

“New Zealand us a firm multilateralist - as a small state we must be. We depend on a stable, rules-based international environment. We don’t have hard power only, only soft.” Discuss.

It cannot be said that New Zealand is not a firm multilateralist, it is one concept that can be regarded as a ‘central pillar’ in New Zealand’s (NZ) foreign policy. The honorable Phil Goff once said, whilst Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2005 - “New Zealand’s dedication to multilateralism stems from three things: New Zealand’s history, New Zealand’s size and the realities of a globalizing world.” These points are still very much evident in today’s society and NZ sees many advantageous results that have, and are still yet to emerge from global communication and co-operation. With increased co-operation comes decreased conflict, and thus the use of soft rather than hard power to achieve a states ambitions. NZ is a significant utilizer of soft power and many examples emerge in NZ’s recent history, the question still arises however, if NZ does in fact poses hard power?

Although New Zealand (NZ) does not necessarily fit the small state model, it is one country that is definitely regarded by not only the NZ Government, but also to many international actors to be that of a small state. With this being the case, New Zealand has historically, and also in today’s world, been involved in many global co-operative agreements. The most pivotal historically being recognized, is the signing of the League of Nations in the early 1900’s. This was NZ’s contribution to ensuring the fair and just treatment of others. From this significant moment onwards NZ remained a firm multilateralist and examples of this stance continue right through NZ’s history.

The reason New Zealand holds this stance is due to the fact it sees many beneficial outcomes that disembody from multilateralism. There are many factors that mold this way of thinking. Firstly, New Zealand is a country of uncertainty, the significant adherence to the United Nations, which rose from the ashes of the League of Nations, demonstrates an aspect of NZ’s loyalty. Yet, the AZUS Treaty illustrates a more non-compliant stance that NZ can hold towards world powers. NZ has typically been a country that is subjected to world influence, largely due to the size of the state and the common values that are shared. It is hugely apparent that in Europe, Asia and America, three significant world powers and sources of influence, that political co-operation and economic integration is growing rapidly and the global trend tends to be that of trade liberalization. Hence, NZ’s active involvement in such organizations as the United Nations. However, at the same time, NZ is not afraid to unearth injustice and highlight issues that it does not think are right. By ensuring multilateral organizations are ‘stable and rules-based,’ this allows NZ to immediately identify when a rule has been broken or has not been adhered to and ensure that the correct measures are undertaken to ensure that rules are followed. This is important, not only for NZ, but also many other small states or still-developing countries as it means their voice can be portrayed to the world, even in the absence of supreme power.

It is apparent that not everything can be achieved through multilateral agreements, however, there are circumstances where the only answer to an issue is multilateralism, such things include the removal of export subsidies on agricultural produce, in NZ’s eyes multilateralism is the pathway to globalization and a more co-operative world. One key issue to NZ is security, again emphasis is placed on NZ’s size. According to Phil Goff in a speech made to Parliament, “as a small player on an international stage, our economic and physical security depends on a properly functioning system of collective security, the

international rule of law and dispute settlement.” Although NZ’s location in the world provides natural security, NZ sees collective security arrangements as very important.

This particular issue, security, exhumes NZ’s role with regards to hard and soft power. NZ exercises most emphasis on soft power, largely through global ‘bridging’, rather than global ‘fighting.’ NZ uses tactical methods such as diplomacy, the implementation of policies that concern trade, the environment, education and immigration to act as preventative measures. NZ also stresses the importance of peace-keeping and economic and technical aid to developing countries, rather than hard power methods. By initiating these global connections, such as collective security, NZ demonstrates effectiveness. The key ‘soft’ actions undertaken by NZ with regards to security include co-ordinating arms-control, strong emphasis on counter-terrorism and involvement international crime monitoring agencies. All these components build a rather effective soft power base of NZ security.

NZ believes that through strong and co-operative multilateral agreements counter-terrorism can be largely successful. This can be achieved through the promotion of adherence to the universal standards of human rights and the co-operation between countries, particularly post 9/11, in initiating new constructs for international protections against terrorism. Under this also falls the global movement to limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This is a large concern going into the future, such biological, chemical and nuclear weapons can now be attained much easier, as they are becoming less expensive and much smaller in size. By global treaties being agreed upon, these weapons can be controlled.

NZ illustrates its preference for soft power in the area of counter-terrorism also. Since 9/11, NZ has passed legislation including Terrorism Suppression Act, Crimes Amendment Act, Counter-terrorism Act and Telecoms Interception Act. This has meant the tightening of customs and immigration, and also aviation and bio-security issues. The Government also set up a Centre for Critical Infrastructure Protection in the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB). This was largely focussed around technological and cyber-security. These actions are clearly soft, preventative measure being applied to this area of counter-terrorism.

Multilateralism also enables unprecedented feats, through key relationships with such states as China, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and India, NZ has an active role in molding the ‘architecture of Asia.’ Through such co-operation the walls that divide the world are crashing down. NZ has the ability and relationship to contribute highly beneficial input into the region’s framework with regards to trade and political and economic dialogue. An example of this has recently been the China-NZ Free Trade Agreement. Without NZ embracing such multilateralism we may not have ‘Hello Kitty’ scorching her face into our toast in the morning. It is often debated that the sole reason for multilateralism is trade and economic benefits in a globalizing world and to a certain extent it is true, according to the late Sir Robert Muldoon for NZ “trade is NZ’s foreign policy”. Multilateralism has been highly advantageous in NZ in the area of trade. A current example is that of NZ’s participation in the P4, along with Singapore, Brunei and Chile. With the United States sparking interest in agreeing to attend meetings. With multilateral agreements comes great possibilities for trade-agreements that can benefit all involved.

Many argue that the success of multilateralism is limited to larger and more powerful countries. NZ does not agree with this stance, firstly because it in itself is not in

accordance with that mould and secondly, NZ sees multilateralism as a key in the irradiation of poverty. Specific to NZ is the work with the Pacific Island nations. It is through the relationship NZ has with Australia and the Pacific that the desperate need of the Pacific can come into light on the global stage and thus allowing aid missions to be initiated in areas in greatest need.

Another benefit that NZ sees in multilateralism and hence a reason for the important place it has in the country, is that common values and approaches to problems solving can often cause issues to be worked upon by groups who share the same views. This approach is required to be context dependent and issue specific and the common value groups may differ from issue to issue. As previously mentioned, NZ may work with Australia for aid in the Pacific, yet work with America for Scientific and Antarctic exploration. This means the regional borders and boundaries are crossed by gathering together coalitions of interest and thus a mixture of developed and developing countries can work together to achieve the desirable outcome. A historical example was that of the disarmament field, which formed the New Agenda Coalition made up of Sweden, Ireland, South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, Egypt and NZ. The realists strive for power politics, the state with the most power dominates, but is this really just? This type of cross-regional and cross-developing multilateralism helps dispel global prejudice and is another way of enabling not just world powers to have their say.

An especially important point for NZ is the work on the environment, in particular climate change. The Kyoto Protocol is an example of a multilateral way to achieve decreased carbon emissions. From this it is evident of the important factors that come out of multilateral agreements, this is commitment and inclusion. Many major players are not prepared to be involved in this, including the US, this is a country that contributes significant amounts of pollution into the atmosphere. This is an example of the requirements of multilateral agreements, dedication, participation and co-operation. This is also another example of NZ's soft power towards global issues, by signing and ratifying treaties issues can be resolved without resorting to hard power.

Lastly, when the two words multilateralism and NZ enter one's head, the words United Nations (UN) are quite likely to follow shortly after. As previously mentioned, NZ was involved from the start, after the signing of the League of Nations, that was created by Woodrow Wilson after the Treaty of Versailles in the early 1900's. The UN, although largely controversial, particularly with regards to corruptions and failed resolutions, is one of the largest multilateral agreements in the world. However, it is important to recognize the many beneficial outcomes that have emerged because of its presence. The UN's General Assembly provides a hugely valuable area to interact in open dialogue, while the security council can implement binding decisions that the government's of members agree upon. NZ has historically and currently followed the decisions and actions undertaken by the UN, and it has proved a valuable decision making tool in NZ's foreign policy making toolbox.

In conclusion, there is not doubt that NZ is or has always been a firm multilateralist, largely due to NZ's size and need for trade and security, but also to promote human rights and attempt to aid and irradiate poverty in developing states. NZ has chosen to embrace soft rather than that of hard power and to a substantial degree have been rather effective in doing so. Soft power has been used particularly in areas on security, counter-terrorism and environmental issues. By ensuring we are involved in agreements with rigid structure

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and rules it allows NZ's voice to be heard when an injustice occurs and encourages NZ's involvement on the global stage.

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