

Making a Difference: The Role of a Small State at the United Nations

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I am mindful that this address is made to a college that maintains a Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, including a Model United Nations, and also, in the 1990s, was the first to have a contractual relationship with the UN, when it co-sponsored its International Seminar on Arms Control and Disarmament.¹ It is against this background of Juniata's links with the world's most universal inter-governmental organization that I am pleased to address the role of a small state at the United Nations, and how it is that those small states can really "make a difference," both at the UN, and geopolitically.²

LAYING THE UN'S FOUNDATIONS

If the victors of World War II—initially, the US, USSR, UK and China—had been allowed their way, the United Nations Charter, its founding document (one might almost call it a "Constitution"), would have been dramatically different from the document we have today. Despite the lofty ambitions of President Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" (the Freedoms of Speech, Expression and Worship, and Freedom from Want and Fear), when the "Big Four" got together at Dumbarton Oaks between August and October 1944 to discuss the outline of the proposed United Nations, the resulting draft document was deeply disappointing.³ The prominence of the Security Council, the diminution of the General Assembly, and only a single reference to human rights buried deep in the text, unleashed a stormy and vociferous debate. No matter how important the role of the great powers in defeating fascism, many other countries had contributed blood and treasure to that effort, and they were not impressed.

Some of us were there in September 1939, and still there in September 1945, at the surrender ceremony on the deck of the battleship *Missouri* when Douglas MacArthur—so elegantly, but so simply—expressed the wish "that peace be now restored to the world." It wasn't just the great powers; it was us, and others like us, as well. And so it was that, along with many others, New Zealand reacted to those initial proposals with anger, frustration, and deep disappointment. New Zealand's Ambassador to the US, Carl Berendsen, simply said of the draft Charter, "It aims too low."⁴

Even before Dumbarton Oaks, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, expressed his unease in a speech to the Canadian Parliament, arguing that the wartime principles that had driven the Allies, "must be honored, because thousands have died for them," and that we shouldn't "be undoing in peace

what has been won on the battlefield.”⁵ We hadn’t fought for a seat at the back of the bus; and so it was that, unhappy with the Dumbarton Oaks’ outcomes, the world’s small and mid-sized nations brought their own agenda to the following year’s San Francisco conference that formally agreed on the Charter. Countries like—and as unlike as—New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Lebanon, Egypt, Mexico, Guatemala, and Paraguay (some who had fought in the global war, others who had not) pushed strongly to give human rights a central role in the Charter.

New Zealand was at the forefront on the colonial issue, chairing the Trusteeship Committee, which focused on the welfare of indigenous people and their right of self-determination. It also successfully argued for a strengthened role for the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which anticipated, with some foresight, its later, critical role in the development of newly-independent African and other states. And it is the stuff of New Zealand’s UN legend that we strongly opposed giving a Security Council veto to the Permanent Five—the P5 (the great powers, now with France)—arguing along with Australia that it would hamstring the search for peace and security. Indeed, the veto was the only provision that was put to a formal vote, at which those who were opposed to the veto were defeated.

The final Charter still included much of the original draft, particularly the primary role of the Security Council, with its P5 veto, but human rights had much more prominence and the Charter addressed the contentious issue of the rights of indigenous peoples. This example of small countries standing up to the great powers and influencing that founding document has been repeated throughout the UN’s history— indeed, throughout wider post-war history. Through almost seven decades of conflict and catastrophe, peace and prosperity, small states have worked to ensure that the great powers do not monopolize an institution whose role and function affects everyone. History has shown (as only history can) that it is in the interests of the international community that small states be represented and heard, and that they can be influential and make a difference in the work of the United Nations and beyond.

SMALL STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS

When the UN was founded in 1945, it had only fifty-one members. Through decolonization and fragmentation following the end of the Cold War, that number has almost quadrupled. The UN now has 192 members—over 100 of them with populations under 10 million. If, like the World Bank, we define “small states” as those with populations of fewer than 10 million inhabitants, then from Nauru with around 10,000 to Belarus with 9.5 million, the UN’s membership is dominated by small states—and New Zealand, with 4.4 million, sits right in the middle.⁶

What, apart from population, are the characteristics of these small states and how do they differ from middle powers and large states? In fact, the characteristics and differences are as many as there are countries, but some are particularly relevant to geopolitics, and to multilateralism as it plays out at the United Nations and elsewhere. Small states usually don’t have the military or economic capability to act

unilaterally beyond their own borders, and must therefore push to ensure equality in their bilateral and multilateral relationships with larger powers.

The obvious imbalance between small states and larger powers (predominantly the P5, but also rising powers like Brazil, India, Germany, Japan, South Africa and Turkey) means that multilateral systems based on the rule of law are vitally important for those smaller states, as they prevent that imbalance being used to their disadvantage. They reduce opportunities for the strong to impose on the weak, they help protect national sovereignty, they establish norms that facilitate trade and prosperity, and they allow small states to participate as equal partners in global discussions that directly affect their interest.

The UN is not the only multilateral institution—the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund and others (some related to the UN, some not) are also vital to the interests of small states—but the UN, with the universality and legitimacy it derives from its scope and membership, sits right at the heart of this multilateral system. Others are also important: New Zealand’s economic well-being depends on exports, particularly agricultural, and our economic strength, even survival, is based on our absolute commitment to the multilateral economic architecture of the WTO.

But no other entity can claim such universality and legitimacy as the UN; indeed, at no previous time in human history have we had a body of such scope. Only the UN can bring together 192 States to debate almost any issue, to establish human rights norms, and to exercise collective responsibility.

The United Nations is the world’s principal peacekeeping body (about 124,000 personnel presently serve in sixteen UN peace operations), and its Security Council can legitimize the use of force when international peace and security are threatened. It is that same UN Security Council to which we turn in times of conflict, and it is the forum through which those conflicts can be (and often are) brought to an end. When conflict broke out in Lebanon in 2006, and in Gaza in late 2008, the Security Council played a key role in bringing the parties to the table to broker a deal.⁷ It was instrumental in achieving the independence of Namibia,⁸ and peace and stability in El Salvador.⁹ It has set up tribunals to deal with genocide in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, partly redeeming its previous inaction in both places.

If small states want to participate in all this, then, lacking military and economic might, they must rely more on establishing formal and informal alliances with other states with similar interests. Through such alliances, small states can play a role on the world stage disproportionate to their size. For example, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the group of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which includes many of New Zealand’s close Pacific neighbors, are very active on environmental and climate change issues. For its part, with Canada and Australia, New Zealand often negotiates as the CANZ group, which is regarded as a moderating force and as a bridge-builder in much of the UN's work. We also work

closely with other small states such as Norway, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein, particularly on human rights issues—indeed, we constantly seek ad hoc groupings to push our point of view. Small states work together because they need to collaborate to wield influence, and the UN is an excellent environment for establishing such groups.

SMALL STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

While the great powers of 1945 may still dominate the Security Council of 2011, in the UN General Assembly (or GA) all 192 countries are equal. The vote of The Comoros has the same weight as that of China; Rwanda, the same as Russia. Even though it is only the UN Security Council that can make binding decisions on matters of international peace and security, the General Assembly is still the UN's principal body for debating and making recommendations on the full spectrum of the UN's work, from peace and security to human rights and development; and, while its resolutions are not binding, they still carry significant moral weight. The GA also elects the non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, and the members of other bodies such as its Human Rights Council.

One of the General Assembly's earliest achievements was the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—the foundation of today's international human rights framework—inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁰ Once again, small countries left their mark on that Declaration. Thanks, in part, to their efforts, it explicitly addressed socio-economic rights, condemned discrimination and, by insisting that all rights applied equally to those under colonial rule, achieved universal application of its provisions. Two New Zealanders, Professors Colin Aikman¹¹ and Robert Quentin-Baxter, played leading roles in that process.¹² As with the Charter, we were involved with our heads and with our hands.

Following on from that tradition, we have played a role in all major international human rights engagements, and domestically, were early in addressing indigenous issues, government transparency, and freedom of information—all hallmarks of both internal and international integrity. There are many other examples of small states playing an important role in the workings of the General Assembly, among them the following representative sample:

- In 2009, the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) proposed a resolution on the security implications of climate change—a real issue for countries that could be inundated by even modest sea level rises—which the GA passed by consensus, with co-sponsorship from 101 states, including, in a first for climate change resolutions, the United States.¹³
- In 2010, Qatar successfully proposed that, in emergency or humanitarian crises, the need for education be considered on the same level as food and shelter.¹⁴
- In other UN-wide examples, Norway was a driving force behind the Convention that banned the production, sale, and use of landmines.

- Malta, Singapore, and New Zealand all played significant roles in drafting the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which governs all activity beyond the territorial waters of individual states and which resulted in them becoming significant maritime states.
- Liechtenstein, one of the smallest of all, currently co-chairs the review of the Human Rights Council--the UN's principal human rights body.¹⁵

SMALL STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

But none of that obscures the fact that most General Assembly resolutions are non-binding, and that the UN Security Council is the “high table” of international relations; indeed, a former Mexican diplomat has said of such discussions generally that, “if you’re not at the table, you’ll be on the menu.”¹⁶ The Council’s basic structure dates back to 1945, when the victors in the most destructive war in human history--the US, UK, France, Soviet Union, and China--were accorded the dominant role of permanent membership, with the right to veto Council decisions, along with (originally) six non-permanent members elected by the GA for two-year terms, increased in 1965 to ten non-permanent members. However, despite having twice as many non-permanent members, for most purposes the Council can usually be dominated by the P5.

Sixty-six years later, that anachronistic structure does not represent today's geopolitical realities, and its work methods are opaque. Some of the Council’s non-permanent seats can be (and often are) held by small states; although they don’t wield the veto, they can still influence the Council’s workings in several ways. For example, even if no P5 member exercises its veto, Council resolutions require nine votes to pass, so the support of the elected members is still important. To get action, even the P5 needs the assenting voices of smaller states. The significance of that nine-vote requirement was dramatically demonstrated in 2003 when the Council considered the draft US-UK-Spanish resolution on Iraq. Although France had threatened its veto, the resolution had to be withdrawn because it was clear it lacked the necessary nine votes.

Much more recently, it was only at the last minute that the Council’s Resolution 1973, authorizing the current military operations in Libya, secured the requisite support from non-permanent members, when South Africa and Nigeria gave their support, resulting in ten members in favor, and five abstaining.¹⁷ So, at least in theory, a coalition of seven non-permanent members can effectively “veto” even a unanimous P5, although in practice that does not often happen. Moreover, the veto does not apply when the Council decides procedural matters. These are not as newsworthy as other Council decisions, but can fundamentally affect the way it works--and here, the views of the “Elected Ten” are very important (the more so as the Council’s working methods are cause for constant complaint from many Member States). Furthermore, during a two-year term, every member will, at least once, sometimes

twice, preside over the Council and can nominate topics for debate—for a small state, a unique opportunity to promote its core values and to influence world affairs.

When it was recently on the Council, Austria led efforts to bolster the UN's ability to protect civilians; and while hardly a small state, Mexico advanced the Council's work on protecting children in armed conflict. Since 1945, many small states have served with distinction on the Security Council.

After New Zealand's most recent Council term, in 1994-95, the then US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, expressed her admiration for what we had achieved, and the African group organized a special function to express its appreciation—particularly significant, as that period saw one of humanity's darkest hours of recent times, the Rwandan genocide. New Zealand, along with a small group of countries, had pressed Council members to declare what was happening in Rwanda as “genocide,” and to deploy a larger UN force. As the Council's President in April 1994, we even had to threaten to hold a public debate to shame certain countries for their refusal to acknowledge what was happening; tough stuff, indeed, considering who we were up against. In the end, mainly because of the unwillingness of some of the P5 (whose veto threat was always there), those efforts were unsuccessful, and 800,000 innocent people were butchered, many with jungle knives.

It was later written that “the only members of the Security Council who cared were New Zealand and the Czech Republic.”¹⁸ This again confirms that small countries like New Zealand have a place at this high table of international relations, that we can make a difference (and that the way we do that can be quite different from the size and muscle of a great power, but is no less effective for that). Although our efforts on Rwanda were unsuccessful, pressing for a UN response was the right thing to do, and most of those involved (including some who opposed us at the time) have since acknowledged that we were on the right side of history.

The Rwandan genocide, and other contemporary atrocities in Srebrenica and elsewhere, occurred in a post-Cold War context, when some regimes were struggling for legitimacy, and when the disintegration of states, blocs, even regions was a consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The international community celebrated what it saw as the “end of history,” but only when the machetes came out did it really focus on the consequences of the political, economic, social and cultural declines that came with the end of the Cold War. Some might regard it as surprising that, of the fifteen permanent and non-permanent Council members, only two small states were sufficiently aware of these events that they fought for different, better outcomes; but that is how it was, and that is the role small powers can play.

Being small can have other advantages. According to Colin Keating, New Zealand's UN Ambassador when we were last on the Council: “Their small size usually means much greater ease of internal consultation, and much greater openness and flexibility ... a small country has real options to operate in the Security Council professionally and credibly and with nimbleness and flexibility.”¹⁹ On the

great issues of the day, small states are often less weighed down by their history, and are less constrained by domestic constituencies, or by an international leadership role, or by past international actions; put simply, they come with less baggage and are often more willing to seek creative, pragmatic solutions.²⁰

THE UN'S INTERESTS

So far, my comments have focused largely on a small power's role at the UN, but largely as seen from its own perspective or that of other states. But it is also in the interests of the UN generally, its Security Council in particular, that small states should play a meaningful role in their work. That is because, among other things, while the P5 veto can have a negative effect on Council deliberations, many of the Security Council's decisions require the buy-in not just of the P5, but of all member states—more than just the nine-vote requirement.

The Council authorizes peacekeeping missions and the use of force missions that require troop contributions from small states. The Council also makes and influences international law—its decisions have the force of international law—and it sanctions countries that violate international law. International law is based on the comity of nations, and is only effective if observed by all states. Measures should be available to deal with those who breach it and the implementation of Council-imposed sanctions requires the cooperation of the entire international community, small states included.

We now live in an interactive global community, where events in Kabul or Baghdad can have an impact on the safety of citizens in New York, London, or Madrid, and the Council deals, almost daily, with the international peace and security implications of such interaction (and is judged in the court of public opinion by the speed and nature of its responses). While, at times, the Council behaves like an exclusive club—meeting behind closed doors, restricting attendees (even those who are the subject of discussion)—it is still answerable to the General Assembly.

Under the Charter, the GA can make recommendations on the Council's powers and functions.²¹ In addition, the Council must report to the GA on the issues it has addressed (reports which are lamentably notable for their brevity and lack of specificity, often little more than diary entries listing which meetings occurred on what days).²² Given its mandate, it is understandable the Council will attract criticism not just for its decisions (or non-decisions), but also for its structure (particularly the role and veto of the P5), and for the way it operates.

Structure, of course, includes membership, both permanent and non-permanent. Germany and Japan, on the wrong side of history in 1945, argue today that they are worthy of a permanent Council role, as do key emerging countries such as India and Brazil. Africa, with fifty-three states, seeks two permanent seats and increased non-permanent representation. Although the non-permanent seats have nearly doubled, from six to ten, UN membership has almost quadrupled since 1945. As we argued in 1945, even then there were far too many faces pressed against the window; today, there are many more.

There are now so many questions about that anachronistic structure that the Council's very credibility is often called into question. Even if it can still be regarded as effective, an opaque, insular, and unrepresentative Security Council could lose credibility and the support of the wider membership over time; its role could diminish, perhaps even be usurped. We should not treat lightly the possibility of the Council's role being usurped.

Groups such as the G20--the twenty countries that, together, account for eighty percent of the global economy--continue to gain profile and relevance, particularly when G20 membership is determined by today's economic reality, in contrast with the Security Council's historically determined and outdated composition. The possible future role of the G20 was widely debated when, in 2009, it was elevated from a finance ministers' meeting to a leaders' summit, particularly when its subsequent actions appeared to help avert a global depression.²³

It has been said that "the elevation of the G20 in 2009 to be an ongoing summit-level forum is emblematic of the power shifts that have placed the old post-WWII order under significant strain" and that "no other recent multilateral innovation is so clearly premised on bringing together the established and emerging powers as peers."²⁴ "Bringing together the established and emerging powers as peers" is what is sought today by the promoters of Security Council reform, and some believe that, if they cannot get it in one place (the UN) they might seek it in another (the G20). Some go even further and argue that the future of multilateral diplomacy lies with coalitions of "motivated technocrats, influential executives, super-philanthropists, cause-mopolitan activists"²⁵ and others who can "assemble the talent, pool the money, and deploy the resources to make the global economy fairer, rebuild failed states, combat terrorism, promote good governance, deliver food, water, health care, and education to those in need, and prevent environmental collapse."²⁶

That is a heady public-private agenda if ever there was one, but it misunderstands the fundamental difference between the countries and the causes targeted by multilateral organizations like the UN on the one hand, and those targeted by private philanthropy on the other, and therefore overstates the likely future direction of multilateral diplomacy. But we cannot ignore the increasing role played by, for example, results-focused and outcome-oriented private entities such as the Gates Foundation, the Clinton Global Initiative, or *Médecins Sans Frontières*; nor the very successful public-private partnership, the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership (ACHAP), involving the Gates Foundation, pharmaceutical company Merck, and the Government of Botswana;²⁷ nor pro bono roles, such as that of accounting firm Deloitte, which voluntarily monitors the delivery of United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) projects; nor the credibility of the World Economic Forum which meets annually in Davos, Switzerland. Prominent global citizens will "crawl over broken glass" for a prestigious invitation to Davos, but not for one issued by the UN.

All such entities, public and private, have their place. Some states are deeply suspicious of the motives of other (particularly Western) countries and their philanthropy, and will only allow the “neutral” UN “brand” to work within their borders on humanitarian, institution-building and other projects. For example, between 2006 and the end of 2011, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) will have funded about 400 democracy projects, including some in democratically-challenged countries such as Burma, Iran, and Zimbabwe, all undertaken with the “consent” of host governments.

By comparison, a private benefactor can ignore host government wishes and sensitivities, and choose its recipients and partners regardless of their views—even, if it wishes, funding opposition groups. The private sector has a wonderful flexibility that is often denied the UN and similar organizations, but it is multilateral organizations like the UN that can keep reluctant governments “inside the tent.”²⁸ Nevertheless, against that activist background, the Security Council can appear indecisive—particularly because of the negative effect of the veto, which, far from demonstrating the “great power unanimity” it was intended to uphold, more often exposes the deep divisions between those powers.

There are, however, occasions when the Council does act decisively, as with its recent resolutions on Libya, and it is in such situations that small countries can often play a crucial role. On Libya, the role of small states was critical; their “nine-vote” support was always required for the adoption of the two recent resolutions. But, perhaps more importantly, the US, UK and France were reluctant to act until small, regional countries acquiesced. Lebanon, a small state, was the active sponsor of the Council resolution. The moral support of countries like Qatar and Kuwait, through the Arab League, was critical to the coalition’s decision to intervene in Libya, and the continued financial and military contribution of Qatar, the UAE and others supports the coalition in its role.

NEW ZEALAND AND SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

Unlike some, I do not criticize the “post-war settlement” of 1945 that gave us the United Nations, even with its less-than-perfect structures. It has generally served New Zealand well; and if we just focused on our own interests, it could be argued we might not fare as well from some of the suggested changes to the UN. Even so, we generally support reform of the Security Council that would, inevitably, bring more members to its table because, given the value New Zealand places on multilateral engagement, it is not in our broader interest that the Council lose credibility, or perhaps even be usurped. For all its shortcomings, we value the role that can be played by the United Nations Security Council. It is only through the Council that the international community can ensure we do not repeat the mistakes of Rwanda and Srebrenica. Indeed, it is only through the Council that the international community can deliver on the promises of international peace and security we made to each other in the UN Charter of 1945. We want a Security Council that is ready, willing, and able to address such issues, and to do so with the credibility that comes from a broad-based, contemporary membership and structure.

However, despite widespread calls for reforms that might deliver such credibility, there has been little progress over the past twenty years. And it is not just the Council's structure that needs reform. Its working methods affect the ability of the rest of us to follow and contribute to its work, and they directly undermine the Council's legitimacy. Reform of the Council's structure and membership would require amendments to the UN Charter (thus triggering the treaty approval procedures required by many national constitutions, not least in the US), but that would not be required if we only changed its working methods. New Zealand therefore supports current initiatives to make the Council more transparent and open, and it is again significant that those proposals come from a group of small states, known as the "Small Five." Some of the P5 actively oppose such measures, even arguing that it is for the Council alone to decide how it should operate.²⁹

NEW ZEALAND AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL

What then should the United Nations expect of a small Member State that seeks non-permanent membership on its Security Council? And what should a small state aspire to achieve through that membership? More specifically, what can a small state bring to the Security Council?

It is not enough that it should simply seek to enjoy a periodic "place in the Security Council sun," with neither an agenda, nor a track record, nor a relevant philosophy, let alone meeting the Charter's requirements that when the GA elects non-permanent members, "due regard ... [must be] specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution."³⁰

I ask these questions not just rhetorically, but in a specific context. New Zealand last served on the Security Council in 1993-1994, and is again seeking election for the 2015-2016 term. At the UN, New Zealand is recognized as an independent and pragmatic Member State, which advocates and pursues constructive solutions, does not play bloc politics, and builds bridges between factions. We are not members of the G8 or the G20, and, even though we are very close to Australia and the United States, as well as an active participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the principal forum for security dialogue in Asia, we are not a member of any military alliances, so we bring an independent voice to multilateral discussions. We take balanced positions on tough issues.³¹

New Zealand is one of the oldest and longest continuous democracies, with the world's eighth oldest national parliament. It was the first country to give women the vote (in 1893), it is a multi-racial society that has developed unique structures for addressing indigenous issues, and it is a Pacific country that reflects the culture and values of its region. We do have strong values to which we consistently adhere, but we do not necessarily seek to force those values on others.

We contribute substantively to the UN's work, both financially and through participation in UN and UN-mandated peacekeeping missions, and also by leading UN negotiations on issues as different as the development of small island states, the rights of persons with disabilities, and control of small arms and light weapons.³² We are also known at the UN as leaders and innovators, willing to embrace and use new ideas; small countries tend to bring innovative, fresh ideas to an organization that is too often hamstrung by political division and drowned in absurd bureaucracy (often maintained under the guise of tradition).³³

Overall, New Zealand has a reputation as a global citizen with a global perspective and a sense of global responsibility—one that advocates actions and pursues outcomes based on the international rule of law, and participates meaningfully in multilateral institutions. Even though we are far from much that tears and tramples at the rest of the world, we often find ourselves pushing much larger countries to act differently (as in the case of Rwanda), or working with others to forge compromises, or assuming the responsibility of advancing key policy objectives because the larger powers are hamstrung by their own very often competing interests.

In 2011, we cannot predict the problems that will face the Council in 2015 and 2016, but they will certainly be the great issues of the day, issues on which a principled and independent stance should make a difference. New Zealand would bring a fresh, Pacific perspective to the Security Council's deliberations. Indeed, the voice, culture, and values of the Pacific have only rarely been represented at the Council's circular table. In terms of population, markets, culture, outlook, and our view of the world, we are not Europe. We have not just applied the European template to another, remote region; we are an integral part of Asia-Pacific. Some of us have had to show flexibility and willingness partly to change our identity, and our way of doing things, to reflect a very different region from that from which they might have come, and indeed, to reflect a very different century from that which went before.

All that means that we do not necessarily act or respond the way others do, we do not necessarily approach and solve problems in the manner of others, and we are different. We are, if you like, the country that accounts for forty percent of the world's dairy trade, the same country that gave you *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Flight of the Conchords*.³⁴ Security Council membership will give us the opportunity to apply all those attributes to the vital and complex matters of international peace and security that confront the Council.

CONCLUSION

Addressing the Uruguayan Parliament in 1998, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said of small states that they “are more than capable of holding their own,” and that “their contributions are the very glue of progressive international cooperation for the common good.”³⁵ It is inevitable that every state will view its UN membership through the prism of national self-interest, and the more democratic the

state, the more that self-interest will be influenced by those on the street (autocracies can and do ignore such views).³⁶ The resulting, noisy debate is the sound of the United Nations at work. Sometimes, that self-interest can be enlightened; sometimes, it will even coincide with the interests of the UN and the wider international community—Kofi Annan’s “common good.”

From the day we first “argued the toss” in San Francisco, and for nearly seven decades since, our principles have been closely aligned with those on which the UN was founded; what is in the interests of the UN is often also in New Zealand’s interests. A small state with that history and with those attributes can make a big contribution to the United Nations.

We do not seek election to the Security Council on the basis of some mistaken sense of regional or national entitlement; and, even though we would represent a region that has had less Council membership than many others, we are not simply claiming “our share” or that “it’s our turn.” All this should be more than just an insider’s game, with participants selected by rotation, and played out in an isolated “East River Bubble.” We seek a role at the “high table” of international affairs because we really do believe we can bring a fresh perspective to the Council’s great issues of peace and security; because our track record shows we can build bridges and offer constructive solutions, and that we can act “professionally and credibly and with nimbleness and flexibility;” because we do not belong to any self-interested bloc, alliance, or grouping; because we are regarded by others as principled, independent, pragmatic, innovative and trustworthy; and above all, because we know (indeed, history tells us) that we can make a difference. And after sixty-six years, in which the UN has struggled its way through conflict and catastrophe towards peace and prosperity, making a difference is what it is all about.

NOTES

1. The views in this address are mine alone and are not necessarily those of the New Zealand Government or Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I express appreciation to those who contributed ideas, knowledge, text and, above all, wisdom for this paper, including: my colleagues at the New Zealand Mission to the United Nations in New York (particularly Bernadette Cavanagh, Anthony Simpson, Alice Revell, Ben Steele and Aidan Burch), Hon. Hugh Templeton, Al Gillespie, Marcy McLay and Denis McLay. However, any errors or omissions remain my responsibility alone.
2. The World Bank takes the view that, “There is no single definition of a small country because size is a relative concept. For instance, Simon Kuznets in ‘Economic Growth of Small Nations’ used an upper limit of 10 million people. By this measure, 134 economies are ‘small’ today. Other indicators such as territory size or GDP are sometimes used. But population is highly correlated with territory size as well as with GDP; therefore, use of population as an indicator of size helps highlight small states’ limited resources.” Although the Commonwealth, in its work on small states, uses a threshold of 1.5 million people, the 10 million population measure is adopted for this paper.
3. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, State of the Union address, 6 January 1941.

4. Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights—Visions Seen*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 168.
5. *Ibid*, p. 167.
6. A population of ten million is also the criterion for membership in the UN's informal Forum of Small States (FOSS).
7. The Security Council held emergency sessions and joined the Secretary General in condemning the violence in Gaza in May 2007. The conflict ended with a six-month ceasefire that came into effect on 19 June 2008.
8. S/RES/435 (1978): United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 (1978).
9. S/RES/693 (1991): United Nations Security Council Resolution 693 (1991).
10. This was achieved through the GA's subsidiary body, the then Commission on Human Rights.
11. Dr. Colin Aikman, Professor of Jurisprudence and Constitutional Law, later Dean of the Law Faculty, Victoria University of Wellington, later foundation Vice Chancellor at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. As a constitutional lawyer and legal advisor to New Zealand's then Department of External Affairs, he was involved both in the conferences leading to the establishment of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.
12. Professor Quentin-Baxter often represented New Zealand on the UN's Third Committee (which deals with human rights) and was, for a time, a member and Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights. He described the Committee thus: "There was an air of irreverence and demagoguery. In great arguments, such as that of self-determination, the debate was repetitious, extensive, extravagant and heated. The people, who had to rely on speeches written for them, or on detailed instructions from their governments, were like crossbowmen at Crecy—absolutely out-manuevered by their more mobile opponents". (R.Q. Quentin-Baxter, "International Protection of Human Rights," in K. Keith, ed., *Essays on Human Rights* [Wellington: Sweet and Maxwell, 1968], pp. 132, 137.)
13. A/RES/63/281: United Nations General Assembly, 63rd Session, Resolution 281. New Zealand's policing contribution in Namibia was integral to that country's transition process.
14. A/RES/64/290: United Nations General Assembly, 64th Session, Resolution 290.
15. In 2010, although this task fell outside the UN's mandate, Lichtenstein also led efforts to establish the "Crime of Aggression" at the International Criminal Court.
16. Quoted by Parag Khanna (see endnote 25).
17. *The New York Times*, "Obama takes hard line with Libya after shift by Clinton," 18 March 2011.
18. Geoffrey Robertson QC, *Crimes against Humanity—The Struggle for Global Justice*, (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 72.
19. Colin Keating, "The United Nations Security Council: Options for Small States," Speech to the Small States Conference at the Centre for Small States Studies, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, 16 June 2008.
20. And, as Keating also noted, respect and credibility earned on the Council can have significant downstream benefits for a country's diplomacy, including its stature within the UN as a whole.
21. See endnote 11.
22. See endnote 16.
23. New Zealand is a founding member of an informal Global Governance Group (the 3G) that seeks to ensure a proper relationship between the G20 and the UN.
24. David Shoor, "Making the G20 a Reservoir of Global Leadership: A Maximalist Argument," *The Stanley Foundation Policy Analysis Brief*, (April 2011): 1.
25. Parag Khanna, (Director, Global Governance Initiative, New America Foundation), *How to Run the World: Charting a Course to the Next Renaissance*, (New York: Random House, 2011).
26. New America Foundation, http://www.newamerica.net/publications/books/how_to_run_the_world.
27. Franziska Rook, "Public-Private Partnerships in the Fight against HIV/AIDS: A Case Study of Botswana," *SPNA Review*, 5.1 (2009): 26.

28. Individual, private benefactors can do as they wish with their own money. Not-for-profits can also perform significant roles but are often constrained by the expectations of their donors, and even by the tax deductibility rules that drive much of their fundraising.
29. This assertion is no more legitimate than arguing that citizens have no valid interest in the rules and practices that govern the proceedings of their country's courts, or the rules and procedures of the legislatures they elect.
30. See endnote 24.
31. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established in 1994. It comprises twenty-seven countries: the ten ASEAN member states (Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) the ten ASEAN dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, China, the EU, India, Japan, New Zealand, ROK, Russia and the United States), one ASEAN observer (PNG) and the DPRK, Mongolia, Pakistan, East Timor, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. It is the principal forum for security dialogue in Asia, complementing the various bilateral alliances and dialogues. It provides a setting in which members can discuss current regional security issues and develop cooperative measures to enhance peace and security in the region.
32. In the recent past, New Zealand chaired UN consultations that led to the Mauritius Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the Ad Hoc Committee that wrote the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the first human rights convention of the 21st century); and, in May 2011, New Zealand will chair an important meeting of small arms experts—small arms being, as one Pacific ambassador put it, “our weapons of mass destruction.”
33. As an aside: as a member of the “Bureau” of the UN's Third Committee (which deals with human rights), we were the first to use social media (Twitter) to communicate with our constituency group, although the results were not as dramatic as their role in Cairo's Tahrir Square.
34. Fonterra, the giant New Zealand dairy cooperative, is “the world's largest dairy exporter,” and “accounts for about 40 percent of the global trade in butter, milk powder and cheese, selling product in 140 countries,” Bloomberg, 23 September 2010.
35. Kofi Annan, “Secretary-General Lauds Role of Small Countries in Work of United Nations, Noting Crucial Contributions,” UN Press Release SG/SM/6639, 15 July 1998.
36. Similarly, most treaties are based on national self-interest, or are achieved at the point of intersection of the national self-interest of a number of contracting states.