priorities at different points in time, and because of various resource constraints must think carefully about their diplomatic partners (Kinne, 2014). As such, various factors come into play, each providing different kinds of perceived value.

## 2.2 The effectiveness and value of diplomatic missions

Contemporary evidence demonstrates that states still value the physical resident embassy precisely because they continue to establish diplomatic missions abroad. The number of new posts is constantly rising, missions are rarely closed, and when a new state is established, building new embassies tends to be one of the first agenda items. For instance, when South Sudan became newly independent in 2011, one of the first things its government did was to initiate a campaign to immediately build 54 new embassies (Kinne, 2014, p. 247). As such, it would appear that diplomacy and the establishment of diplomatic missions remain core aspects of states' foreign policy.

In Kinne's large-scale study, it was found that despite the increase in globalisation and digital technology, physical diplomatic posts are still effective for gathering "…information on one another's economies, foreign policies, armed forces, governing coalitions, and various other facets of government and society" (2014, p. 248).

More specifically within the field of foreign policy analysis, strong diplomatic networks are also considered important. Diplomatic ties are often perceived as a key aspect of the "foreign policy tool-box" (Criekemans in Murray et al., 2011, p. 716). Given the perceived importance of diplomatic ties, this raises the question of why diplomatic representation is not ubiquitous. That is, why do some states establish more diplomatic missions than others?

Within the literature on foreign policy, a number of studies emphasise the effectiveness and value of diplomatic missions. Nonetheless, there have been very few in-depth studies conducted specifically on the topic of diplomatic missions. With the exceptions of Neumayer's and Kinne's papers, no large-scale academic studies on this topic exist. It is therefore curious that the most traditional, central aspect of this field – diplomatic missions – is so often overlooked. As such, there exists no clear consensus on what drives states' decision to establish a diplomatic mission; various factors and dimensions come into play.

## 2.3 The economic dimension

In terms of modern-day applicability, a recent empirical study by Ruel, Lee and Visser has placed significant value on commercial diplomacy (2013). This can be defined as "…an activity conducted by state representatives which is aimed at generating commercial gain in the form of trade and inward and outward investment for the home country…" (2012, p. 74). Through interviews with diplomats and private enterprises, it was found that international business is of increasing importance to governments, and that commercial diplomacy has significant perceived benefits for small businesses. While the study makes it clear that international business is highly

valued, it raises the question of how commercial diplomacy is best conducted, to which there are various perspectives emphasising aspects such as culture and history.

Similarly, literature on the issues surrounding economic diplomacy found that this field is not limited to the economic or diplomatic domains, but rather that the success of economic diplomatic activities is also dependent on cultural, historical and organisational aspects (van Bergeijk, Okano-Heijmans and Melissen, 2011). While studies have been conducted on the effects of sanctions and aid as tools of economic diplomacy however, there remains significant debate about their effectiveness. By extension, literature on the economic dimension of states' establishment of diplomatic missions is also limited.

Nonetheless, there exists a small realm of literature linking economic factors to the establishment of diplomatic posts. In fact, the majority of studies looking specifically at diplomatic missions attribute choices of diplomatic representation to trade flows, finding that embassies tend to focus their time on export promotion (James, 1980; Segura-Cayuela & Vilarrubia, 2008). This economic dimension is not a new phenomenon either, for instance, the Dutch established an embassy in China in 1655 with the specific objective of improving trade (Ruel, Lee and Visser, 2013). Today, this commerical emphasis appears to remain. In his book on modern diplomacy, R. P. Barston argues that while some of the more traditional functions of the embassy – such as eliminating military threats – have lost importance, focus on the promotion of economic interests has only increased (2014). This focus on economic ties has been re-emphasised in a number of empirical studies finding that "trade follows the flag" (Pollins 1989; Rose 2007; Neumayer 2008). Indeed, within the limited literature on diplomatic networks, the focus on economics and trade seems to be the enduring trait. Despite this, there has been little academic focus on the link with states' decision-making when it comes to establishing diplomatic missions.

## 2.4 The ethnographic dimension

Of course, it is only logical that the choice to establish a diplomatic mission does not come down to a pure numbers-based calculation of the economic benefits. As asserted by Small and Singer, every government must make decisions based on their perception of the value of exchanging missions with others in the system (1973). Similarly, Nierop argues that patterns of diplomatic representations "reflect deliberate political action" (1994, p. 66). As such, it appears that endogenous factors also play a role. That is, that internal factors surrounding policymakers' decision-making are also important.

This endogenous argument was also made by Kinne, who conducted one of the only large-scale studies on diplomatic representation by looking at the network effects of diplomatic ties (2014). His study consisted of a large-N analysis on signalling, strategy and prestige. These network effects indicated that states are much more likely to respond to cues from their diplomatic partners because signals are likely to generate policy changes. He argues that signalling and prestige "…though they may appear symbolic, are a consequence of strategic responses to the costs and informational asymmetries imposed by the global diplomatic network" (2014, p. 248). This indicates that diplomatic missions are a source of status, that their symbolism and prestige are more important than actual material gains. Kinne asserts that this is why diplomatic missions continue to be relied upon as a means of securing prestige within the international system and why diplomatic ties are used to indicate approval or disapproval of particular policies.

In fact, there exist a number of studies that have also found other ethnographic factors play a role. For instance, it has been argued that alliances and colonial ties play a role when establishing diplomatic missions, with countries such as the United Kingdom having more embassies so as to stay closely connected with former colonies (MacRae, 1989). Conversely, others argue that colonial ties do not have a statistically significant effect on patterns of representation (Neumayer, 2008, p. 234). As such, there exist significant discrepancies within the literature on this topic, much of which is now quite out-dated (Alger and Brams, 1967; Russett and Lamb, 1969). This begs the question of whether or not endogenous factors such as historical ties and symbolism really do play a role in the establishment of diplomatic missions, and if so, to what extent.

## 2.5 Realism and power

It is also crucial to look at the exogenous factors that can play a role in how states conduct diplomacy. Namely, this requires an examination of the concept of power, that is, the ability to influence the outcome of events, which is at the core of traditional international relations theory. Consistent with the realist approach, studies have found that establishment of a diplomatic presence can be framed as a sign of power, enabling the advancement of foreign policy priorities (Vanhoonacker & Pomorska, 2013).

Looking specifically at the literature regarding states' establishment of diplomatic missions, this notion of power is indeed the most prominent. A number of studies attribute the size of countries' diplomatic networks to how powerful they are. As noted by Barston, states view "diplomatic real estate" as "part of the accoutrements of power" (2006, p. 22). Similarly, Small and Singer found that the number of diplomatic missions hosted by a country is an indicator of its relative power in the international system, both at present and in the future (1973).

Despite these findings, there has only been one in-depth, geographical, large-scale study on the relationship between a state's power and the number of diplomatic missions it possesses, which is Neumayer's large-N analysis on patterns of diplomatic representation (2008). This quantitative study conducted statistical modelling of dyadic relationships in the number of diplomatic missions sent and received by states. It argued that the choice to establish a diplomatic mission abroad is based on a cost-benefit analysis of geographical distance, ideological affinity and power status, the latter being the most important factor because sending and hosting a large number of missions "symbolises and represents power" (2008, p. 233). It was also found that reciprocity correlates with states' establishment of diplomatic missions: when countries are observed in pairs, usually either both have representation in each other's country, or neither (p. 232). This was the case in 90 per cent of observed ties,

however the remaining 10 per cent remain a puzzle. One such abnormal case is Australia.

Neumayer's findings, like those of Kinne on network signalling, are useful because they are large-scale; by looking at such an array of countries' diplomatic missions, the studies are more convincing and generalisable. This being said, the fact that both look at different factors – power and networking, respectively – and that these are the only two large-scale studies on the topic in existence – lessens the impact of results. Moreover, neither study successfully explains the case of Australia or other similar middle power countries.

## 2.6 The problem with power

While these arguments regarding power have their place – indeed it is clear that the most powerful states send and host the most diplomatic missions – they raise several more questions. Namely, what is the best way to explain countries that are neither major or minor powers.

For instance, looking at Neumayer's study it could be expected that the Republic of Korea, Canada and Australia would have similarly sized diplomatic networks. They share a similar ideological affinity, power status (their GDP size is comparable and all are active members of various international organisations), and are similarly geographically distanced from the traditional hub of diplomacy in central Europe. Despite this, the size of Canberra, Ottawa and Seoul's diplomatic networks is very different: 116, 147 and 172 missions abroad respectively (Lowy Institute, 2017).

South Korea in particular is a very comparable case to Australia: both project power in the same region, both are G20 countries, members of the OECD and the middle power political partnership group known as MIKTA, they have similar GDPs and a democratic system of governance. Despite this, Seoul's diplomatic network is almost 50 per cent larger than Canberra's.

It therefore appears that while large-scale studies can explain the diplomatic representation of the most and least powerful countries, their ability to account for the diplomatic network of middle power countries such as Australia is more limited. Consequently, this concept of middle power has been looked at more in depth in this study, and is discussed in the following section.

## 2.7 Academic relevance

This literature review has not been exhaustive largely due to the lack of academic focus specifically on states' establishment of diplomatic missions. Nonetheless, the importance of diplomatic missions and the resident embassy is clear. Empirical studies have found that diplomatic representation is indeed important: it has a particular impact on trade and is also a measure of the perception of relative and future importance that state possesses (Small and Singer, 1973; Pollins, 1989; Rose, 2007). This being said, while some literature exists on states' establishment of diplomatic missions abroad, there remains little consensus on what factors impact this, or on the ongoing relevance of diplomatic missions today.

What is starkly obvious is that the most powerful states have the largest diplomatic networks (Neumayer, 2008). This can be observed when comparing the most and least powerful states. It is intuitive, for instance, that the US and China have more embassies abroad than nations such as Mauritius and Lithuania. When observing states with mid-level power however, the distinction becomes less obvious. For instance, India has fewer diplomatic posts than Spain despite a vastly larger economy and population. It therefore appears that the notion of power can predict the establishment of diplomatic missions at the top and bottom ends of the power spectrum, but not in the middle, including the aforementioned peculiar case of Australia. Moreover, no academic study expressly examines or explains Australia.

# Chapter Three: A Middle Power Approach

## 3.1 The usefulness of middle power theory

As mentioned in the previous section, no study has explicitly examined or accurately explained the case of Australia and its establishment of diplomatic missions. The literature on this topic is dominated by the concept of power, and therefore tends to focus on major power and minor power countries, without looking at those in the middle.

While middle power theory has never before been specifically applied to the establishment of diplomatic missions abroad, it has been used to explain various other foreign policy decisions of states (Ravenhill, 1998; Beeson, 2011; Emmers et al, 2015). For instance, Jordaan argues that middle power countries often take leadership roles in advocating changes in areas such as environmental policy, because while these topics tend to be overlooked by hegemons, middle powers do have the capacity to influence the more powerful states in regards to these issues (2003). Because middle power theory successfully explains numerous foreign policy decisions, it logically follows that it could shed light on states' establishment of diplomatic missions.

Former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans succinctly outlines the policy decisions and priorities of middle powers when he described their role as entailing the following:

> "…good international citizenship, within the utility, and necessity, of acting cooperatively with others in solving international problems, particularly those problems which by their nature cannot be solved by any country acting alone, however big and powerful. The crucial point to appreciate about good international citizenship is that this is not something separate and distinct from the pursuit of national interests… On the contrary, being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen should itself be seen as a third category of national

interest, right up there alongside the traditional duo of security and economic interests." (2011).

For Evans, this notion of being a good international citizen is key for middle powers, thus shaping their policy choices. States' middle power status has also been found to shape other aspects of their policy decision-making, such as seeking regional leadership or relying on soft power projection (Cooper, 2008). Diplomatic missions are the physical representation of a state's government and by extension its policies; it can therefore be expected that if middle power theory can explain states' policies such as environmentalism and international citizenship, it could also explain how it establishes its diplomatic network. It is therefore an applicable and appropriate for the issue at stake in this thesis: Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions.

In fact, middle power theory is frequently associated with Australia in the literature, and it has often been used to explain its policy choices. There have been numerous studies defining Australia as a middle power, especially in recent years (Jordaan, 2003; Beeson, 2011; Cotton and Ravenhill, 2012; Carr, 2014). Moreover, the term "middle power" has been considered one of the most enduring in Australia's foreign policy discourse over the past several decades (Carr, 2014). Its applicability for this study is therefore twofold: middle power theory explains foreign policy choices, and it is closely associated with the case of Australia.

This being said, while a number of studies have been published on Australia's status as a middle power and the implications and potential of this, there has been little academic focus on how this relates to the size of its diplomatic network. Middle power theory therefore provides a unique and appropriate method of understanding this case.

As such, this paper uses middle power theory as its framework of analysis. That is, the concepts of middle power theory have been examined in relation to Australia and its establishment of diplomatic missions abroad.

### 3.1.1 Conceptualising middle power

It should be noted that there exists no unanimously agreed upon definition of middle power (Ungerer 2007, Carr 2014; Robertson, 2017). The term has been used to describe countries from Nigeria to Sweden, and from Malaysia to Argentina.[3] This middle power label has been applied based on all kinds of selective criteria, from economic size to military capability. Despite lexical difficulties with the notion however, it continues to resonate with academics and practitioners alike.

The emergence of contemporary use of the term "middle power" can be easily traced back to emerged at the end of World War Two in the Canadian Press, when Australians and Canadians were seeking a distinct role in post-war settlement (Robertson, 2017, p. 357). Since then, there have been numerous definitions given, although the essence of the concept remains more or less the same.

Put simply, the notion of middle power states refers to those countries that are "…neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity and influence, and demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system" (Jordaan, 2003, p. 165). A particularly key aspect to this theory is that these states' self-identity centres on them being a middle power, meaning they actually label themselves as such (Carr, 2014, p. 76). Despite some disagreement on the intricacies of this theory however, it is widely accepted that Australia constitutes a middle power (Beeson, 2011; Carr, 2014; Robertson, 2017).

In his study on soft power and the re-calibration of middle powers, Cooper makes an important point that objective criteria such as GDP, population size and military capacity can only be considered a starting point for ascertaining whether a state is a middle power (2008, p. 37).

Carr adheres to this viewpoint, arguing in his study on Australia's middle power role that for a state to be a middle power it must adhere to certain criteria, namely an ability to credibly provide for its own defence while also possessing demonstrated

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[3] See for instance Jordaan, 2003, where the distinction between emerging and traditional middle powers is made, defining various states as middle powers.

diplomatic leadership "… with a definable ability to affect the international system" (2014, p. 81). More specifically pertaining to Australia, Jordaan defines it as an emerging middle power because it is regionally dominant: "Australia has a sizeable and highly developed economy, but its geographic isolation dissipates its regional focus and influence, as well as raising questions of self-identity." (2003, p. 172).

Coupled with these notions of military capacity and regional dominance is states' self-conceptualisation as a middle power. Carr defines this as the "identity approach to middle power" (2014), and this concept has been reiterated in other studies on small states (Keohane, 1969), sub-state diplomacy (Criekemans, 2010), cycles of middle power activism (Ravenhill, 1998), and the power of domestic politics on diplomacy (Putnam, 1988). On the other hand, many states that are considered to be middle powers have rejected this label (Jennings & Bergin, 2014; Robertson, 2017). As such, the notion of self-conceptualisation is an essential component of middle power theory: whether or not a country perceives itself as a middle power is significant.

This identity approach is not exclusive to middle power theory either. As asserted by Finnemore and Sikkink: "knowing about a state's perception of its identity (both type and role) should help us to understand how the state will act" (2001, p. 399). As such, having knowledge of Australia perceives its identity – as a middle power or otherwise – could aid in the comprehension of and even the prediction of how it might act; this is the essence of the middle power approach.

Similarly, it has been argued that the adoption of a middle power identity leads to a change in state behaviour, as evidenced by the cyclical nature of Canadian and Australian foreign policy in recent decades (Ravenhill, 1998; Carr 2014). This further emphasises the importance of labelling and self-identity as key aspects of middle power theory: they give middle power countries the ability to shape and change their foreign policy. This in turn implies that states' self-conceptualisation might also impact their establishment of diplomatic missions.

All this being said, simply labelling or defining a country as a middle power is insufficient as a framework. While Australia is widely identified as a middle power, the implications of this must also be considered.

### 3.1.2 The potential of middle powers

The current state of the world order, namely the decline of US hegemony and the rise of China, has brought rise to literature and debate regarding what policies should inform any new global structure (Beeson, 2011). While the international system is changing however, smaller non-hegemons continue to play a role. Middle power theory has more or less been devised in order to explain this phenomenon: "to cope with the theoretical challenge of explaining the considerable influence some states have on international relations even though their resources are much smaller than those of great powers." (Gilboa, 2010).

Unlike so-called hegemons, middle power countries have relatively fewer resources with which to defend or pursue their interests. On the other hand, unlike small states that are not powerful, middle power countries are not simply forced to obey the great powers, but can defend their interests by other methods, such as through engagement in negotiation with great powers, or via their involvement in multilateral forums (Beeson, 2011). This is precisely where their potential lies: rather than being complacent in international problems, middle powers practice "good international citizenship" in their diplomacy by embracing compromise positions and pursuing multilateral solutions to international problems (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, 1993, p. 19).

As such, the potential of middle powers lies in their unique position and ability to shape events. This ties in with what Carr defines as the systemic impact approach of middle power theory, which focuses on the potential of middle powers "…to alter or affect specific elements of the international system in which they find themselves… through the outcome, rather than the intention, of their actions." (2014, p. 79). Australia certainly fulfils these criteria as it has the potential and capacity to influence

the international system, albeit in a different way than hegemons. In his study on the potential of Australia as a middle power, Carr asserts precisely this: "the Australian state's ability to credibly provide for its own defence (or at least substantially raise the risks and costs to an aggressor), along with demonstrated diplomatic leadership, suggests a middle power country… with a definable ability to affect the international system, especially around its core interests." (2014, p. 81).

Another key aspect of middle power theory is middle power diplomacy, also referred to as 'coalition-building' or 'niche diplomacy' (Robertson, 2017, p. 360). This sub-theory has been apparent in the literature since Frederic Soward's 1963 paper, which refers to middle power diplomacy as the tendency towards the maintenance of "strategic know-how" in important diplomatic areas and the tendency to work with like-minded states (pp. 132-136). This further reinforces the potential of middle power states: their unique manner of conducting diplomacy, which emphasises knowledge and working with allies based on values, gives them the ability to effect real change.

This potential of Australia and other middle powers is best exemplified by how they fit into global governance structures. Middle powers make a difference via their involvement in multilateral forums, which is not only valued, but expected. This is especially the case for Australia, which has actually been criticised for not acknowledging its role as a middle power (Jennings & Bergin, 2014). This role includes, for instance, its position as an enhanced partner of NATO and in the UNSC, as well as its history of making "…a significantly better than symbolic contribution to Coalition operations in the Middle East." (Jennings & Bergin, 2014, p. 2). Middle powers' potential lies in their influential and respected role within these kinds of international platforms.

It is the notion of *potential* that lies at the core of middle power theory and that applies to the case of Australia so well, hence it forming the basis of the theoretical framework for this study. Combined with the notion of self-conceptualisation, middle power theory provides a unique and appropriate theoretical basis for studying Australian policy regarding its diplomatic network.

## 3.2 Middle power rhetoric in Australia

For any country, the particular rhetoric used in the public field is a way of framing its policies. In terms of middle power states, Ungerer presents this idea very succinctly: "…when foreign policy practitioners make declaratory statements about exercising a country's 'middle power' role in the international system, they are employing a type of shorthand for a pre-defined and generally agreed set of foreign policy behaviours." (2007, p. 539). This notion of using middle power to characterise foreign policy activities is also apparent in Australia.

Academics and practitioners alike have referred to Australia's position as a middle power ever since the end of the Second World War (Ungerer, 2007). Despite this, the actual extent of this rhetoric regarding middle power identity has varied over time, especially within the realm of domestic politics. In fact, the notion of middle power diplomacy is considered a point of contention and competition in foreign policy discourse between different political parties in Australia (Ravenhill 1998; Ungerer, 2007, Jennings & Bergin, 2014).

In his recent study on defining middle powers and political competition for control of foreign policy narratives, Robertson argues that Australia's political history has been characterised by a divide in narratives and support for middle power diplomacy (2017). Australia is a bipartisan country, and the rhetoric between the liberal ALP and the more conservative Liberal Party (its counterintuitive name aside), differs greatly. On one hand, the ALP promotes the following:

> "…narratives claiming to be the originators and inheritors of the middle-power tradition… argues that Australia's middle-power diplomacy started in the 1940s with […] efforts to promote a stronger voice for all nations during the formation of the United Nations, and continues as a prominent component of ALP policy." (Robertson, 2017, pp. 364-365).

On the other side of the spectrum, Robertson found that the narrative of the Liberal Party is that Australia is "more than a middle power" and that to "…label Australia as a middle power is to belittle its position" (2017, p. 365). In fact, the Liberal

Government in the past tended to prefer conceptualising Australia as a "pivotal power" (Cotton and Ravenhill, 2011, p. 2), while the current Liberal Government narrative has used the term "middle power" when addressing international audiences, but tends to prefer the term "top-20 nation" when addressing a domestic audience (2017, p. 365). Undoubtedly, Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power has varied over time, as well as from government to government.

As such, not only does prior literature indicate that middle power self-conceptualisation and labelling can change and does play a role, but also that this varies greatly in Australia itself. So, if Canberra's rhetoric about middle power diplomacy can vary so much, it can be expected that this would cause a variation in its diplomatic representation as well.

## 3.3 Variables and hypotheses

The primary concept in this thesis is that of diplomatic missions. As previously mentioned, for the purposes of this study, the diplomatic mission is defined as the physical overseas representation of a nation's interests, encompassing embassies, high commissions, consulates-general, consulates, and permanent missions (Broadbent et al., 2009, p. 18). This definition is ideal because it is broad, meaning all kinds of diplomatic representation can and will be studied, making findings more generalisable. This concept of (the presence of) a diplomatic mission is the dependent variable of the study.

The primary concepts of middle power theory (as mentioned in the previous section) drive the hypotheses for this study. Namely, this study focuses on Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power, as this is one of the core concepts of the theory. As previously mentioned, the adoption of a middle power identity shapes states' foreign policy, and that in the case of Australia this has differed over different time periods (Ravenhill, 1998; Carr 2014; Jennings & Bergin; 2014). The notion of Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power has affected other aspects of its foreign policy, so it is useful to examine whether this is the case with its

establishment of diplomatic missions as well. This presence of a middle power identity therefore constitutes an interesting independent variable for this study.

As such, the hypothesis for the thesis is as follows:

**H:** As Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power increases, its establishment of diplomatic missions abroad also increases.

### 3.3.1 Operationalisation

This hypothesis has certain empirical implications. For it to be accepted, a change in the size of Australia's diplomatic network would need to be observed. This mean that if there were a change in the independent variable – Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power – accompanied by a change in the size of Australia's diplomatic network, then the hypothesis would be accepted.

The dependent variable – Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions abroad – has also been examined over time. As such, it has been operationalised according to the number of missions abroad. By extension, increase and decrease have been measured simply by counting the number of missions.

The independent variable has been operationalised according to frequency. That is, the quantity of middle power self-conceptualisation was observed over time, in order to ascertain whether variation was present. This notion of self-identity is intertwined with the primary concepts of middle power theory discussed previously in this section. Namely, the fact that this theory as it pertains to Australia focuses on its explicit labelling as a middle power, as well as a regional power in the Asia-Pacific, its desire to make a difference in the international sphere, and its potential to influence world events through multilateral forums.[4] As such, the presence or absence of language relating to a middle power self-identity was examined. In order to measure

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[4] These criteria were based on Robertson's study on middle power definitions (2017). They were used to conduct the content analysis, more details on which are given in the Research Design chapter.

this self-conceptualisation as a middle power, a content analysis was conducted. More detail on the exact methodology of this is provided in the following section.

# Chapter Four: Research Design

## 4.1 Case selection

This study consists of an in-depth case study of Australia, employing a congruence analysis to make inferences regarding to what extent Australia's middle power self-identity has shaping power over its establishment of diplomatic missions abroad.

This case of Australia was disaggregated into multiple temporal cases. This enabled a better establishment of a causal mechanism by examining the variation of Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power and its establishment of diplomatic missions over time.

### 4.1.1 Case classification

In order to examine the variation in Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation, its contemporary foreign policy and history of diplomatic engagement were categorised into three time periods. These were chosen because, based on preliminary research, there exists variation of the independent variable between each case. Moreover, each case constitutes a different government, that is, a distinctive socio-political context where there was variation of the independent variable (middle power self-conceptualisation).

Historically, there has been a political divide in policy and rhetoric regarding the focus on Australia's middle power status. The two major parties – the ALP and the Liberal Party – have very different positions. While the ALP advocates Australia's middle power role, the Liberal Party argues that Australia is "more than a middle power" (Robertson, 2017, p. 365). Consequently, these differences in government were taken into account when classifying cases.

It is also important to note that the actual establishment of diplomatic missions takes time, especially in a democratic country like Australia. As such, it can be expected that if the hypothesis is accepted and an increase in middle power self-conceptualisation leads to an increase in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions abroad, the change may not be immediate. This is why multiple cases were selected; while the government may start to speak about Australia's middle power identity, there could be a lag of several years before this translates into the actual building of new diplomatic missions.

In order to gain a particular insight into Australia's modern political history and the recent increase in size of its diplomatic network, this study has only looked at roughly the last 30 years. As official government data on Australia's diplomatic network is not available online prior to 1997, this was selected as the first year of analysis.

The details of each of the selected time periods are provided below, along with notable events during that time:

- 1997 – 2007:
    - Publication of Australia's first foreign policy white paper; and
    - Australia's conservative Liberal Government in power. It prided itself on privileging bilateral ties and was heavily critical of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (Beeson, 2011, p. 564).
- 2007 – 2013:
    - Return to power of Australia's Labour Government, where then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's rhetoric was particularly focused on the notion of Australia as a middle power; and
    - At the end of this period, the Inquiry into Australia's overseas representation was published (Australian Government, 2012a).
- 2013- 2018:
    - Change of government to the Liberal party; and
    - Federal Budget 2015 – 2016 announces "the single largest expansion of Australia's diplomatic network in forty years" (Bishop, 2015a). Several new diplomatic missions abroad have consequently been opened.

## 4.2 Data sources and collection

### 4.2.1 Australia's diplomatic missions

Data for the dependent variable – Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions – were obtained from official Australian Government documents. Namely, from DFAT's annual reports, which are published at the end of every financial year for the period of 1 July to 30 June. Each report contains a "summary of the overseas network", with information on Australia's diplomatic missions abroad during that time period.

For the purposes of this study, the following posts were included and considered a diplomatic mission: embassies and high commissions; consulates-general and consulates, provided they were headed by chief of mission accredited to the host country; permanent missions and delegations to multilateral organisations that are headed by a separate head of mission to the embassy; and Austrade missions/offices.[5] The number of honorary consulates was also taken into consideration.[6] Temporarily closed and vacant posts were excluded. These criteria were selected so as to ensure that the study was strictly on diplomatic missions according to the chosen definition, looking only at those that were active so as to gain a more accurate idea of how much Australia was establishing diplomatic missions over time.

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[5] Austrade is a statutory agency within DFAT with various representations overseas. Its role is to promote Australia's interests in trade, investment and education (Australian Government, 2018).
[6] Honorary consulates provide consular assistance to citizens, although they do not technically have diplomatic status, have been included in this dataset because they are considered by DFAT to be "really important and really valuable in being able to represent you and wave the flag more widely than you could otherwise do and therefore increase your representational reach." (Australian Government, 2012, p. 18). Moreover, the number of honorary consulates Australia has opened has steadily increased during the time period under examination, so they are useful point of reference for how much its so-called diplomatic footprint has increased. This being said, their lack of diplomatic status means they were not granted the same level of importance as embassies and high commissions when analysis was conducted.

The full dataset of Australia's diplomatic missions was collated from the DFAT
Annual Reports and can be found in the Appendix.

### *4.2.2 Middle power identity*

In order to measure the independent variable – Australia's self-conceptualisation as a
middle power – a content analysis was conducted. To do this, data were collected
from official Australian Government sources, such as speeches, statements and
websites. Of particular focus were DFAT's annual reports, as well as the *Foreign
Policy White Papers*, the most recent of which was published in November 2017 by
DFAT (Australian Government, 2017).[7] This outlines Australia's ambitions, strategies
and perceived challenges relating to foreign policy and diplomacy in the coming
years.

### 4.3 Method of analysis

Data were analysed qualitatively using the congruence method, which is a
"within-case method of causal interpretation" (George and Bennett, 2004, p. 181).
Theory is used as the basis of this, and its relevance and ability to explain the cases is
assessed (Blatter and Blume, 2008, p. 319). So in this instance, the ability of middle
power theory to explain the establishment of diplomatic missions in three different
time periods in Australia is assessed.

More specifically, the congruence method entails a study of co-variation, whereby:
> "causal inferences are drawn on the basis of observed co-variation between
> causal factors (independent variables) and causal effects (dependent variables)."
> (Blatter and Blume, 2008, p. 318).

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[7] The Australian Government has only published three Foreign Policy White Papers during the time
period under examination, hence why only three documents have been included.

This enables an understanding of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. So in this instance, covariance is applied over time within the case of Australia, thus enabling an understanding of whether or not middle power self-conceptualisation caused an increase in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions. This in turn gives an indication of to what extent middle power theory permits an understanding of this over different time periods.

This method was particularly appropriate for the study herein because it necessitates a theoretically deduced hypothesis for causal direction, which in this instance is the aforementioned hypothesis pertaining to middle power theory. The different dimensions of middle power theory – discussed later in this section in 'content analysis' – are used to explain the variation in the different cases. This relates directly to the hypothesis, enabling an understanding of whether variation in middle power self-conceptualisation corresponds to a variation in Australia's diplomatic missions.

Congruence analysis was used because it enables an understanding of to what extent the dependent variable varies when the independent variable varies. That is, if there is low self-conceptualisation as a middle power, how much Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions abroad increases or decreases, compared to the other cases (if at all). So, the variation between cases was the focus. As such, congruence analysis was an ideal method for this study: it allows the application of middle power theory, while the co-variation component enables an understanding of the link between middle power self-conceptualisation and the establishment of diplomatic missions.

It is important to note however that the congruence method has certain limitations. Namely, the fact that findings can be somewhat abstract, largely due to the fact that theory forms the basis for predictions and observations. By extension, concrete results can be difficult, as observations are based on somewhat abstract concepts, in this case aspects of middle power theory. Findings are also arguably not objective, as they are subject to the researcher's own interpretation of the theory and application of this to the observations. Nonetheless, the congruence method remains the most ideal for this study, due to its unique ability to specifically apply middle power theory to the establishment of diplomatic missions, enabling a more in-depth understanding of the Australian case.

### 4.3.1 Content analysis

In order to undertake the congruence analysis, a content analysis of all the aforementioned documents was first conducted. Terms pertaining to Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power were the focus. The language and rhetoric used, and the number of times such terms were used, were compared between the different time periods. This enabled an assessment of whether or not Australia self-conceptualising as a middle power affects the size of its diplomatic network.

To conduct the content analysis, language was coded in order to ease interpretation. Any and all language indicating that Australia is self-conceptualising as a middle power was counted and interpreted. More specifically, the words and phrases indicating Australia's self-identification as a middle power will be based on the following criteria from Robertson's study on middle power definitions (2017):[8]

- Explicit references to Australia's middle power status (i.e. explicit labelling and use of the words "middle power");
- References to Australia's potential to influence, lead and make a difference in the international sphere;
- Allusions to regional ambitions in the Asia-Pacific and/or Indo-Pacific (e.g. phrases such as "regional leadership"); and
- Mentions of leadership, involvement or investment in multilateral institutions such as the UN and ASEAN.[9] In particular, the use of positive language toward multilateral involvement or increased multilateral investment.

Once this language was coded and counted, it was compared between the different time periods. For a congruence analysis, the quality and quantity of middle power

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[8] This paper was particularly appropriate because it focuses explicitly on defining middle powers, and uses Australia as a case study.

[9] According to Robertson, middle power diplomacy constitutes "…a tendency towards the maintenance of 'strategic know-how' in key diplomatic areas and the tendency to work with like-minded states (132–136). These ideas would later be formulated as 'coalition- building' and 'niche diplomacy' by subsequent generations of middle-power enthusiasts who would base their definition on behaviour" (2017).

self-conceptualisation was compared between the three cases, in order to determine whether variation in the dependent and independent variables exists, and whether this changes between time periods.

# Chapter Five: Analysis

For this congruence analysis, the variation in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions in the three cases was compared and contrasted with the extent of its middle power self-conceptualisation. As such, in order to determine whether co-variation exists, first the findings on Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions between the three time cases is presented, followed by the findings regarding its middle power conceptualisation. Finally, these results are compared in the congruence analysis section.

## 5.1 Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions
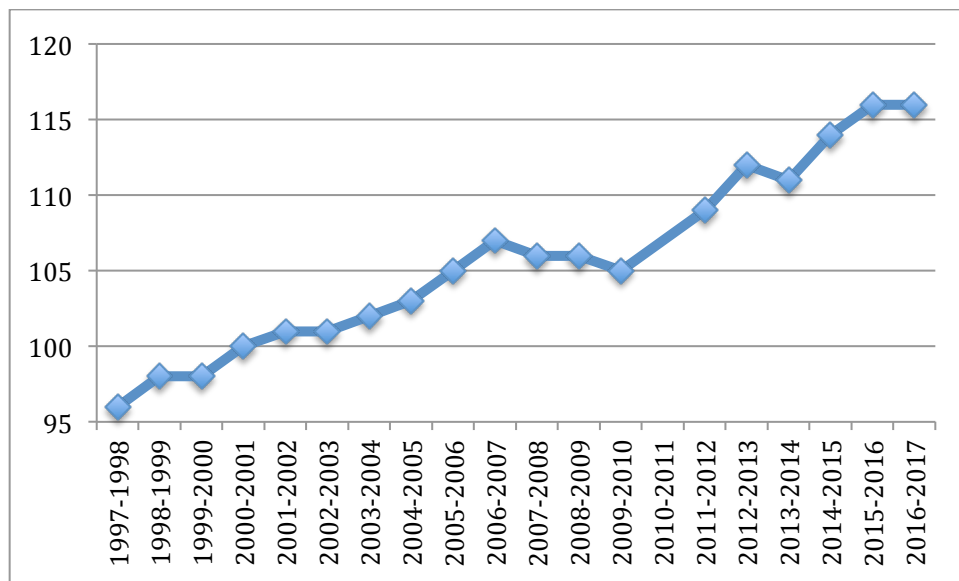


*Figure 1: The size of Australia's diplomatic network 1997-2017, excluding honorary consulates)*
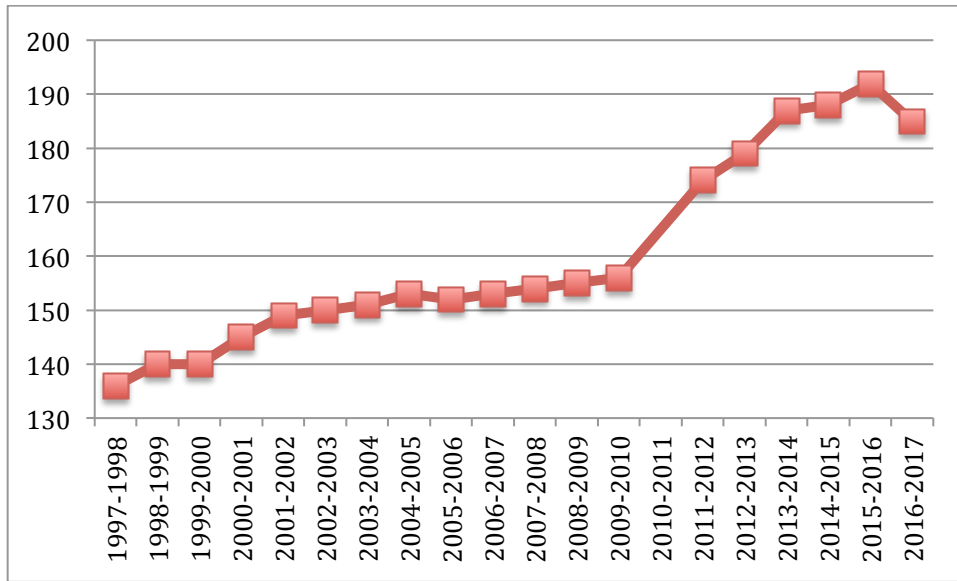
*Figure 2: The size of Australia's diplomatic network 1997-2017, including honorary consulates*

These graphs illustrates Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions over time, with data obtained from DFAT's annual reports. The first demonstrates the number of diplomatic missions excluding honorary consulates, while the second includes honorary consulates. These are presented separately so as to provide better perspective.
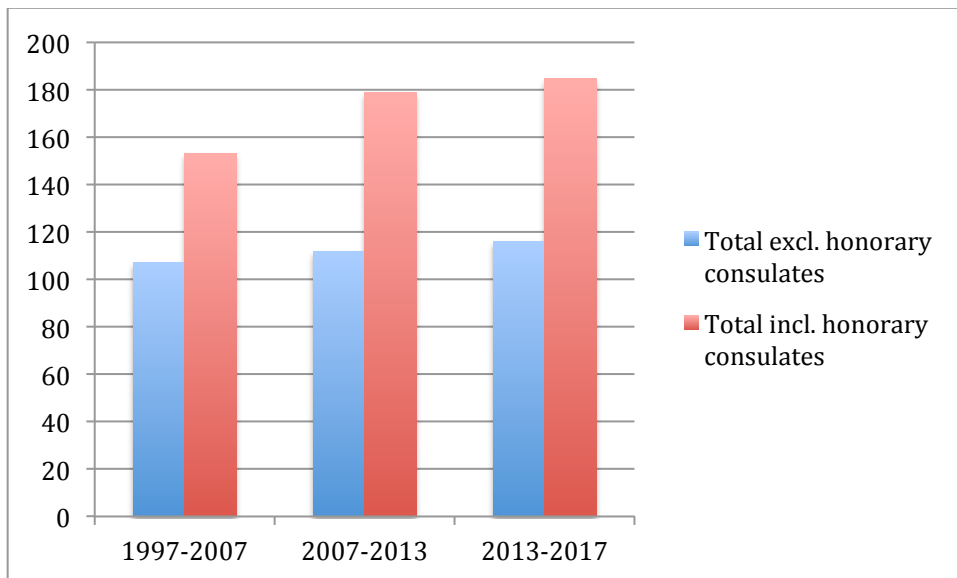


*Figure 3: The size of Australia's diplomatic network, according to time case*

Figure 3 illustrates Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions according to the chosen time periods so as to allow for better comparison between cases.

The findings and variation within each of these cases is discussed below, according to the three chosen time periods.

### 5.1.1 Case one: 1997-2007

Australia has seen a significant increase in the size of its diplomatic network since 1997. During the first time period under examination, the 1997-1998 financial year, Australia possessed only 96 embassies and high commissions abroad, although this number increased to 107 at the end of the 10 year period in 2007.

Various diplomatic posts were opened and closed during this time. No clear regional or functional focus was observed: both embassies and honorary consulates were opened and closed, and the new posts were established in every region of the world.

A clear variation and increase was observed in this case, with a steady increase in the number of diplomatic missions being observed.

### 5.1.2 Case two: 2007-2013

In comparison, in the second case, characterised by a change in government from the conservative Liberal Party to the more left-leaning ALP, there was a notable increase in Australia's diplomatic network. Interestingly, the beginning of the period saw the closure of several posts, with a decrease in the number of diplomatic posts from 2007 to 2010, down from 107 to 105. Despite this, from 2011, this number increased again to 109, indicating an overall increase in the size of the diplomatic network during this case. Moreover, when including the number of honorary consulates, which increased from 146 to 166, a significant increase in the establishment of diplomatic missions was also observed during this time.

As such, the majority of new diplomatic posts being established during this time were honorary consulates, not embassies, high commissions or Austrade-managed consulates. Similarly to the previous case, these posts were opened in virtually every region of the world, with no obvious concentration on a specific continent or country.

After the first observed decline at the beginning of this case, a clear variation and ultimate increase was observed during the time period of 2017-2013. Considering the short length of the time period in question (although it is distinctive due to the country's ALP leadership), this constitutes a significant increase in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions once again.

### 5.1.3 Case three: 2013-2018

When announcing the 2015 DFAT budget, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop announced the opening of a number of new embassies in new locations, which she described as "the single largest expansion of Australia's diplomatic network in forty years" (2015a).

Indeed, the most recent time period undoubtedly saw the most change, from 109 posts in 2011-2012, to 116 posts in 2016-2017. It is also useful to note that while DFAT's Annual Report 2017-2018 had not yet been published in order to gain the most up-to-date data, the opening of several new posts has recently been announced. These include a "pop-up" embassy in Estonia, a new embassy in Morocco, and new Consulates-General in the Indo-Pacific in Lae and Surabaya (Bishop, 2016; Bishop, 2017a; Bishop, 2017b, Bishop, 2018). As such, it can be determined that the number in the current year would be much higher, although no official figure has been given as yet.

The opening of its new diplomatic posts abroad during this period is largely concentrated in the Indo-Pacific, Africa and Latin America. This has included a new mission to a multilateral mission: ASEAN in Jakarta, which is the first permanent

delegation of this kind to be established over the course of all the time periods under examination. A permanent mission to the FAO was also integrated into the Australian Embassy in Rome, and a permanent mission to ESCAP within the Australian Embassy in Bangkok, further emphasising Australia's renewed interest in establishing representation to diplomatic missions during this time period.

It is significant to note during this time period that Australia's new diplomatic missions were all established in non-Western countries, often in locations where it had never had a mission before. This has included, for instance, posts in Qatar and Mongolia, as well as several new consulates in countries where it already has a presence, such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Currently in 2018, Canberra's diplomatic network is larger than ever before, and it is now ranked 28 in the world. In the G20, Australia has now overtaken Saudi Arabia and certain EU members such as the Czech Republic for the first time ever, and it is catching up to other members such as South Africa (Lowy Institute, 2017). Although Australia's diplomatic position is still below its ranking within the G20, its diplomatic footprint has undoubtedly increased, and it is slowly reaching a similar ranking to those states with similar rankings on the world stage.

Once again, Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions saw a distinct variation and increase during this time period.

### 5.1.4 Increase over time

A steady and obvious increase in the establishment of Australia's diplomatic missions was observed between the three cases. Including honorary consulates, the number of diplomatic missions increased from 136 to 170 from 1997 to 2017.

This indicates a clear variation in the dependent variable, making it ideal for undertaking the congruence method of analysis, which relies on co-variation. For this to occur and for the hypothesis to be accepted however, there would also have to be

variation (an increase) in the middle power self-conceptualisation between the cases. This is examined in the following section.

## 5.2 Content analyses: Australia's middle power conceptualisation

### 5.2.1 1997-2007: Low middle power conceptualisation

From 1997 to 2007, Australia was governed by a Liberal Coalition government.[10] During this time, the first ever Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper was published, quickly followed by a second in 2003. This is significant because it was the first time Australia published a comprehensive framework for its international engagement available for public access. This period also saw the publication of a Defence White Paper in 2003, which also outlined a framework for the future of Australia's strategic engagement internationally. All of these documents were analysed in relation to the extent of their middle power self-conceptualisation, as well as speeches by The Honourable Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Liberal MP during the entire period. The results of these analyses are presented below.

### *In the National Interest*

Australia's first ever Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper was titled *In the National Interest*, and the document's key focus was on Australia's national interests, which it defined as "the security of the Australian nation and the jobs and standard of living of the Australian people" (1997, p. ii). As the name suggests, this was a highly inward-looking paper, with very few examples of middle power self-identity or the

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[10] This term 'Coalition' refers to the alliance of Australia's two major centre-right political parties, the Liberals and the Nationals, forming one of the two major political groups in Australia (the other being the ALP). The Liberals constitute the largest proportion of this coalition.

role that Australia should play on the international stage. The 1997 White Paper was focused on securing Australia internally, and less on Australia's role in the world.

In fact, this document did not present a single mention of the term 'middle power' in its 100 pages. Moreover, the Paper appears to actively discourage multilateralism, despite praising Australia as "…having a strong record of achievement and influence in multilateral diplomacy," (p. 32). This supposed strong record notwithstanding, the Paper actually actively criticises the very international institutions that it is a part of, stating:

> "Australia must be realistic about what multilateral institutions such as the United Nations system can deliver. International organisations can only accomplish what their member states enable them to accomplish. If the reach of the UN system is not to exceed its grasp, it must focus on practical outcomes which match its aspirations with its capability" (pp. iii-iv).

Such statements suggest set the tone for the whole document: that Australia prefers bilateral ties to multilateral ones, which is not at all demonstrative of a middle power identity.

In fact, in the entire document, the word 'bilateral' is used 87 times. This starkly contrasts with the term 'multilateral', which was only used 42 times, most of which were in conjunction with 'bilateral'. It actively advocates bilateralism over multilateralism, stating that "The greater part of Australia's international efforts is, however, bilateral, and bilateral relationships are the basic building block for effective regional and global strategies" (p. iii). Further, the Paper even appears to express regret about Australia's multilateralism in the past: "Existing bilateral and multilateral approaches to trade policy, together with APEC, have served Australia well. For the future, however, Australia will keep an open mind about new approaches, including preferential free trade arrangements" (p. 42). This certainly suggests that Australia's foreign policy approach at the time was, if not anti-multilateral, then at least selective with where it chose to act multilaterally, and that this type of engagement would and should always take a backseat to bilateralism. This language of pride in bilateralism and heavy criticism of multilateralism suggests that Australia did not perceive itself as a middle power country at the time.

This Paper also showed very little evidence of Australian ambition to be a regional leader. In fact, it makes just a single reference to Australia as a leader, which is in regards to the PICs: "Australia's international standing, especially in East Asia and in North America and Europe, is influenced by perceptions of how well Australia fulfils a leadership role in the islands region" (p. 69). This statement of regional leadership actually does show evidence of middle power sentiment, however it is significant to note that this is the only time it does this in the entire document. For the most part, the Paper emphasises the importance of maintaining and forging ties with partners in the region, with no mention of leadership. Indeed, it states that one of the most important elements of the Government's policy framework is "The priority accorded to the Asia Pacific, and especially the countries of East Asia," (p. iii), and outlines certain regional strategies for engagement, namely through preferential free trade arrangements. In this document, Australia makes it clear that while regional ties are important, it does not see itself as taking a leading role in such matters. By extension, such perceptions are strong evidence of a lack of middle power identity.

In general, the 1997 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, published at the very beginning of this case, sets a strong precedent. It is inward looking, focused on growth and jobs and integrating domestic and international strategies. It does not mention being a middle power, advocates bilateralism over multilateralism, and does not advocate Australia taking a regional leadership role. As such, this Paper shows very little evidence of Australia having a middle power identity at the time.

### *Advancing the National Interest*

Published some six years later in 2003, the second Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper was written to be a follow-up from the 1997 Paper, aptly titled *Advancing the National Interest*. Similar to its predecessor, it demonstrates little evidence of a middle power identity, however this self-conceptualisation was slightly more developed than in 1997.

As with *In the National Interest*, the 2003 Paper never uses the label of 'middle power', nor does it ever refer to Australia as a regional leader. In fact, the document contains numerous references to China and Japan's claims to "regional leadership", further highlighting the fact that it does not consider itself that way (pp. 84-86). The document's emphasis is on other powers as leaders in the region, in particular the US and China, where Australia perceives itself as having "a major stake and a supportive role to play" (p. 22). Far beyond not identifying itself as a regional leader, this document suggests that at the time Australia only saw other nations as fulfilling this role. Such self-conceptualisation indicates a clear absence of a middle power identity.

Conversely, unlike its predecessor, the 2003 Paper does make certain allusions to Australia possessing a middle power identity, although it never explicitly states this. In particular, this sentiment of Australia's self-perceived important responsibility and potential role is outlined in the document's introduction:

> "The international environment is a challenging one. As a nation we have strong assets with which to advance our interests – a strongly performing economy, sound defence capabilities and a distinctive and positive approach to the world. The Government will build on these assets to work with others who are similarly committed to dealing decisively with heightened threats to global security and expanding the prosperity and freedoms that come from open societies and open markets" (p. xx).

Despite not using the label of 'middle power', this statement highlights many aspects of a middle power: strong assets that can help Australia pursue its goals, a sense of responsibility and a desire to work with other nations to ensure security and prosperity.

Having said this, the fact that no middle power label is explicitly used is significant. Moreover, as with its predecessor, this Paper heavily advocates bilateralism over multilateralism, which indicates an absence of middle power identity. For instance, the document states: "Bilateral relations are fundamental, including for multilateral cooperation… Bilateral advocacy and cooperation are fundamental for dealing with global and regional issues" (p. 7). Once again, bilateralism is advocated at the expense of multilateralism. In fact, virtually every time multilateralism is mentioned in the document, it is in conjunction with a reference to multilateralism. This is

especially true when it discusses multilateral trade issues: "While the emphasis of the Government will remain on multilateral trade liberalisation, the active pursuit of regional and, in particular, bilateral liberalisation will help set a high benchmark for the multilateral system" (p. xiv). Once again, there is little advocacy for multilateralism, which is never prioritised over bilateralism. This opposition to multilateralism is a clear sign that Australia was not identifying as a middle power at the time.

The 2003 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper is focused on defending Australia's national interests, with little emphasis on its role as a middle power. The document does not ever refer to Australia as middle power nor as a regional leader, and advocates bilateralism over multilateralism. Having said this, it does occasionally allude to Australia as a middle power by mentioning its unique position and abilities, however this is far from exemplifying a distinct middle power identity. Like its predecessor, the 2003 Paper does not demonstrate Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power.

### *Australia's Future Defence Force*

Unlike the Foreign and Trade Policy White Papers, the 2000 Defence White Paper, entitled *Our Future Defence Force,* was not the first of its kind; the Australian Government has been publishing such documents in this policy field since 1976. While the Defence White Paper is focused more strictly on strategy and the defence force, its middle power rhetoric largely mirrors that of the two Foreign and Trade Policy White Papers. It shows little evidence of middle power ambition, only looking to other nations as regional leaders and rarely prioritising multilateralism.

The Defence White Paper never uses the term 'middle power'. It also never refers to Australia as a regional leader. In fact, its only mentions of regional leaders are references to other nations. After acknowledging the importance of regional relationships, it states:

> "The most critical issue or the security of the Asia Pacific region is the
> nature of the relationships between the region's major powers – China,

Japan, India, Russia and the United States. These countries are important to

Australia's security because they are the ones with the power – actual or

potential – to influence events throughout the Asia Pacific region" (p. ix).

While of course these countries possess more power than Australia in various ways,

the fact that Australia perceives them as the ones with the ability to affect regional

events, without mentioning itself or its own potential is significant. This lack of

regional leadership interest or ambition is indicative that even in the realm of defence,

Australia did not perceive itself as a middle power at the time.

In terms of multilateralism, the document's emphasis is very similar to that of the

Foreign and Trade Policy White Papers in that bilateral relations are preferred. This

being said, its first reference to multilateralism is somewhat promising:

"Our fifth strategic objective is to contribute to the efforts of the international

community, especially the United Nations, to uphold global security. We will

continue to support the United Nations in the major role it plays in

maintaining and strengthening the global security order." (p. x)

Having said this, it is important to note that this is cited merely as the fifth objective,

which is the lowest priority. This is heavily contrasted with its first priority: the

bilateral relationship with the US, which the Paper defines as "Australia's most

important single strategic relationship" (p. 33). This alliance is valued over any kind

of multilateral or regional leadership ambition. Such sentiment is also somewhat

counterintuitive, as the document also states "…we must be able to defend Australia

without relying on the combat forces of other countries – self-reliance" (p. ix). This

assertion is more aligned with middle power sentiment as it alludes to a nation that

has the capacity and power to act. Nonetheless, Australia's defence strategy is

somewhat confused, and its preference for bilateralism provides little evidence of a

middle power identity.

The Defence White Paper 2000 shows a small amount of middle power self-

conceptualisation as it makes references to Australia's own capacity as well as

multilateralism. These notions are trumped by evidence of a lack of regional

leadership ambition and propensity for bilateralism. Much like the Foreign and Trade

Policy White Papers, *Our Future Defence Force* exemplifies very little middle power

self-identity in Australia at the time.

*'More than a Middle Power'*

Other than official policy documents, speeches were also analysed in order to gather a broader idea of the level of middle power self-conceptualisation at the time. More specifically, the language of Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was examined.

In his speech to the Asia Research Centre, Mr Downer described Australia as "…a stable, significant power with strong democratic values" (1999). The use of the term 'significant power' vastly differs from that of 'middle power'. In fact, Mr Downer explicitly and deliberately never used the middle power label, often arguing that Australia's identity amounted to much more than this. Indeed, his speech entitled *The myth of 'little' Australia* outlined this sentiment perfectly (2003). This address to the National Press Club became an iconic part of Australia's political history when Mr Downer asserted:

> "…we are not just a 'middle power' as my predecessor, Gareth Evans, often asserted. In fact we are a strong Commonwealth with around the 12th largest economy in the world, and one of the most successful, peaceful and well-governed democracies in history. We are not a middling nation, but a considerable power, the sixth largest in total land mass."

This viewpoint, that Australia is more than a middle power and that to label it as such is to belittle its position, is a significant one that strongly opposes any kind of middle power identity.

As Australia's longest serving Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer's rejection of the label is an important indicator of a lack of middle power self-conceptualisation in Australia at the time.

The 1997-2007 period in Australia was one of distinctly low middle power self-conceptualisation in Australia. Not only did official policy documents and politicians never refer to Australia as a middle power, but the government actually

explicitly rejected this label. Moreover, in both the foreign, trade and defence policy fields, bilateralism was valued over multilateralism, and there was very little regional leadership ambition. While Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation varied somewhat from 1997 to 2007, overall there was an overwhelming absence of middle power self-identity.

### 5.2.2 2007-2013: A return to the middle power identity

The 2007 to 2013 period was characterised by the leadership of the ALP, two different Prime Ministers, and three different Foreign Ministers: Stephen Smith, ousted Prime Minister then re-instated Kevin Rudd, and Bob Carr. No Foreign and Trade Policy White Papers were published during this time, however a Defence Paper was published in 2009, which was analysed along with the speeches and official statements of the aforementioned ministers so as to gain an understanding of the extent of Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation during the period. Then, the 2012 Inquiry of the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee into Australia's overseas representation was also analysed. This document is of particular significance as it is what encouraged the so-called upheaval of Australia's diplomatic network, with the building of several new embassies. The results of the content analyses of all of these statements and reports are presented below.

### *Stephen Smith and Bob Carr: The need for a more active Australia*

Unlike their predecessor, both Stephen Smith and Bob Carr were Foreign Ministers that were fond of the 'middle power' label, and both actively advocated Australia embracing this role on the global stage.

Mr Smith used the term 'middle power' in various speeches, a theme that was common during the ALP governance at the time. He aptly expressed middle power sentiment when he described Australia as "…a significant player with a strong interest in a rules-based international order," (2008). This notion of Australia's

importance and capacity is important. According to Mr Smith, this meant that Australia "…should play an active role as creative middle power" (2008). Not only is this an explicit use of the middle power label, but he also expressed and even advocated Australia taking up the role and responsibilities that he saw as coming with being middle power. The presence of middle-power self-conceptualisation was strong and explicit.

Mr Carr was also fond of the middle power label. In his first speech as Foreign Minister, when addressing the Parliament, he explicitly stated this:

> "I subscribe to the view that Australia is a creative middle power and an activist middle power that defends its interests—which is after all the essence of foreign policy" (2012).

The fact that Mr Carr embraced this term straight off the bat is significant, and indicative of a pro-middle power sentiment that varied greatly from that of the previous Liberal government. This being said, while Mr Carr was fond of the label, he was also often an advocate of bilateralism. He promoted Australia's "bilateral architecture" as a way to engage with regional partners such as China (2013a) and also often commended the bilateral nature of Australia's relationship with Indonesia (2013c). This being said, Mr Carr also commended and encouraged Australia's multilateral engagement in his National Press Club Address, stating: "We are country with a strong tradition of multilateral activism" (2013b). This propensity for multilateralism is indicative of a middle power identity. Combined with his active fondness of the middle power label and despite some pro-bilateralism, overall Bob Carr promoted a strong middle power self-conceptualisation for Australia.

Both Minister Smith and Minister Carr explicitly used the middle power label, which constitutes a significant difference from the previous Minister Downer's rhetoric. Moreover, their advocacy for having Australia play a more active role on the international stage is clear evidence of middle power self-conceptualisation.

*Kevin Rudd: Creative middle power diplomacy*

The Honourable Kevin Rudd held office as Prime Minister of Australia from December 2007 to September 2010, when he was ousted by his deputy Julia Gillard, but later regained this position from June to September 2013, but failed to lead the ALP to re-election. He was also Minister for Foreign Affairs after his first Prime Ministership until February 2012. As such, his various speeches during this time period constituted useful sources from which to conduct content analyses of middle power rhetoric.

Mr Rudd delivered Australia's inaugural national security speech to the House of Representatives in 2008. During this, he used the term 'creative middle power diplomacy' three times, actively advocating the use of this label within his government. He also reinforced the fact that Australia was "…committed to multilateral institutions, and in particular the United Nations, to promote a rules based international order… We believe that those that share the benefits of these systems must also share the responsibilities of supporting and enhancing them" (2008). Not only did he promote multilateralism in this speech, but Mr Rudd also advocated the notion that Australia had a responsibility within the international system, echoing leadership sentiment. Middle power self-conceptualisation was obvious and advocated.

Further, Mr Rudd saw 'creative middle power diplomacy' as essential for the pursuit of national interests, especially in relation to the diplomatic network:

> "the government is committed to an Australian diplomacy that will be more activist than in the past – in the tradition of creative middle-power diplomacy. Australia's national security calls for diplomatic resources that are more in-depth and more diversified than currently exist… our diplomacy must be the best in the world… These increasing challenges have not been adequately reflected in the historical resourcing of the Australian foreign service relative to comparable governments around the world. Over time, this must change" (2008).

This advocacy for 'creative middle power diplomacy' was the first of its kind in Australia, constituting a distinct change from the former government, where such a label was never used. Mr Rudd perceived that actively acting as a middle power was essential to Australia's national interests, and that increasing the resources of the

foreign service was a part of this. This enthusiasm did not wane over time, and he regularly advocated creative middle power diplomacy as a means for Australia to take up responsibility in its region and "craft a common future" (2012).

In fact, Mr Rudd actually coined the term 'creative middle power diplomacy', and this label was used over the course of this time period. Not just a label, this notion was used to advocate multilateralism, as well as Australia taking on a larger role of responsibility on the world stage. As both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd developed and advocated a middle power in Australia at this time.

### *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century*

This notion of 'creative middle power diplomacy' transcended into various aspects of policy at the time, including the 2009 Defence White Paper, entitled *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century*. The document also advocates multilateralism, although it is unclear whether this is valued over bilateralism. Further, while it encourages Australia to take on a more leading role, it also makes several references to other nations' leadership.

This White Paper uses the label 'middle power' five times, a significant increase from other documents analysed. Not only is the term used, but the Paper actually advocates Australia's embracing of this role:

> "Promoting Australia's middle power role puts a premium on highly developed analytical and policymaking skills, and our ability to understand and shape strategic developments. The Government remains committed to enhancing these skills and retaining the resourcing necessary for this essential foundation of our global and regional engagement plans" (p. 93).

In this document, the Government expresses its commitment to being a middle power, expressing that promoting this position enables it to better shape and defend national interests. In fact, the Paper explicitly discourages Australia shying away from its middle power role, stating that: "…basing our defence policy on a narrow 'defence of Australia' approach would also be an irresponsible abdication of our responsibility as

a capable middle power that is able to contribute to global and regional security," (p. 57). Embracing this middle power identity is perceived as essential for Australia's defence. Middle power-self conceptualisation is welcomed and even advocated.

This middle power label is also used in the document to promote increased multilateralism. The White Paper states:

> "Australia's defence relations will remain an important tool to promote our middle power influence… The strength of those relations and the credibility of our alliance relationships enhance our capacity to support the United Nations, NATO and other multilateral institutions" (p. 100).

From a defence perspective, it is made apparent not only that Australia is a middle power, but that this comes hand in hand with increased multilateral engagement, further reinforcing the promulgation of middle power self-conceptualisation during this time. Furthermore, the document advocates this multilateral engagement as essential for promoting Australia's strategic interests, defining key aspects as central to this: our network of alliances, our bilateral and multilateral defence relationships, and the growing range of multilateral security forums and arrangements in our region" (p. 12). It is important to note here that while multilateralism is advocated, this is occurs in conjunction with bilateral ties. Indeed, like its 1997 predecessor, the 2009 Paper maintains the view that the bilateral relationship with the US is crucial: "Australia needs to play its part in assisting the United States" (p. 42). While multilateralism is given increased importance, Australia's fondness for bilateralism – especially with the US – lingers.

Similarly, in terms of regional leadership, the document constantly refers to the US. It often refers to "The global leadership role played by the US" when advocating such bilateralism (p. 44). This being said, this White Paper also outlines ambitions for Australia to take on an increased leadership role in the region. It advocates Australia increasing its military power, including by having the power to lead military coalitions because it "would be willing to accept a leadership role" (p. 48). This would involve Canberra undertaking what the Paper terms a "strategic posture of self-reliance… in relation to which we would normally take a leadership role" (p. 49). It even acknowledges the fact Australia has "particular responsibilities to assist our neighbours", and that "Australia will be expected to take a leadership role within the

South Pacific" (p. 54). These notions of responsibility are perceived as essential to Australia's security, hence the promotion of increasing Australia's role in its immediate neighbourhood. Such enthusiasm for regional leadership constitutes clear middle power self-conceptualisation.

In *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century*, high levels of middle power conceptualisation are expressed. The document explicitly uses the 'middle power' term multiple times, advocates multilateralism and expresses a desire for Australia to take up a stronger leadership role within its region. This being said, bilateralism is still often advocated and certain allusions to other regional leaders are also made. Overall however, this document expresses clear middle power self-conceptualisation, which is much higher than that in the former case.

### *Australia: Punching Below its Weight*

In October 2012, the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade published its inquiry entitled *Australia's Overseas Representation-Punching below our weight?* (Australian Government, 2012a). This heavily criticised Canberra's so-called small diplomatic footprint, and strongly advised an upheaval and reinvigoration of its diplomatic presence abroad, which it described as "seriously deficient" at the time (p. viii). This inquiry has been cited in DFAT policy documents multiple times since, and can consequently be considered a catalyst for changes in the size of Australia's diplomatic network. As such, this document was afforded significant priority when conducting this content analysis. Consistent with middle power self-conceptualisation, it explicitly uses the middle power label, while also mentioning Australia's multilateralism as well as its regional leadership.

The inquiry makes several references to Australia as a middle power. It considers that this position comes with certain responsibilities, including having a significant diplomatic presence. In fact, it explicitly states that it is precisely because of its middle power status that Australia should have more investment in its foreign service: "In the longer term, funding to DFAT should be increased to a set percentage of gross

domestic product sufficient to reflect Australia's standing as a middle power" (p. viii).
This statement outlines the overall sentiment of the document: because it is a middle
power, Australia should improve its overseas representation. The document even
explicitly criticises the Government's lack of investment in its diplomatic network on
multiple occasions. It cites Australia's international standing as the very reason for
this, stating that it possesses "…a diplomatic network which is seriously deficient and
does not reflect Australia's position within the G20 and OECD economies" (p. vii).
This allusion to Australia's important power and potential is further evidence of
middle power self-conceptualisation, which the document puts hand in hand with a
well-developed diplomatic network. In fact, it advocates this as essential for the
country to maintain this position: "Australia has a substantial economy and if it
wishes to cement its position as an influential middle power it should have a
diplomatic network to match" (p. 25). Middle power self-conceptualisation is high,
and it is used as a means of justifying increased diplomatic investment.

The document also contains several references to multilateralism. It embraces
Australia's involvement in international institutions, and even advocates increasing
this. In the Committee's view, the diplomatic success of Australia and other nations
can be measured by their "leadership records in key multinational organisations" (p.
23). The Inquiry also considers that Australia's multilateral engagement had been
insufficient, stating: "Australia should not shirk from putting itself forward for
leadership in world bodies" (p. 25). This emphasis on the importance of
multilateralism, as well as the advocacy for Australia increasing its multilateral
engagement is demonstrative of strong middle power self-conceptualisation.

This self-conceptualisation as a middle power was further emphasised when the
Committee encourages Canberra to take on more of a leadership role in its region.
The document advocates Australia developing a mediation unit in the South Pacific,
stating that this would enable it "…to become a regional leader in mediation and
conflict prevention in South East Asia and mediation and conflict prevention in South
East Asia and [the] Pacific" (p. 65). This notion of Australian leadership – both the
potential and absence of this – is a recurring one throughout the document. The
Inquiry affords an entire section to Australia's "Failure to keep up with the leaders in
e-diplomacy" (p. 102) and also speaks of its missed opportunities to enjoy "a

leadership position in world bodies" (p. 24). The Committee makes it clear that Australia has leadership potential – both regional and in various other diplomatic domains – that it is not achieving. This ambition is clear evidence of the presence of a middle power identity.

This Inquiry document demonstrates high levels of middle power self-conceptualisation in all respects. It explicitly uses the middle power label in reference to Australia on multiple occasions, values multilateralism and advocates Australia becoming increasingly involved in this domain, as well as for it to become more of a regional and diplomatic leader. It is also important to note that this Inquiry was published by a committee not affiliated with any particular political party, so it offers a unique perspective when compared to the other analyses. Of all the statements analysed, this one demonstrates the highest level of middle power self-conceptualisation.

The 2007-2013 period saw a significant increase in Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power. Despite its lack of continuity in political leadership at the time, its self-identity was relatively consistent, with a distinct notion of middle power self-conceptualisation not present in the previous case. This was even more explicit in the case of the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee Inquiry, which cited Australia's middle power status on multiple occasions and linked it to a need to increase its diplomatic presence. Overall, during this time period Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power was apparent and explicit, which constitutes a dramatic increase compared to the former case.

### 5.2.3 2013-2018: The renewed upheaval of the diplomatic network

The period from 2013 once again saw a change of leadership in Australia, back to the Liberal government. This time saw the publication of another Defence White Paper in 2016, as well as the first Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper in fourteen years. These documents were analysed in conjunction with several speeches

and statements from the Honourable Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs for the duration of the period (and still now).

### *Middle power or top-20 nation?*

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop is not fond of middle power rhetoric. In various speeches, she actually rejected this label, opting instead for the term 'top-20 nation', which she advocated as more appropriate for Australia. Despite this, virtually all her statements exemplify a middle power identity. Her initial speeches often contained several references to Australia as a middle power, and while this waned over time, her advocacy for Australia's multilateralism and regional leadership only increased.

In one of her first speeches as Foreign Minister, Ms Bishop addressed Sungkyunkwan University in the Republic of Korea. During this, she used the label of "middle power" four times (2013). In particular, she used this term to refer to both Canberra and Seoul, using it to define the shared interests of the two nations. She perceived this shared middle power status as entailing certain responsibilities: "As two middle powers it is in our joint interests to work together in multilateral forums. President Park has underlined the importance of Korea working together with other countries as a middle power." (2013). This explicit labelling, along with advocacy for multilateralism, indicates clear middle power self-conceptualisation. Further, she took the opportunity to advocate MIKTA as a useful platform for increased multilateral engagement, stating: "…at the UNGA last month… we [MIKTA] discussed mutual concerns as middle powers in our respective regions and we intend to meet regularly before other multilateral forums and summits, because we share a common attitude and approach to so many regional and global issues." (2013). Her advocacy for MIKTA – a grouping specifically based around middle power status – further emphasises her propensity for middle powers, and most importantly for giving them an increased voice in multilateral settings. This notion of potential, as well as mentions of regional concerns, is key to middle power self-conceptualisation. At the beginning of her Ministership, Ms Bishop advocated an Australian middle power identity in every respect, through labelling and regional and multilateral engagement.

Having said this, Ms Bishop's rhetoric changed over time. Despite having employed the middle power label to refer to Australia when engaging with MIKTA members, this term was rejected in most settings. In her 2015 Address to the Lowy Institute, she stated:

> "Over the years, Australia has been described as a middle power. I do not believe that adequately reflects our standing or our level of influence. While we should be careful not to overstate it, neither should we understate it."

From Ms Bishop's point of view, the middle power label is insufficient to describe Australia as it downplays its power and potential. She prefers the term 'Top-20 nation', stating in her Address to the G'day USA Australian Outlook Luncheon that this term better describes Australia's position (2014). This is because Australia has many top-20 assets, not only is it a G20 member, but that besides its small population it is "…top 20 for virtually every other indicator in global terms", including for FDI, tradability of currency, and population wealth (2014). She has since preferred and advocated this term in virtually every speech. Her explicit rejection of the middle power label is significant, and could be considered a deliberate rejection of a middle power identity.

This being said, while Ms Bishop's dismissal of the term 'middle power' is clear, her rhetoric displays a middle power identity in almost every other respect. She is an advocate of Australia's leadership in its neighbourhood, stating that "As a neighbour and responsible regional player Australia comes to the aid of our Pacific friends in times of need as a matter of course." (2015b). Moreover, she advocates and is proud of Canberra's multilateral engagement, promoting Australia abroad as "…an active, positive participant in the negotiations for multilateral agreements" (2014). As such, despite her preference for the term 'top-20 nation', Ms Bishop's promotion of Australia as a regionally and multilaterally engaged nation is indicative of middle power self-conceptualisation. She also seemingly acknowledges the potential that comes with such a conception, stating in the conclusion of her address to the Lowy Institute:

> "Australia is without doubt one of the world's significant nations, and therein lies our diplomatic strength that I have sought to use to further our national

interest, to influence others and to build prosperity and peace in our region
and abroad." (2014).

Label or not, Ms Bishop advocates Australia as a power with the potential to
influence and be a leader in its region. As such, despite a rejection of the term 'middle
power', significant middle power self-conceptualisation is demonstrated.

Julie Bishop's middle power advocacy has changed over time and depending on
context. The label is used when engaging with other middle power countries, but is
otherwise rejected in favour of the notion of 'Top-20 nation'. Despite this, her
advocacy for Australia's multilateral engagement and in particular its potential for
regional leadership demonstrates a clear middle power self-identity.

### *Regional leadership and multilateralism ensuring security*

In a similar vein to the Foreign Minister's rhetoric, the 2016 Defence White
Paper also rejects the label of 'middle power'. This being said, the document
demonstrates more evidence of a middle power identity than any Defence White
Paper before it, through its explicit focus on regional leadership, as well as through its
expression of increased ambitions for increased multilateral engagement.

In terms of regional ambitions, the 2016 Paper outlines a plan for Australia to become
a more prominent leader in its neighbourhood. This is deemed essential for managing
strategic risk:

> "Australia must play a leadership role in our immediate neighbourhood… in
> support of national interests. We must strengthen our defence engagement
> with regional countries with interests in the security of maritime South East
> Asia… Our security and prosperity depend on a stable Indo-Pacific region
> and a rules-based global order in which power is not misused," (p. 33).

For the first time, Australia as a regional leader is deemed essential to its defence and
security, rather than simply referring to and relying on other powers as in former
documents. In fact, this document does refer to these other powers, but while
continuing to advocate Australia's leadership role:

> "To help countries in our immediate neighbourhood respond to the challenges they face, Australia will continue to play an important regional leadership role… We will continue to play that role in close collaboration with New Zealand, France, the United States, Japan and other partners." (p. 56).

Australia's embracing of its role as a regional leader is significant, and its ambition to work with other likeminded states is further indicative of middle power sentiment. Such rhetoric, focused on the essentiality of regional leadership, demonstrates a high level of middle power self-conceptualisation.

Similarly, the White Paper's advocacy for multilateralism is highly apparent. The document has entire components devoted to this, for instance the sub-section entitled "Defence posture – more active and internationally engaged" (p. 21). Unlike former Defence White Papers, the 2016 document contains numerous explicit examples of where and how Australia is engaging multilaterally and where it seeks to do more. These include its involvement in ADMM-Plus, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and its role as a NATO Enhanced Partner. It also re-emphasises Canberra's most enduring multilateral engagements:

> "Australia remains one of the most active supporters of the Untied Nations and Defence will continue to make tailored contributions to United Nations operations in the future … Defence will continue working with the United Nations to build its capacity to lead international efforts to respond to global security challenges." (pp. 76-77).

This explicit advocacy for the UN demonstrates unprecedented multilateral engagement by the Australian Department of Defence. In fact, the Paper identifies "strengthening Defence's international engagement" as a key priority (p. 21). It even defines multilateralism as a way of doing this, citing specific areas for improvement:

> "Australia will continue to make substantive contributions to multilateral practical exercises to help increase interoperability between ADMM-Plus members…We will continue to engage in security dialogue through other multilateral security frameworks, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, to discuss cooperation to address regional security issues." (p. 130).

These new multilateral goals are ambitious, but are presented as highly achievable due to the specific and targeted areas of involvement that are cited. The unprecedented level of multilateral engagement and ambition presented in this White Paper is demonstrative of an increased level of middle power self-conceptualisation.

Unlike its predecessor, the 2016 Defence White Paper does not contain any explicit references to Australia as a middle power. This being said, the Paper exemplifies high middle power self-conceptualisation in every other sense: it presents Australia as a capable regional leader, and advocates multilateralism while citing specific examples where Australia is and should engage.

### *Opportunity, Security, Strength*

DFAT's 2017 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, entitled *Opportunity, Security, Strength*, was the first of its kind in fourteen years. Already this is demonstrative of Australia's increased prioritisation of its foreign policy in recent years. In the same vein as the Foreign Minister's rhetoric, the 2017 White Paper uses the term 'top-20 nation', and never 'middle power'. This being said, like Ms Bishop, this White Paper still exhibits every other aspect of a middle power identity. The document contains several references to Australia as a regional leader that is multilaterally engaged, thus indicating strong middle-power conceptualisation.

The realm of multilateral engagement is referred to from the very outset of the document. When defining Australia's values at the beginning, it is stated:

> "The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper is grounded in our national foundations of freedom, equality, the rule of law and mutual respect. Our commitment to those values and the institutions which uphold them gives us confidence and credibility in the global competition for customers, capital and talent." (p. 2).

The value placed on institutions is indicative of multilateral engagement, as is the notion of working with likeminded states. Moreover, unlike former Foreign and Trade

Policy White Papers, this one actually explicitly advocates such global cooperation through multilateralism:

> "…in many circumstances multilateral engagement magnifies our influence. By working with partners in coalitions and leveraging the resources and expertise of international organisations we can get more done." (p. 79).

This Paper is unique in that it actively advocates multilateral engagement through institutionalism.

Moreover, instead of simply criticising multilateralism in favour of bilateralism as in former Papers, the 2017 White Paper instead advocates reform. The document acknowledges emerging powers' lack of involvement in various aspects of the international system, stating that Australia will support "well-designed proposals for new forms of global cooperation and reform of multilateral institutions." (p. 79). Additionally, after acknowledging certain shortcomings of the UN system, it promotes an approach that "seeks to reinforce the strength, accountability and effectiveness of international institutions." (p. 82). The document also cites a desire to increase Australia's diplomatic in footprint, giving specific multilateral examples: by becoming involved further it in the AIIB (p. 40), increasing Canberra's voice within the G20 (p. 57), seeking to advance trade liberalisation at the WTO, via its bid for a seat on the UNSC (p. 82), and through its support for international accountability mechanisms such as the ICC and the ICJ. This desire for improvements is indicative of an unprecedented level of desire for increased multilateral engagement in Australia. This in turn indicates a new kind of increased middle power self-conceptualisation at this time.

Similarly, Australia's demonstration of regional leadership ambitions in the 2017 White Paper is unparalleled in any former document. In previous Papers, Australia was referred to a regional leader almost exclusively in reference to aid in the PICs, however this one goes far beyond this:

> "We are a regional power with global interests. Our strong economy and institutions, innovative businesses, educated and skilled population and secure borders provide solid foundations for success." (p. v).

Such rhetoric, especially the explicit use of the term 'power', indicates that Australia has strong regional ambitions and that it believes itself capable of achieving these,

providing strong evidence of clear middle power identity. The Paper goes on to describe Australia as having "the strength to shape its own future" (p. 2), further emphasising this notion of potential. Moreover, this White Paper advocates Australia working with other leaders, stating: "We must take responsibility for our own security and prosperity while recognising we are stronger when sharing the burden of leadership with trusted partners and friends." (p. iii). This language indicates that instead of looking to others for leadership, Australia is willing to take on this role and work with likeminded states. This rhetoric, focused on embracing a regional leadership role, indicates high levels of middle power self-conceptualisation.

Despite an absence of the middle power label, the 2017 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper exemplifies an Australia with a middle power identity. In particular, its numerous references to multilateralism, with specific examples of ambitions for increased involvement, as well as for taking on a leadership role in the region, is indicative of an unprecedentedly strong middle power self-conceptualisation.

The period of 2013 to 2018 has seen some drastic differences from former cases. Unlike its predecessor, virtually no explicit middle power labelling has been used, with documents and statements instead preferring the term 'top-20 nation'. This being said, despite a distinct absence of the middle power label, evidence of middle power identity is strong: language pertaining to multilateral engagement, regional leadership, and increased international involvement was exceptionally high. As such, strong middle-power self-conceptualisation is present during this time.

## 5.3 Discussion – congruence analysis

In order to complete the congruence analysis, the results from the content analyses were collated to examine the extent of co-variation and apply the concepts of middle power theory to the findings.

### 5.3.1 A study of co-variation

The variation in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions was examined in conjunction with the extent of its middle power self-conceptualisation and compared between cases in order to understand if co-variation existed.

### *1997-2007: A preference for bilateralism*

Characterised by a return to the Liberal government, the 1997-2007 period in Australia saw a distinct absence of middle power rhetoric and actions, along with a lack of investment in the establishment of diplomatic missions. Out of all three cases, this first time period had both the smallest diplomatic network observed, as well the least middle power self-conceptualisation.

In terms of Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions, a clear, albeit small, variation was observed over time. That is, the analysis showed a steady increase in the number of diplomatic missions between 1997 and 2007, from 96 to 109. Including honorary consulates, this number went from 136 to 156, which was the smallest increase of all the cases. So in this instance, Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions was classified as 'low'.

Similarly, Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation was also low at this time. No middle power labelling was used, and the period was characterised by a significant investment in and preference for bilateralism, a distinctly anti-middle power trait. The literature regarding Canberra's middle power conceptualisation at the time confirms these findings. In particular, Ungerer noted a distinct change in rhetoric with the election of this Howard government:

> "…the new government made it very clear that they were not interested in pursuing middle power multilateralism as a foundation for Australia's role in international affairs. In keeping with this new approach, the government reduced financial and human resources for multilateral diplomacy as part of

successive budgetary cuts to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade"
(2007, p. 549).

Not only was the Howard government's rhetoric not focused on middle power diplomacy or multilateralism, but this also led it to not invest in multilateral diplomacy. Indeed, as asserted by Ungerer as well as the findings on Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions, there appears to be a link with the small diplomatic network at the time.

In the first case, Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation was low, mirrored by its low establishment of diplomatic missions abroad. Co-variation was observed between the dependent and independent variables, suggesting that there may be a causal link between Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions and the extent of its middle power self-conceptualisation.

### 2007-2013: A return to 'creative middle power diplomacy'

The following case also demonstrated co-variation. Australia's return to Labor leadership under Kevin Rudd saw a slight increase in the establishment of diplomatic missions, coupled with unprecedented levels of middle power self-conceptualisation.

Including honorary consulates, the period of 2007-2013 saw the number of diplomatic missions increase from 146 to 166. This is a larger increase than in the previous case, which is significant considering the smaller timespan. It is also important to note that many diplomatic missions were also closed during this time. Considering the possibility of a causal link that was established above, this may have been a time lag resulting from the former Liberal government's anti-middle power stance. As such, this period can be characterised as having a steady increase in the number of diplomatic missions. Variation from the former case is also apparent.

In terms of middle power self-conceptualisation, this case was distinctly different from the former. The Rudd government's propensity for the term 'creative middle power diplomacy' was obvious, with this label making frequent appearances in

government documents and speeches at the time. This significant difference from the former Liberal government's language further confirms arguments within the literature that Australia's middle power diplomacy is cyclical and largely dependent on the political party that is in power (Ravenhill, 1998; Robertson, 2007). This being said, it is also worth noting that the inquiry published at this time on Australia's overseas representation was published by a Joint Standing Committee, and not affiliated with any particular political party. This document also heavily emphasised Australia's role as a middle power, citing this as a reason for it to increase the size of its diplomatic network. As such, this case demonstrates high levels of middle power labelling, which appears to not necessarily be dependent on the political party in governance.

Explicit middle power labelling aside, significant value was also placed on multilateralism and increasing Australia's international involvement at the time. This being said, references were also made to bilateralism and looking to other nations for regional leadership. Nonetheless, this case saw the highest levels of explicit middle power labelling, and a significant increase in Australia's overall middle power self-conceptualisation. A distinct increase was apparent.

The co-variation present in this case would therefore once again imply that a relationship exists between Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions and the extent of its middle power self-conceptualisation. In this instance, increased diplomatic establishment can be linked to a drastic increase in its middle power self-conceptualisation. It is also worth noting here that the inquiry on Australia's overseas representation was published at this time. As this document explicitly advised an increase the size of Australia's diplomatic network, while also heavily emphasising Australia's middle power status, this further implies a causal link. This being said, the document was published at the very end of this case, so if a relationship indeed existed, it could be expected that the co-variation would be even higher in the following and final case, in particular with an increase in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions.

*2013-2018: The multilateral leader and 'top-20 nation'*

Indeed, as the inquiry on Australia's overseas representation would suggest, co-variation was also apparent in the final case, with the largest ever increase in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions. This being said, Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation during this time is less obvious; while the use of labelling was notably low, the middle power language was unprecedentedly high in every other respect. In the period of 2013 to 2018, co-variation and the link between variables is less clear.

The most recent time period has seen the largest ever increase in the size of Australia's diplomatic network, to its largest size ever with 116 high commissions and embassies in 2017. With the announcement of the opening of several new posts, the real number in 2018 is undoubtedly much higher.[11] This period also saw an increase in permanent missions to multilateral institutions, as well as significant investment in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions during this time can be considered 'high', with the size of the network slowly approaching that of other G20 nations.

In fact, in DFAT's Annual Report 2016-2017, this achievement was heavily emphasised, stating that it "implemented the Government's decision to grow the diplomatic network" (2017b, p. 16). This is a reference to the Joint Standing Committee's inquiry into Australia's diplomatic representation that was examined as part of the former case. This suggests that while a causal link might exist between middle power self-conceptualisation and the establishment of diplomatic missions, a time lag exists between high conceptualisation and increasing the size of the diplomatic network. Considering the bureaucracy involved within the government, as well as the actual time it takes to build a new post, source staff, and so on, this is relatively intuitive. It is nonetheless worth noting however that while a relationship might exist between Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation and its establishment of diplomatic missions, the cause-effect result is not immediate.

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[11] See for example the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, as well as official statements from Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, which announce new posts in Estonia, Morocco, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. Official numbers for 2017-2018 have not yet been published.

The understanding of the nature of this relationship becomes more confused when considering Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power during this time. Consistent with Liberal rhetoric and the argument regarding the cyclical nature of Australia's middle power diplomacy, virtually no middle power labelling was used during this case. Further, the term 'middle power' was explicitly and deliberately rejected by the Government in favour of 'top-20 nation'. Label aside however, middle power self-conceptualisation was high in every other dimension: language pertaining to increased international involvement, regional leadership and multilateral engagement was all unprecedentedly high. As such, it can be concluded that the 2013-2018 period has also seen high levels of middle power self-conceptualisation.

Compared to previous cases, 2013-2018 has seen the largest level of establishment of diplomatic missions by Australia, as well as strong middle power self-conceptualisation. This co-variation once again implies a link between these two variables, especially considering that co-variation here is higher than in any other case. This is further evidenced by the strong influence of the inquiry into Australia's overseas network, which used significant middle power rhetoric and has been cited as the reason for the "the single largest expansion of Australia's diplomatic network" (Bishop, 2015a). Moreover, looking at *where* Australia has been establishing diplomatic missions during this period further implies a link: most of the new posts were established within Australia's region and to multilateral missions, both clear signs of middle power ambition.

All this being said, establishing a link between middle power self-conceptualisation and the establishment of diplomatic missions in this case is made more difficult by the distinct rejection of the middle power label. While co-variation within and between all cases is present, the explicit use of the term 'middle power' during a period where Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions was so high might imply that the link between self-conceptualisation as a middle power and diplomatic network size is not so clear-cut.

Distinct co-variation was apparent during the three cases. First, low middle power self-conceptualisation was associated with low establishment of diplomatic missions, followed by high self-conceptualisation and increased focus on establishment of diplomatic missions, before finally ending at the current time period, with high self-conceptualisation and unprecedented high establishment of diplomatic missions. This being said, the problem of labelling in the final case – where the term 'middle power' has been rejected – complicates the issue of establishing a causal link. As such, an analysis of the implications of explicit middle power labelling has been conducted, followed by the inferences from middle power theory, in order to complete the congruence analysis and understand the nature of the relationship.

### 5.3.2 What's in a name?

The Liberal government's rejection of the middle power label in the final case appears rather counterintuitive, as it is accompanied by middle power rhetoric in every other respect. This includes numerous references to Australia's economic standing, the desire to resolve international issues at the multilateral level, and to embrace regional leadership. This confusion complicates the analysis of whether or not Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation affects its establishment of diplomatic missions, begging the question: how significant is middle power labelling?

The findings of the content analysis indicate that explicit use of the middle power term in Australia does vary over time, from the Liberal Howard government's 'significant power', to the ALP's use of the term 'creative middle power diplomacy' and the current government's preference for 'top-20 nation'. This complies well with the arguments of Ravenhill (1998) and Ungerer (2007) regarding the cyclical nature of Australia's middle power activism, at least if looking strictly at the explicit use of the label. If this label is ignored however, a very different story is told. While the current Liberal government has explicitly rejected use of the term 'middle power' – a fact that has been observed both in the rhetoric of the Foreign Minister as well as official documents such as the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper – its actions speak differently. Carr raises a relevant question in this domain: "When the Australian or

Canadian government stopped using the label 'middle power', did these countries stop being middle powers?" (2014, p. 76). This is what he perceives as the problem with this identity approach to middle power theory, which "…could leave scholars adding and removing countries from the middle power status with every election" (2014, p. 76). Indeed, it does appear counter-intuitive that a state could show middle power ambitions in the majority of senses, but that its choice not to use a particular label could inhibit it from actually *being* a middle power.

Perhaps then the label is insignificant. In a report of Australian scholars entitled "Are we a top-20 nation or a middle power?", Davies asserts precisely this: "…words mean what we want them to mean. So really I don't think it matters how we characterise ourselves" (Bergin et al., 2014, p. 17). As such, Ms Bishop's propensity for the term 'top-20 nation' could be perceived as a mere choice to 'talk up' Canberra's status on the world stage. While it is true that it is in the top 20 nations of the world by most measures, this does not mean the idea of Australia as a middle power does not make sense, especially if it continues to adhere to the criteria that make it belong to such a category. In the same report, Jennings makes an excellent point: "Calling Australia a top 20 country is a statement of fact, not policy intent" (Bergin et al., 2015, p. 7). So, while the Foreign Minister's preference for emphasising Australia's higher status on the international stage is true, it does not necessarily indicate a shift in policy from when she referred to it as a middle power when addressing students in Korea (2013).

This suggests that while middle power labelling may change over time or dependent on which party is in power, what is of greater importance are intentions. That is, whether the policy ambitions of the government in question reflect those of a middle power. In the 2013-2018 case, while explicit middle power labelling was low, the mentioned policy intents were nonetheless those of a middle power, indicating that the intention was there. In the lead-up to the publication of the 2017 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, Hawker highlighted this: "Although the concept of Australia as a middle power is one most associated with Labor… there is also a strong Coalition tradition of embracing middle power diplomacy… as a concept used to describe powers that are not considered great, yet are not small, the idea of Australia as a middle power still makes sense" (2016). What is of most significance is not necessarily the explicit association of Australia as a middle power, which waxes and

wanes dependent on which party is in power, but rather whether or not middle power diplomacy is embraced.

In this study, the extent to which middle power diplomacy is seized indeed varies greatly between cases. In the first, Australia the 'significant power' preferred bilateralism. In the second, the term 'creative middle power diplomacy' was often used, although multilateral and leadership ambitions were actually less than what this label would suggest, as bilateralism was still often prioritised. In the final case, despite a preference for the term 'top-20 nation', Australia's middle power diplomacy ambitions were actually at their highest, with preferences for multilateralism, increased regional leadership, and a desire for more international involvement overall. The concept of *What's in a name?* therefore does not appear to be as significant as *What is the actual policy intent being portrayed?*, although this certainly does not have the same ring to it. For this analysis, it is therefore clear: Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation has grown in every case.

This clear increase in Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power can then easily be linked to its establishment of diplomatic missions in order to establish co-variation. As Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power increased from case to case, so too did its establishment of diplomatic missions. Co-variation over time among these two variables implies a link. In order to understand the extent of this link, the final stage of the congruence analysis was conducted: an examination of the theoretical implications.

### 5.3.3 Implications of co-variance

The co-variance between cases has several theoretical implications. The congruence analysis showed clear co-variance, enabling application of middle power theory to Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions, albeit with certain issues regarding labelling. This in turn has implications for the hypothesis of the study.

Firstly, it is important to note that co-variation over time was indeed established: in each case, relatively similar levels of establishment of diplomatic representation and of middle power self-conceptualisation were apparent. In the first case, Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions and its middle power self-conceptualisation were both low. Both these variables increased over time, and in the second case the size of its diplomatic network was larger, as was its middle power self-conceptualisation. Then in the final case, Australia saw the largest ever increase in its diplomatic network, coupled with the highest levels of conceptualisation of middle power ambition. Such co-variation implies a link: Australia's increase of middle power self-conceptualisation has an effect on its establishment of diplomatic missions.

The other key component of congruence analysis is to consider the theoretical inferences. In this instance, the implications of middle power theory. Because co-variance was present, this suggests that the relative strength of middle power theory to explain Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions is relatively high. This comes back to the original hypothesis, which was: as Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power increases, its establishment of diplomatic missions abroad also increases. As co-variation and a link were established through the congruence analysis, this hypothesis is accepted.

This being said, it is important to note that middle theory does not and cannot explain Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions completely. In particular, the issue with differing definitions of middle power and the implications of middle power labelling can have an impact on results. In fact, the impact of middle power labelling on Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions was found to not be as significant as actual statements of policy intent that *related* to being a middle power. If labelling were significant, it would be expected that the ALP government during the 2017-2013 period would have had the highest levels of establishment of diplomatic missions, which was not the case. As such, it can be determined that a particular aspect of middle power theory – self-conceptualisation and middle power policy intent – seems to have the most impact.

It is also important to note that middle power is also unable to completely and accurately predict Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions. It would of course be incredibly hyperbolic to suggest that if Australia were to build a new embassy in Cairo that this would be entirely dependent on whether or not the Foreign Minister decides to talk about multilateralism and being a regional leader in a speech. Other factors such as budgetary constraints, historical ties, and trade implications must also play a role. Middle power theory is not the be all and end all, but it does provide a useful framework for understanding how Australia perceives itself and how this might affect the policy choices made about its diplomatic network.

Ultimately, this congruence analysis makes one aspect clear: Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation, and not explicit labelling, is associated with its establishment of diplomatic missions. More specifically, as Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation increases, so too does its establishment of diplomatic missions.

# Conclusion: the Australian middle power future?

This thesis looked at Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions. Using a middle power theory approach, the development of Canberra's overseas network was examined in order to understand if self-conceptualisation as a middle power has an effect. Through content analyses of Government statements, the congruence method was applied, finding that co-variation between cases was indeed apparent, resulting in an acceptance of the hypothesis: as Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power increases, its establishment of diplomatic missions abroad also increases.

Because no study has previously applied middle power theory to the establishment of diplomatic missions abroad, or specifically looked at the case of Australia, this research is relatively unique. This means that this study can make a contribution to the literature, particularly in the realm of studies middle power theory.

This being said, conducting an in-depth case study and only studying Australia has its limitations. Namely, the findings cannot necessarily be implied to all other states, or even to other middle power states. Moreover, the methods used, content analysis in particular, are relatively subjective and open to interpretation. As such, more in-depth study is required to validate these findings. This thesis provides interesting results about Australia, however these must not be overstated: in order generalise the finding that as Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power increases, its establishment of diplomatic missions abroad also increases, the study must be reproduced.

By extension, the research herein also offers interesting grounds for further study, particularly on the potential of middle power rhetoric in Australia as it pertains to other foreign policy issues, or even in terms of how other states shape their policies with regards to diplomatic missions. This makes its relevance in the societal domain significant: if middle power rhetoric has such shaping power over policy, it is useful for politicians and government to be aware of this as it could be used to their

advantage when attempting to promote particular aprroaches. This rationale in turn could provide an interesting and relevant avenue for further study.

## A middle power identity without a middle power label

Looking at the results of the congruence analysis more in-depth, although it is always virtually impossible to establish a causal link between two variables, a clear relationship between Australia's middle power self-conceptualisation and its establishment of diplomatic missions was made apparent. In the first case, which characterised by the conservative governance of the Liberal party, middle power self-conceptualisation was low, as was Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions. This increased in the second case, where the return to middle power rhetoric saw the publication of a parliamentary inquiry into Australia's overseas network. Then with the return to Liberal governance in 2013 and undoubtedly due in part to this inquiry, Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions abroad reached unprecedented levels. This makes it clear that while middle power self-conceptualisation can impact Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions, policy change is not immediate and takes time. This period saw very little middle power labelling, however the ambitions expressed regarding multilateral engagement and regional leadership indicate a middle power identity.

This confusion over labelling brought to light the issues with an identity approach to middle power theory. The recent trend among politicians to refer to Australia as a 'top-20 nation' and not a 'middle power' has not actually resulted in a ceasing of it engaging in middle power behaviour. Canberra is becoming increasingly engaged regionally, multilaterally and internationally, and the recent upheaval in its diplomatic network has reflected this. It therefore appears that what is of most importance is whether a state's policy intentions actually reflect those of a middle power, and not necessarily whether or not it refers to itself as such. As such, it appears that while certain aspects of middle power theory can explain Australia's diplomatic representation – namely speaking about undertaking 'middle power-esque' activities –

the theory falls short when it comes to explicit labelling and using an identity approach.

This would therefore constitute useful grounds for research within the realm of middle power theory, by specifically looking at how important the middle power label is to the middle power identity. It would also be useful to examine whether the labelling is equally insignificant in other similar countries such as Canada.

### 'Cyclical middle power activism'

The content analysis on middle power self-conceptualisation also raised another interesting point regarding partisanship. Over time, Australia's promotion of itself as a middle power has waxed and waned. During the periods where Australia's more conservative Liberal party was in power, the middle power term was deliberately and obviously rejected, while when Labor was in government, the exact opposite was true. This further confirms the notion of cyclical middle power activism: for middle power countries, foreign policy decisions are of course based on resources and other such endogenous factors, but also on the domestic policy context. As this thesis indicates in the case of Australia, how it identifies itself is at least in part dependent on how the politicians in power perceive their priorities regarding domestic policy. This in turn has an effect on Canberra's establishment of diplomatic missions abroad: this is related to its middle power self-conceptualisation, which is linked to the politicians in power and their policy intentions.

In order to explore this issue further, it would be useful to undertake a more in-depth analysis using process tracing. This would enable a more precise understanding of the various steps involved in Australia's establishment of diplomatic missions more generally, as well as to what extent different factors have an impact. For instance, the Inquiry into Australia's overseas network would be a useful starting point: not only did this document portray high levels of middle power self-conceptualisation, but it was then referred to the parliament which considered the advice before advising DFAT to implement the changes. It would be interesting to examine this chain of

process more closely, which in turn would help establish more of a causal relationship between variables.

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Overall, this thesis has answered the initial research question of why Australia establishes diplomatic missions abroad, which is in part based on how it identifies itself. As Australia's self-conceptualisation as a middle power increases, its establishment of diplomatic missions also increases. This self-conceptualisation is not dependent on explicit labelling, but rather on the expression of middle power policy intentions. For Australia, the future for its foreign policy is clear: its desire for multilateral engagement, regional leadership and international involvement is only increasing. It appears that Australia's history of rejecting its middle power role and having the smallest diplomatic network of the G20 may become firmly rooted in the past.

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# Appendix

## Collated data – Australia's overseas network 1997- 2017

| Case | Year | Embassies, high commissions, consulates, multilateral missions and representative offices managed by DFAT | Consulates managed by Austrade | Total DFAT + Austrade (excl. honorary consulates) | Honorary Consulates | Grand total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CASE 1 | 1997-98 | 79 | 17 | 96 | 40 | 136 |
| | 1998-99 | 81 | 17 | 98 | 42 | 140 |
| | 1999-2000 | 81 | 17 | 98 | 42 | 140 |
| | 2000-2001 | 83 | 17 | 100 | 45 | 145 |
| | 2001-2002 | 84 | 17 | 101 | 48 | 149 |
| | 2002-2003 | 84 | 17 | 101 | 49 | 150 |
| | 2003-2004 | 85 | 17 | 102 | 49 | 151 |
| | 2004-2005 | 86 | 17 | 103 | 50 | 153 |
| | 2005-2006 | 87 | 18 | 105 | 47 | 152 |
| | 2006-2007 | 89 | 18 | 107 | 46 | 153 |
| CASE 2 | 2007-2008 | 89 | 17 | 106 | 48 | 154 |
| | 2008-2009 | 89 | 17 | 106 | 49 | 155 |
| | 2009-2010 | 89 | 16 | 105 | 51 | 156 |
| | 2010-2011 | ?? | ?? | ?? | ?? | ?? |
| | 2011-2012 | 95 | 14 | 109 | 65 | 174 |
| | 2012-2013 | 95 | 17 | 112 | 67 | 179 |
| CASE 3 | 2013-2014 | 95 | 16 | 111 | 76 | 187 |
| | 2014-2015 | 97 | 17 | 114 | 74 | 188 |
| | 2015-2016 | 100 | 16 | 116 | 76 | 192 |
| | 2016-2017 | 103 | 13 | 116 | 69 | 185 |

*Note: no data were published online on Australia's diplomatic network in the Annual Report 2010-2011, and upon contacting DFAT they were also unable to provide these, so numbers for that year were unavailable.*