

RE-CALIBRATING NEW ZEALAND'S CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH STRATEGY IN THE DAYS OF TRUMP

Professor Alan Tidwell | Georgetown University | ct35@georgetown.edu

Policy brief no. 17 | June 4, 2017

Presented at the conference: 'Small States and the Changing Global Order: New Zealand Faces the Future' at University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, 3-4 June 2017

After the withdrawal of the United States as a signatory to the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) New Zealand altered its approach to Congressional outreach. The current approach reflects budgetary restraint, and may need recalibration to better account for the new US political environment.

Key findings

- New Zealand's engagement with the US Congress is an important hedge against unwanted actions by the US executive branch.
- During the campaign for passage of the TPP New Zealand gained many hard won relationships on Capitol Hill, those relationships should be maintained.
- The strategy for engaging Congress should be recalibrated to account for the current US political environment.

Executive summary

New Zealand's diplomacy with the US government faces a two-pronged challenge emanating from the election of President Trump. Many policies espoused by Trump stand in stark contrast with New Zealand's. Within days of being inaugurated the President withdrew the US as a signatory to the TPP. This upended years of diplomatic efforts, and leaving the NZ diplomatic mission with limited objectives. Following the TPP's demise the NZ Embassy in Washington restructured its Congressional outreach, shedding the outreach position, and distributing outreach responsibilities throughout the Embassy. The result is to load already busy diplomats with more tasks and complicating the job of Congressional relations.

To resolve this two-pronged challenge the New Zealand government should redouble its efforts to engage with the US Congress. Having spent years building relationships in pursuit first of a free trade agreement, and later the TPP, New Zealand should avoid letting the Congressional relationships erode. The NZ government should seek to expand its budget for diplomatic representation in the US and fund a full time diplomat to head Congressional relations, both to expand New Zealand's representation in Congress and to hedge against unwanted actions by the Trump administration.

Analysis

Over the past twenty years the relationship between the United States and New Zealand has been transformed. Early in the post-ANZUS era the bilateral relationship was not warm, but over time it has

matured into a strong and trusted one. While not formal security partners the US and NZ share many values and interests in their foreign relations, as demonstrated by the Wellington and Washington Declarations, participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and broad commitment to international law and institutions. The steady warming of relations has been profoundly impacted by the 2016 US election.

The election of GOP candidate Donald Trump represents a significant challenge for the government of New Zealand. The Trump administration has taken positions and actions at odds with the New Zealand government, notably withdrawal from the TPP, downplaying the importance of free trade, downgrading the importance of international cooperation in addressing climate change, signaling a significant reduction in funds for the United Nations, calling for a reduction in expenditure on bilateral aid for poverty alleviation, and an ambiguous view on nuclear nonproliferation to name a few.

The challenge may be felt in a variety of ways but perhaps none more so than in diplomatic representation in Washington, DC. Over the course the past fifteen years New Zealand has engaged with the US government, both executive and legislative branches, on matters of trade. In the course of pursuing trade issues New Zealand diplomats have developed numerous strong relationships with members of Congress. Maintaining and building new Congressional relationships is vitally important for New Zealand both as a hedge against unwanted actions by the US administration and for the broader goals of engagement with the US.

In mid-2015 MFAT undertook a review of Congressional outreach at the New Zealand Embassy. Following that review and after the US withdrawal from the TPP the Embassy restructured the way it engaged in Congressional outreach. The responsibility for Congressional outreach was given to a junior diplomat (replacing the locally engaged staff member) along with other duties. In addition, other diplomatic staff were tasked with building relationships in Congress. From a budgetary perspective this approach seems entirely rational, yet from a point of view of organisational strategy and political, it may require modification. Congressional outreach is labour intensive and time consuming. To be effective it must be well coordinated.

Why does this matter?

Numerous stresses test the global order: examples include conflict in the Middle East, terrorism, asymmetric conflict in Ukraine, the continued growth of the DPRK's nuclear capacity and international migration and refugee flows. Competition between the US and the PRC has become increasingly sharp as demonstrated by the establishment of Chinese bases in the South China Sea, increasing presence of US military assets in the region, and shifting allegiances among Southeast Asian nations. Given the importance to NZ of trade with China and the shared values and interests between the US and NZ increased competition or even the emergence of conflict in the region poses risks. As a small power NZ has limited capacity to make its diplomatic voice heard in Washington. Should NZ wish to influence US actions in East Asia it must find the appropriate tools. One avenue through which NZ can find voice for its point of view can be found through Congress. This lesson was made clear early in the Trump administration when the phone call between President Trump and Australia's Prime Minister Turnbull went awry. Coming to Australia's defence with the new administration were some 40 members of Congress who knew Australia well.

A growing concern for managing relationships in Washington emerges from the increasingly complex political environment. Diplomatic missions must maneuver carefully and avoid being caught up in the political fracas.

Congressional relationships capable of being leveraged take time to mature. They cannot be created quickly, but must be cultivated. Drawing on the experience of lobbyists, the most important tool for developing those relationships is information. The information needed by members of Congress is highly contextual. The most effective way of knowing what information to provide is by establishing ongoing relationships.

What should concerned governments and other relevant actors do?

- Reform diplomatic Congressional outreach of the NZ mission to Washington
- Expand MFAT budget to strengthen diplomatic engagement with the US
- Appoint a mid-career diplomat to head Congressional outreach and secure one locally engaged staff member with experience of the US Congress to support this role

Conclusion

The US decision to withdraw from the TPP along with other actions being undertaken by the Trump administration challenge New Zealand diplomacy. Building on the strengths of the relationships formed with members of the US legislative branch over the course of the past fifteen years can hedge against unwanted actions by the executive. To take advantage of this opportunity the correct diplomatic strategy and staff must be in place. The current approach to representing New Zealand in the US Congress may require recalibration to achieve the best outcomes.

NEW ZEALAND'S POTENTIAL IN SMALL STATE PEACEMAKING

Professor Alan Tidwell | Georgetown University | act35@georgetown.edu

Policy brief no. 18 | June 4, 2017

Presented at the conference: 'Small States and the Changing Global Order: New Zealand Faces the Future' at University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, 3-4 June 2017

A strengthened New Zealand peacemaking programme would build on existing foreign policy and advance New Zealand's interests among larger powers.

Key findings

- In keeping with its national values, New Zealand should broaden its peacemaking activities beyond the immediate region
- With a professional diplomatic corps, strong anti-nuclear stance, a commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes, and a limited colonial history, New Zealand is well situated as a peacemaker
- New Zealand will gain enhanced standing and greater access to larger powers

Executive summary

In an increasingly multi-polar world carving out a niche for its diplomacy is critically important for New Zealand. Global shifts in relative power create both threats and opportunities in coming years. Some of these changes include:

- A rising China, with all the tensions that brings into play, underscores the importance of an engaged and effective New Zealand foreign policy.
- Changing character of US engagement around the globe further complicates New Zealand foreign policy.
- A diminished European Union adds to the rising tide of global uncertainty.

Amidst this change violent conflicts persist in the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa and Central America any of which can intensify and grow. How New Zealand positions itself in the face of these global changes is a matter of considerable importance. The temptation to ride out the changes will not best serve New Zealand. Instead, a proactive and engaged foreign policy will best serve New Zealand.

Taking on the role of peacemaker will be a productive and beneficial role for New Zealand. Several benefits will fall to New Zealand along the way. Adopting a peacemaker role will deliver greater access to larger powers. The additional value that accrues to New Zealand by pursuing an expanded peacemaking role is that it reinforces other elements of New Zealand's foreign policy including

support for international law and institutions, nuclear nonproliferation and the poverty alleviation. New Zealand's professional diplomatic service, a critical resource for peacemaking, puts it ahead of many countries. The market for peacemakers can hardly be said to be saturated - many peacemaking opportunities exist in which New Zealand could focus its peacemaking energies, especially outside of the Pacific. In taking on the broadened peacemaking role New Zealand will increase the range of benefits it can accrue from the international environment.

Analysis

In a rapidly globalizing world, conflicts persist and numerous peacemaking opportunities exist around the world. Many of these conflicts threaten the security and economic stability of the international community. These developments have particular salience for smaller states, such as New Zealand. For New Zealand, involvement in peacemaking has the potential to be both insurance against disruption of its economy and an opportunity to increase its influence in decision-making in the international system.

Peacemaking is a process of reaching agreements. Any country which aspires to be a peacemaker needs to establish its *bona fides*, though there are many paths to follow. Norway, Switzerland and Qatar (see table 1) all have peacemaking credentials.¹ Norway can point to its tradition of liberal and religious internationalism and its history of colonial rule under Sweden and Denmark, which gives it more credibility than a state with a colonial history might have. It also has a reputation for its progressive missionary activities. Switzerland has its longstanding policy of neutrality and its status as the headquarters of many major international organizations. Qatar can emphasize its effectiveness in facilitating negotiations and direct involvement of its most senior officials, up to and including the Foreign Minister and the Emir himself.² Where Qatar differs from Norway and Switzerland is in its thinly staffed foreign office and its more regional focus.³ This difference in regional focus is partly by design and partly by necessity-- Qatar seems to be seeking regional, rather than global, influence, but at the same time Norway and Switzerland would struggle to focus on their own region if they wanted to owing to the relative strength of their immediate neighbors.

¹ Bandarage, Asoka. 2011. The "Norwegian Model": Political Economy of NGO Peacemaking. Research Article, Providence: The Brown Journal of World Affairs.

Lanz, David and Mason, Simon. 2012. Switzerland's Experiences in Peace Mediation. Research Article, Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, pp.73-78.

² Kamrava, Mehran. 2011. "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy." The Middle East Journal 539-556.

³ Barakat, Sultan. 2014. Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement. Analysis Paper, Washington, D.C., Doha: Brookings Doha Center.

Dickinson, Elizabeth. 2012. "Qatar Builds a Brand as Mediator." The Christian Science Monitor, March 28.

Kamrava, Mehran. 2011. "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy." The Middle East Journal 539-556.

Ulrichsen, Kristian Coates. 2013. Qatar's Mediation Initiatives. Policy Brief, The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center.

	Resources	Colonial Past?	Geographic Focus	Advantage	Free dialog?	Benefit?
NORWAY	Yes (oil)	No	Global	Peacemaking & missionary traditions	Yes	Discuss trade
SWITZER- LAND	Yes (banking)	No	Global	Commitment to Neutrality	Yes	Banking, FDI, access
QATAR	Yes (oil & LNG)	No	Within region	No Bureaucracy, quick access to senior figures	Yes	Regional influence; Pro-Palestinian
NEW ZEALAND	Yes	Yes	??	National Values Impartial	??	Promote free trade; nuclear disarmament, good governance

Table 1 Small State Peacemakers

Small states involved in peacemaking have several distinct motivations. Access to great powers is a significant factor in developing a peacemaking role. For example, the Norwegians were able to gain access to the then US Secretary of State Rice, briefing her on the peace process in Sri Lanka. Of course, such access also affords an opportunity to raise issues beyond the peacemaking issues. In the case of the Norwegians, they could also raise bilateral trade issues. Peacemaking can also afford a government an opportunity to act out popularly held national values. Switzerland's commitment to neutrality is played out every time the Swiss government offers its good offices to countries who do not share diplomatic relations. Qatar's peacemaking activities are more regional in nature - by resolving regional conflicts greater focus can be placed on what they believe the most important issue, namely Palestine.

What sets New Zealand apart as a peacemaker? There are several strengths that give New Zealand a unique advantage in peacemaking. One is that it is in New Zealand's interest to see violent conflict peacefully resolved, both in because the pacific resolution of disputes is an end in itself and because violent conflict has negative consequences for free trade -- war is quite damaging to trade indeed. Next, New Zealand already has credentials as a peacemaker. Their successful involvement in the Bougainville conflict is proof positive of New Zealand's peacemaking capacity.⁴ A third strength is that New Zealand has stood against a powerful ally (the US) in the pursuit of its anti-nuclear policy. To that end New Zealand was prepared to pay a heavy price in the name of principle. The final strength which New Zealand might present as a unique advantage is its comparatively better relationship between its original people (the Maori) and the colonizers (Pakeha). While still domestically fraught, recent work to honor the Treaty of Waitangi suggests New Zealand is comparatively better off than many others (e.g. Australia, Canada, the US). In sum, New Zealand's *bona fides* as a peacemaker are informed by its history and values.

⁴ Reddy, Peter. 2008. Reconciliation in Bougainville: Civil war, peacekeeping and restorative justice. Research Article, Canberra: Contemporary Justice Review.

Why does this matter?

Relatively few small states are capable of advancing the dual agendas of helping to secure a more peaceful international order while at the same time promoting their relationships with larger powers. Many small states exist in crowded regions where they must contend with the larger powers. For example, the Baltic states are largely unable to work as peacemakers in their own region, squeezed as they are between Russia and Germany. In addition, small states to be effective at peacemaking must also have a strong foreign service. Once again, small states in highly contested regions must deploy their diplomatic service sparingly outside their own region.

Small states that have been most effective at peacemaking have operated outside of their region. Norway and Switzerland are the two most notable examples of successful extra-regional peacemaking. New Zealand is one of only a handful of countries in the world in a position to make a serious attempt at becoming a major state peacemaker. To do so, New Zealand will need to actively engage in conflict resolution beyond its own region. Expanding peacemaking to a global operation will allow New Zealand to increase its standing and influence with great powers while simultaneously taking public action to advance the country's popular national values in a public way and on a global scale.

What should concerned governments and other relevant actors do?

The New Zealand government should seek increased funding from Parliament with the express purpose of expanding peacemaking activities. In addition, the government should commission a scoping exercise to 1) identify 'best practice' in country led peacemaking around the globe, 2) collaborate with New Zealand civil society in building its peacemaking capacity and 3) develop a five year plan on creation of a peacemaking arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Conclusion

There is much potential for New Zealand in peacemaking. New Zealand is enough like the other peacemaking countries for the possibilities to be clear, yet it is different enough that the case for a peacemaking New Zealand is unique from the histories and qualifications of Norway, Switzerland, and Qatar. The professional diplomatic service, which is critical to being able to credibly and sustainably implement conflict resolutions over the long term, is already in place. If it wishes to pursue the peacemaker role, if it deems the benefits of assuming this part in the international system worthwhile, then it is time for New Zealand to act.