

**Tracing our Footsteps;
New Zealand and the UN Security Council**
Hon Jim McLay CNZM, QSO¹
New Zealand Ambassador and Permanent Representative
to the United Nations
New Zealand Institute of International Affairs
and United Nations Association of New Zealand
Beehive Theatre, Parliament Buildings, Molesworth Street, Wellington
Wednesday 25 August, 5.30 pm

The Rwandan Genocide of 1994

Sixteen years ago, between April and July 1994, Hutu extremists in Rwanda began a rampage that became one of the worst genocides of recent history.

At the same time, thousands of miles away, in New York, as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, New Zealand led a small group of countries that tried to persuade the Council to deploy additional UN forces to Rwanda.

If ever an atrocity required that the UN “reaffirm [its] faith in fundamental human rights” and that it act to “maintain international peace and security”, as declared in its Charter, this was it.

And yet, the UN failed.

As the death count grew, our Ambassador, Colin Keating, pressed hard for the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda to be strengthened, and for the Council to declare this atrocity as genocide.

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.

In the end, mainly because of the unwillingness of some of the Council’s permanent members, those efforts were unsuccessful¹, and 800,000 innocent people were butchered – many with jungle knives.

This and other contemporary atrocities occurred in a post-Cold War context, when some regimes were struggling for legitimacy, and when the disintegration of States, even regions, was a negative side of the aspect of the Berlin Wall

The international community celebrated the “end of history” - but only when the machetes came out did it really focus on the consequences of the economic, social and cultural declines that came at the end of the Cold War.

Genocide was the 1990s end-point of the failure of the Rwandan state; only the international community could have stopped it; today, only the international community can provide mechanisms to ensure such mistakes do not happen again; only the international community can honour the promises we made to each other in the UN Charter of 1945.

The UN failed Rwanda, just as it failed Srebrenica and others; it left undone those things that it ought to have done.

The resulting genocide provides an awful but appropriate context for this address; because it reinforces, in the strongest way, the need for multilateral institutions that might prevent such mass atrocities; and it demonstrates that today’s institutions, though noble in ideal, are still fallible and demand reform and strengthening.

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 my 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 Natasha Lewis); Colin Keating; Hon Hugh Templeton; Al Gillespie; and Marcy McLay. However, any errors or omissions, remain my responsibility alone.

It's contrary to every humanitarian consideration for those institutions to stand aside while a government allows or can't prevent the slaughter of its own people; but, too often, the international community (including the UN) has erred on the side of inaction; inaction that was possibly at its worst during the Cold War, when it was ideological and political; and at its most pathetic after the Cold War, when it reflected inertia and an inability to understand how the world had fundamentally changed.

A United Nations that can't prevent such atrocities doesn't deliver on its declared "faith in fundamental human rights" and fails its responsibility to "maintain international peace and security"; and it certainly requires reform.

Listening to our own voices; tracing our own footsteps

It was said of the Rwandan tragedy thatⁱⁱ, "The only members of the Security Council who cared were New Zealand and the Czech Republic"; confirming that New Zealand has a place on the international stage, and that we can make a difference.

Although those efforts were unsuccessful, pressing for a UN response to the Rwandan genocide was the right thing to do.

Everything written about those dark days, confirms that New Zealand's stance added to our mana at the UN; and that it reinforced our reputation of being principled and independent.

The late Michael King once said that, "If we wish to present ourselves as New Zealanders, then we must be able to listen to our own voices, and trace our own footsteps"ⁱⁱⁱ.

Our voice calling for action in Rwanda was principled and independent – and our footsteps walked us on the right side of history^{iv}.

That might reflect a national character, not just of independence and willingness to speak out, but also to be an active player in world affairs – even, on occasion, to stand in harm's way - and an understanding that remoteness doesn't protect us from the consequences of global events.

A 21st Century Prime Minister would never repeat MJ Savage's "Where [Britain] goes, we go, where she stands, we stand", but might still reflect that character with the words that followed: "We are only a small but young nation, but we are, one and all, a band of brothers, and we march forward with a union of hearts and wills to a common destiny"; an acknowledgment that, then and now, we've always needed something bigger than the voice and actions of just one nation - that some issues are so big - so important - they require a multilateral response.

Multilateral engagement has long been important for New Zealand; which is why it's in our interest again to be represented on the Security Council.

The case for multilateralism

The UN emerged, in 1945, from the rubble of the most destructive war in human history; its founders being those who had fought against facism.

But it was only in the last year of that war that a blueprint for future cooperation started to emerge; leading, ultimately, to a UN Charter declaring that, "We the peoples of the United Nations" commit "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war; ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights; to establish the conditions for justice and respect for international law; to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Linking international security and prevention of war to maintaining human rights and achieving economic and social progress, all under a multilateral umbrella, was the most explicit-ever attempt – much more so than the League of Nations – to beat swords into ploughshares.

Even so, the UN's founders never envisaged a utopian body in the manner of the League; its structures (Security Council and all) are much more realistic and pragmatic and reflect a wider blend of politics and law.

Despite the conspiracy theorists, the UN isn't a plot to impose world government (and, if it was, would fail utterly); it's not even the "universal system for a new world order"^v envisioned by Franklin Roosevelt and Cordell Hull; and certainly isn't Tennyson's "... Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World ..."^{vi}, as adopted by Paul Kennedy.

Even so, the UN was so different and so ambitious, it was probably set to fail in some respects; and certainly bound to attract critics.

Our national interest

New Zealand was a founding member of the United Nations; we helped draft that Charter (we chaired the committee that wrote its Trusteeship chapter); its commitments are at the heart of our commitment to multilateralism.

Since the Charter was agreed, not only have the problems "we the peoples" committed to address remained with us, they are now amplified.

As flows of technology, information, media and people render national borders ever more porous, as conflicts that were once inter-state become more intra-state, as atrocities such as in Rwanda and Srebrenica still occur, and as issues become ever more global, it makes sense to participate in and extract maximum benefit from multilateral institutions.

For a small country at the edge of the world, an international system based on the Rule of Law is vitally important; it reduces (but doesn't eliminate) opportunities for the strong to impose on the weak; it helps protect our sovereignty; it establishes norms which facilitate our trade and prosperity, building the Rule of Law and regulating the free passage of goods by sea and air; and it allows us to participate in global discussions directly relevant to our interests.

The past 65 years have confirmed that New Zealand is more likely to advance its national interest by participating in different multilateral fora than by pursuing narrow, segregated self-interests.

And there are many such fora: As well as the UN and its organs, multilateral institutions (some related to the UN, others not) deal with all manner of global problems: the World Health Organisation (WHO); the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the International Labour Organisation (ILO); the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); there as many organisations as there are problems.

And we've also seen the establishment of regional groups such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) - and, importantly for New Zealand, APEC, ASEAN and the Commonwealth.

All are important (and make their own contribution to global security and development), but there's still only one organisation that is universal in membership and general in scope - the United Nations.

Universality and legitimacy

The UN is far from perfect, but its scope and membership gives it universality, and legitimacy that no other organisation can claim (indeed, at no other time in human history have we had a body of such scope).

That universality is, of course, the bane of some critics.

It accords the same "respect" to a usurper as it does a democratically elected leader; and some object to sharing a table and, as it were, breaking political bread with such undesirables.

It's an understandable view; but that's the price we pay if we want at least one global and universal body where we can deal with all, without pre-qualification – where we can try to hold accountable the likes of North Korea, Burma or Iran.

For all its imperfections, that's still much better than the alternative of having no forum at which such issues can be examined.

Only the UN can assemble 192 States to debate almost any issue, establish human rights norms, and to exercise collective responsibility.

It's the world's principal peacekeeping body; it can legitimise the use of force when international peace and security are threatened; and it's a forum through which conflicts can be brought to an end.

If Winston Churchill was right that “jaw-jaw is always better than war-war”^{vii}, then the UN is the place for that.

A diverse, multifaceted organisation

It's easy – and possibly justified – to respond adversely when someone from the UN arrives here, seemingly only half-briefed but still ready to criticise - or where a remote UN committee appears to do likewise.

But, the UN is an extraordinarily diverse, multifaceted organisation; and, for every seemingly unsatisfactory agenda, there are hundreds clearing mines (saving lives and limbs), distributing food, preventing HIV or helping establish new governance and Rule of Law institutions in a failed state – doing it well, and doing in the name of the United Nations.

Through its various organs – and often ignored or overlooked by critics - the UN provides vital humanitarian assistance, helps avoid or end conflict, and disarms and reintegrates soldiers.

The list goes on - and, fundamentally, human life improves.

New Zealand's issues of national importance

And for New Zealand, there are issues of national importance where multilateral fora – such as UN - play a key role, and where we've gained considerable benefit.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) we have a four million square kilometre Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the world's fourth largest.

Under the UN's extended continental shelf regime, our extended continental shelf covers 1.7 million square kilometres of seabed beyond the EEZ - six times the size of New Zealand; an outcome that could never have been achieved through bilateral negotiations.

Issues that pay no heed to nation-state borders

In the 21st Century, all too often, problems of environmental sustainability, economic health and physical security can only be dealt with at the multilateral level; and so it is that the UN has also led on issues that pay no heed to nation-state borders, such as ozone depletion, fisheries management and rising sea levels.

It's also led efforts to stop the spread of weapons; although some of those have had to play out in other fora.

More and more, it's multilateral bodies that write the rules that protect wildlife, open up trade^{viii}, and govern shipping.

All are crucially important to New Zealand; and, if we want to influence those rules and treaties, we must be at the table when they are made; the world is simply too big, too interconnected, for us not to be there.

As a country, we are no longer in control of many of the economic or environmental trends that will determine our future; but even if we, alone, can't solve such problems, we can still be part of the answer.

Problems facing United Nations

Recently, Baroness Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, admitted that,^{ix} "... critics are sometimes right ... The EU can be too slow, too cumbersome and too bureaucratic".

The same could be said of the governance structures of most democratic states – but no-one questions the legitimacy of those institutions.

Why then is the UN, with much the same problems, regarded differently?

Like the EU, the UN and its efforts at reform are slow, cumbersome and bureaucratic; it's an easy target; it has few natural (or vocal) defenders, particularly in developed countries that pay much of its bills; and it often sells itself short – sometimes, even sets itself up for criticism.

Philosopher's Stone?

As one of the world's largest bureaucracies, the UN often moves slowly.

But those who demand that it solve every global problem (and solve them exactly as they expect) – and criticise when it doesn't - know full well that's impossible - that can't exist - the geopolitical equivalent of the Philosopher's Stone, the mythical alchemists' substance that would turn base metals, such as lead, into gold.

They ignore the global complexity of the 21st Century; and it's also telling that, other than suggestions at the margin about bureaucratic inefficiency, when put to the test, the critics offer few viable alternatives that might better address such complex issues in a multi-polar world.

Even so, many of the criticisms – particularly of often-stalled decision-making and of the bureaucracy – are valid and must be addressed; but others are unrealistic and ignore continued meddling in the bureaucracy and obstruction of negotiations by some Member States.

Poor progress on disarmament, for example, results from the stance of some Member States; and thus it was that, even though supported by the Secretariat, the recent Convention on Cluster Munitions (where New Zealand played a leading role), had to be agreed outside the UN system because of opposition from countries like the [US](#), [China](#) and [Russia](#).

In fact, questions about the UN's effectiveness, scepticism about its relevance, and criticism of its performance have been around as long as the organisation itself.

Much of this is inevitable; with 192 Member States - all protecting their national interests - decisions take time, and mistakes will be made.

Like any political body, decisions are usually the product of compromise – “best fit” solutions for which all sides must concede ground; and the machinery that makes them is old, and reflects the epoch and context in which it was created – out of the ashes of World War II and the shredded files of the League of Nations; since when, little has changed.

What has changed – in addition, of course, to the number of members - is the range of problems to which the UN is expected to respond.

They continue to grow; and the remedial mechanisms, from which the UN must choose, can't always keep up.

The United Nations is its 192 members

Countries, faced with similar domestic problems, might try to reform their bureaucracy; but, at the UN, for every under-performing department or programme that demands reform, there's a Member State (sometimes, a permanent member of the Security Council) with a vested interest in the *status quo*.

The simple truth is this: The United Nations is its 192 members; how they behave is how the United Nations behaves; what they're prepared to achieve, the United Nations achieves.

We can – and will - criticise all we like, but, in the end, the United Nations is us, the countries that take seats in its great hall.

The Secretary-General

What, then, of the Secretary-General?; designated by the Charter as the UN's "Chief Administrative Officer" – the head of that bureaucracy.

Despite a rather grand job description, he has limited power to act.

The UN is like a corporate board with 192 members; and many of the SG's decisions must be vetted by the General Assembly, and all his resources are under the thumb of the budget-setting Fifth Committee.

Bloc politics

Like the wider UN, the Fifth Committee is dominated by bloc politics – and by the classic split between the global north and south (the developed and the developing).

There's often significant mistrust between these groups, particularly when state sovereignty clashes with collective responsibility and action.

And, between those two poles, there are almost as many combinations of allegiances and alliances as there are Member States.

Contrary to the idea of "Great Power Unanimity", on which notion their veto is based, the five permanent members of the Security Council (Russia, China, France, the UK and the US – the P5) are often divided.

There's the Non-Aligned Movement (the NAM) - 118 diverse countries - created to counter the Cold War powers, but now (with two-thirds of the UN's membership) a powerful negotiating force in its own right.

Many of the NAM are also members of the Group of 77 - the G77 (a misnomer, it has 130 members) - a coalition of developing nations.

Then there are the regional and sub-regional groups such as the African and European Unions, the Arab League, CariCom and, of course, ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Blocs sometimes make life easier – allowing only a handful of negotiators rather than the full UN membership – but can also mean that reasonable voices from individual countries are often subsumed by a group position.

Intense criticism; but no alternative

Criticism of the UN has been particularly intense over the past decade, when it was blighted by scandals, bureaucratic problems, financial challenges, increased expectations and bloc politics.

But, despite the shortcomings and criticisms, and the questionable engagement of some, the UN has remained a crucial forum for dialogue, and the only venue for addressing some of the world's most difficult, complex and often intractable issues.

Furthermore, even the UN's most determined detractors have returned to its table, having been brought to the realisation that bilateral diplomacy, alone, is not enough; and that the Security Council's cover and endorsement was essential on issues such as Iran and North Korea.

Multilateralism has proved to be one of the few viable ways to address complex issues in a multi-polar world; and, whatever its flaws, the UN is still the fulcrum of that multilateralism.

Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, with the emergence of powers like China, it's become clear that there are now multiple poles of power, and that no single country can solve the world's problems.

Put simply: The United Nations is here to stay; and only its members can bring it - bureaucracy and all - into the 21st Century, and ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

And, for New Zealand, one way to do that is to seek membership of – and to serve with relevance and effectiveness on - its Security Council.

Is the Security Council still relevant?

Mandated with preserving international peace and security, the Security Council is at the sharp end of the UN system.

It is the Security Council to which we turn in times of conflict.

It is the Security Council that can sanction transgressing Member States, authorise or approve the use of force, establish tribunals to prosecute crimes against humanity, and broker agreements that end conflicts.

When conflict broke out in Lebanon in 2006, and in Gaza in late 2008, the Security Council played the key role in bringing Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Palestine to the table to broker a deal^x.

It was instrumental in forging the independence of Namibia^{xi}, and peace and stability in El Salvador^{xii}.

It has set up tribunals in respect of genocides in Yugoslavia and Rwanda – partly redeeming its previous inaction in both places.

Other parts of the UN do also wield power: The Fifth Committee, for example, decides how to finance peacekeeping missions; and, at its best, the General Assembly can pass resolutions that are a barometer of international sentiment.

But the Security Council is the only body that can authorise or sanction the use of force; for instance, the International Stabilisation Force in Timor-Leste, to which New Zealand is a significant contributor, is legitimised by the Security Council's endorsement^{xiii}.

The Council can also impose sanctions.

The universality of its most recent sanctions against Iran^{xiv} enabled the US and EU then to impose their own, further sanctions – which would have been difficult to achieve without Council cover.

Currently, there are 36 countries on the Council's agenda^{xv}, almost 20 percent of the UN membership, with many more informally considered.

Peacekeeping

The Council authorises the UN's own peacekeeping missions^{xvi}

Presently, about 124,000 personnel serve in 16 UN peace operations which directly impact - often directly protect - many millions of people^{xvii}.

As well as preventing some conflicts, ending sexual violence and protecting civilians, UN peacekeeping makes financial sense.

Those 16 operations cost about \$US 8 billion a year - just 0.5 percent of global military spending.

US Ambassador, Susan Rice, has said that, “for every dollar that the US would spend [deploying its own forces in such countries], the UN can accomplish the mission for twelve cents”^{xviii}.

A far from perfect Security Council

Although it wields considerable power, like the wider UN, the Security Council is far from perfect.

Dominated by the victors of 1945, its structure is anachronistic, it doesn't represent today's geopolitical realities, and its work methods are opaque.

Its role is to “determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and ... [to] make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance ... to maintain or restore international peace and security”.

The 1945 drafters clearly had front-of-mind the inter-state conflicts they'd largely known; but some of today's most intractable problems involve intra-state conflict, so Council debate often centres on whether a particular “threat ... [or] breach of the peace” comes within Chapter VII.

However, those same drafters also created Chapter VI, which mandates the Council to focus on political resolution, mediation and conflict avoidance; particularly relevant tasks in the context of modern, intra-state conflict – but a mandate that's often ignored by Council members.

The UN was founded by 50 countries; now, it has 192 members.

But, despite that increase, its Security Council has only once been expanded - in 1965, when four non-permanent seats were added, to make the current fifteen.

Of the 15, five - the P5 – are permanent members with the right of veto; the other ten, elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, are drawn from five regional groups – Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Europe and Others.

Reforming the UN and BWIs of 1945

I don't criticise the “post-war settlement” of 1945 that gave us the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), even if it gave us less-than-perfect structures.

It's generally served New Zealand well; and, if we just focussed on our own interests, it could be surmised we mightn't do so well out of some of the suggested changes to the UN or the BWIs.

Even so, we've generally supported Security Council structural reform; and we do that because there are now so many questions about the legitimacy of its anachronistic structure – and because, given the value we place on multilateral engagement, that's not in our broader interest.

An opaque, insular and unrepresentative Security Council could lose credibility and the support of the wider membership; its international peace and security role could diminish, perhaps even be usurped; and that would not be in our broader interest.

Such a Council might at best be viewed as irrelevant, at worst illegitimate; and, again, that would not be in our broader interest.

Much of the criticism comes from under-represented regions such as Africa (with only two non-permanent seats); with the push for change led by countries like South Africa and Nigeria, together with the G4 aspirants for permanent seats (Japan, Germany, India and Brazil).

But, despite widespread calls for reform, there's been little progress; partly because the permanent seat aspirants are often opposed by their neighbours (Pakistan opposes India, Mexico opposes Brazil, and so on); partly because the African Union is locked into an position (the Ezulwini Consensus^{xix}), and partly because there are many (including some of the P5) who are content with the *status quo*.

A "Uniting For Consensus" group, including many regional "rivals" of the main aspirants, insists that any change must be agreed by consensus (which, given the various, unmoving positions, is unattainable).

There is even a proposal for a reviewable, "interim" solution that would allow aspirants to seek longer-term seats; and that could be a way forward, particularly if it isn't based on "regional entitlement".

Lack of progress reflects the fact that no current reform proposal attracts sufficiently wide support; and none of the various groups seem ready to move or compromise their positions to achieve broad-based agreement.

In short: Despite the best efforts of the Chair of the process, there is no "negotiation"; no willingness to move; no hint of consensus; just a constant reiteration of known positions.

Working methods reform?

But, apart from its structure, the Security Council's working methods also require reform; and, in the short term, at least, that may be the more relevant issue – if only because it might be the more achievable.

The Council can behave like an exclusive club - it can meet behind closed doors excluding non-members, even if they're the subject of discussion.

The P5 often presents elected members with *fait accompli* resolutions or statements on contentious issues – most recently, in respect of Iran sanctions^{xx} and the sinking of the South Korean ship, *Cheonan*^{xxi}.

Such a Council risks losing credibility; again, that's not in our interest - so New Zealand is a strong advocate of reforming its working methods.

In a statement to the Council in April, I proposed several specific reforms^{xxii} and strongly rejected the suggestion (from some of the P5) that the Council's working methods are for it alone to decide

. The Council's working methods affect the ability of the rest of us – the faces pressed against the window - to understand and contribute to its work; and directly affect the legitimacy of the Council itself.

The veto

But no aspect of the Council demands reform more than the P5 veto.

That veto assumes the desirability of "Great Power Unanimity" – all the more ironic given the history of its use.

The exercise, or even threat, of veto can seriously impede the Council's work and the international community's crisis response; and the "pocket veto" – where resolutions aren't pursued because it's known a permanent member would vote against adoption – can, on occasions, have a chilling effect on Council discussions - as with Rwanda in 1994.

At the height of the Rwanda killings, New Zealand and others pushed for the Council to act; but, under pressure from the US, France and UK – all with a veto – its response was watered down, the UN peacekeeping force was downsized, and the genocide continued, unabated.

As recounted by the Czech Ambassador (on the Council at that time)^{xxiii}, our Ambassador “drew his final trump”, and turned a draft presidential statement into a draft Council resolution - “an absolutely brilliant manoeuvre” because, “unlike a presidential statement, a resolution didn’t need unanimity”; and any debate would highlight the veto possibility and expose the opponents in “their real colours”.

During the Cold War, the veto was mostly used by the USSR; less by the US; since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it’s been used 24 times.

The US exercised over half of these, mainly for Middle East-related resolutions; but others include double-vetoes by China and Russia on resolutions on human rights in Burma and sanctions against Zimbabwe.

New Zealand and the veto

It’s the stuff of New Zealand’s UN legend that, in San Francisco, we strongly opposed the veto^{xxiv}, arguing (with Australia) that it would hamstring the search for peace and security; but it had already been agreed, several months earlier, at Yalta, by the “Big Three”^{xxv}, so that opposition – while principled and spirited – was largely symbolic.

We continue to call for the veto’s abolition; or at least for the P5 to agree not to use it in cases of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing (a widely supported view - except by the P5).

Imperfect but necessary

The second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, said the UN wasn’t “created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell”^{xxvi}; and so it is that the Charter puts an imperfect but necessary Security Council at the very centre of an imperfect but necessary United Nations.

But, when used effectively, the Council is the only forum that can urgently respond to, and maybe prevent, humanitarian crises.

On behalf of the international community, it can send clear messages to rogue governments that threats to peace and security won’t be tolerated.

It can highlight issues that threaten global security - and trends to enhance that security, such as the role of women in building peace.

The Council increasingly emphasises the importance of assisting fragile states and least-developed countries; and recognises the links between political stability and economic development.

When the Security Council does speak, governments, media, civil society, and the public, must listen; the Security Council is the high table of international affairs.

How might reform be achieved?

While actually achieving UN reform is not the focus of this address, allow me to pose one question: Can change – to the Council, the General Assembly (which I’ve barely discussed), the Secretariat and bureaucracy – be achieved by diplomats exchanging, between themselves in New York, pre-prepared statements that repeat pre-determined positions?; or is it more likely to be achieved in the same way they established the United Nations in 1945 - by the direct action of political leaders?

Reflect on this: In the past few years, globally, we’ve seen the election of a new generation of political leadership; Heads of Government - when elected, still in their 40s, of differing political persuasions, but all, in their own way, daring to take new approaches to resolve great issues, without referencing past ideological benchmarks: in our geopolitical milieu alone - Cameron, Harper, Key.

Might they and their global contemporaries be the ones to rehearse again the grand debates of 1945 and agree a new order?; and what would it take to bring them together for that purpose?

I must leave it there: because, while we debate whether it's the right question, and await the right answer, today we must deal with the UN as it is, not as it ought to be – particularly the Security Council.

Why should New Zealand be there?

New Zealand has served three times on the Security Council; most recently in 1993-1994; previously in 1966 and 1954-55.

In 2004, New Zealand announced it would again seek a Council seat for the 2015-16 term; reaffirmed by Prime Minister John Key in his General Assembly address in September of last year.

Two members of the “Western European and Others” (WEOG) group serve on the Council, elected together every two years.

In October 2014, the General Assembly will, by secret ballot, determine whether New Zealand becomes one of those members, requiring the support of two-thirds of the UN's membership – 128 votes.

Unlike most WEOG races, so far only two are seeking election in 2014 – Spain and New Zealand – and, today, our campaign is looking good, with support already secured from many countries.

New Zealand's case for UNSC membership

Based on its performance, record and standing at the UN, New Zealand can make a very strong case for Security Council membership.

It would be in our national interest, and it would benefit the UN.

Our national interest

New Zealand is far from much that tears and tramples at the rest of the world, and a long way from the centres of international rule-making.

We're not members of the G8, G20, NATO or other key groupings; but we are directly affected by many of their decisions.

It's, therefore, in our interest to be seated at the same table as the world's powers, and to participate in and influence their decisions.

Council membership provides that opportunity - and offers consistent and close contact with key partners such as the US, UK and China.

Unlike the Cold war era, when it sometimes didn't meet for weeks or months^{xxvii} the Council now convenes most working days; so we'd be able to forge relationships and advance our bilateral interests with those countries - and others - with a consistency and proximity that no other forum provides.

New Zealand has a reputation as a global citizen with a global perspective and sense of global responsibility – one that advocates the Rule of Law and participates, meaningfully, in multilateral institutions.

In a few words: We're seen as principled, independent and trustworthy.

That reputation even predates the UN; in the 1930s, including at the League of Nations, we were recognised as the most consistent anti-appeaser – sometimes, as a very lonely voice.

Carl Berendsen's memoir^{xxviii} recounts how New Zealand was one of only two League members to support Abyssinia^{xxix}; and how we opposed what he described as "the wretched Hoare-Laval proposals" for Abyssinia, and, later, the "foul abandonment of Czechoslovakia" at Munich.

At the 1937 Imperial Conference in London^{xxx}, New Zealand "would have nothing to do with ... appeasement"; getting no support from other attendees and earning public ridicule and scorn from Lady Astor.

Even then, we walked on the right side of history.

That reputation is important, as is today's; but as Terence O'Brien said recently^{xxxi}, it can't be taken for granted; it must be cultivated; and membership of the Security Council will give us that opportunity.

The UN's interests

And, viewed objectively, it's also in the interests of the United Nations and the Security Council to have us as a member.

At the UN, New Zealand is recognised as an independent and pragmatic Member State, which seeks constructive solutions, doesn't play bloc politics, and builds bridges between factions.

Usually, we only speak at the UN when we really have something to say; and more than one Ambassador has told me that, for that very reason, when New Zealand speaks, they listen.

We have strong values to which we consistently adhere.

We take balanced positions on tough issues - such as the Middle East.

Despite our size and geographic remoteness, and without over-playing our hand, we are a real contributor – recently acknowledged by US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, who explained the resumption of trilateral US-New Zealand-Australian security talks as the US making "a very deliberate effort ... to work more closely with New Zealand as a recognition of the role [we play] in global politics"^{xxxii}.

In 2010, we can't predict the problems the Council will address in 2015 and 2016; but they'll certainly be the great issues of the day – issues on which a principled and independent stance should make a difference.

New Zealand is one of few WEOG countries that isn't also a member of the EU; and, as part of the South Pacific regional family, we'd bring a fresh, Asia-Pacific perspective – which should be welcomed on a Council where Europeans regularly hold nearly one third of the seats.

Council membership will give us the opportunity to apply those attributes to the vital and complex matters of international peace and security that confront the Council – now, as I say, almost on a daily basis.

In electing non-permanent Council members, the General Assembly is required to pay due regard to the past and potential contribution of nations to the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as to equitable geographical distribution.

New Zealand has a strong history of involvement with UN peacekeeping^{xxxiii}.

In 2009, we contributed \$70.5 million to UN-led or -endorsed peace operations; and contributed to international peace and security in Afghanistan, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.

We're also known at the UN as leaders and innovators; willing to embrace and use new ideas.

In the recent past, we chaired the consultations that led to the Mauritius Programme 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 we now chair an important

meeting of government small arms control experts – small arms being, as one Pacific ambassador put it to me, “our weapons of mass destruction”.

Likewise, we’ve pioneered the use of social media, such as Twitter, to communicate within the UN.

History - as it happens

A colleague recently commented to me that, by observing and reporting the Council’s work, he was participating in world history - as it happens.

It isn’t “East River Egotism” to say that, by taking a seat in the Security Council chamber, New Zealand would again be there as history is made.

And, if we are elected, we’ll preside over the Council at least once, possibly twice, for a month-long term^{xxxiv} - a unique opportunity to nominate topics for debate - and to promote our core values.

Larger countries - larger powers – might see things differently, and might believe they have ways other than Security Council membership for projecting themselves and seeking a role on the world stage; but, for New Zealand, Council membership is a credible way to influence world affairs, and to enhance our relationships with those who do likewise.

What do we want from you?

It would be easy for this campaign to be seen as the closely-held project of the 15 people in our UN Mission in New York, and a similarly small group within Foreign Affairs, supporting the outreach of the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and a few others.

Viewed like that, no one else need be involved.

But that’s not how we see it.

Tomorrow, I brief Cabinet’s External Relations and Defence Committee (ERD) on our campaign; and have done likewise with senior MFAT officials and CEOs whose departments have international dealings.

A “Whole-of-Government” approach

My message is simple: We need a “Whole-of-Government” approach.

Ministers with relevant responsibilities will factor the campaign into their bilateral discussions; the whole of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be involved; as will other government agencies with an international reach.

National identification

But we shouldn’t stop there.

National identification with the campaign will also be important.

When we last sought a Council seat, back in 1992, I remember the growing interest - media and otherwise - and the sense of national achievement when we succeeded against some “big hitters”.

Don’t get me wrong: I don’t anticipate “World Cup type” excitement.

But I would like to see a certain sense of quiet solidarity and support; a sense that we’re doing something important; and doing it together.

And a sense that, if we succeed – and if, as previously, our Council term earns praise – that it’s not just something to satisfy a few politicians and diplomats – that it’s something we can all share.

There's a challenge here for the media – to help build that feeling by reporting the campaign and the build-up to the 2014 vote.

And there's a challenge for organisations with an international outreach – and not just those focussed on international affairs.

In addition to involving every part of the Government, we also need media and public support for New Zealand securing this unique place in world affairs.

It's an ambition that is and should be relevant to all New Zealanders; and it will be important that, in pursuing that ambition, we act and speak as one; bipartisan, in political terms; widespread, in public terms.

Yesterday, I addressed the Auckland Downtown Rotary Club; part of an organisation with a global reach and perspective.

Before 1945, Rotary promoted member-discussions on the proposed United Nations; eleven prominent Rotarians were invited to the San Francisco conference, and influenced the humane aspects of the Charter.

So, I challenged Rotary actively to support our campaign; to take pride in the hoped-for result, and pride in what we do at the Council table.

The Institute of International Affairs promotes discussion and understanding of international issues; and the United Nations Association is “the people's movement for the United Nations in New Zealand ... [promoting] understanding of, and engagement with the UN”.

Both, by your very character, have a strong interest in the same matters, so I know we'll have your active support; and likewise anticipate support from other like-minded organisations.

All can contribute to – indeed, all can be part of - a successful campaign.

We hear much of “New Zealand Inc”; this is its opportunity to front up.

Ready, willing and able?

All too often, one encounters scepticism about the readiness, willingness and ability of the United Nations to deal with global problems.

But the UN was established to meet challenges that were once so overwhelming that some only saw solutions in autarkic, protectionist or inward-looking economic responses, or in war and destruction.

Dealing with such issues by other, better, more peaceful means was never going to be easy; and, whatever its shortcomings, the UN shouldn't be deterred from persevering to achieve such goals.

Shortly before going to New York, I had to think about this when a nine-year-old, preparing a class speech, asked “what was the best thing about being appointed [to represent New Zealand] at the United Nations?”

I briefly outlined the UN's history, adding that, “Its purpose was to ensure peace for everyone”.

“It hasn't been perfect”, I said, “but it's done a lot of good - and it's meant that I and others like me didn't have to do as our fathers and uncles did, and fight in another world war”.

Mine was the first generation of the 20th Century that wasn't called to a world war (and only for a brief moment, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, did we think we might); something later generations take for granted.

Despite regional conflicts, we've now enjoyed the longest period of global peace since the Congress of Vienna; and, for that peace, I'm very grateful.

A giant wave can be broken by the canoe's prow

I have always held in awe the ability of Māori orators to capture whole ideas in a single, metaphoric phrase.

Māori have a saying, "He nui maunga e kore e taea te whakaneke, he nui ngaru moana ma te ihu o te waka e wahi" - a great mountain cannot be moved, but a giant wave can be broken by the canoe's prow.

Although the challenges faced by the United Nations might seem overwhelming, they can be addressed, they can be overcome; even the giant wave of the world's many problems can be broken by the canoe's prow.

And that is what the United Nations is all about; and it also happens to be what New Zealand is all about.

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- i On June 22, along with Nigeria, Pakistan, Brazil and China on Security Council, New Zealand abstained on Resolution 929 which authorised Operation Turquoise' – a peacekeeping mission, but without Chapter VII (use of force) powers.
- ii Geoffrey Robertson QC "Crimes against Humanity – The struggle for global justice"; Penguin Books; 2000; page 72.
- iii Michael King "A Moment in Time" (2007 documentary film based on a 1994 interview) New Zealand on Screen, available at <http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/michael-king-a-moment-in-time-2007>
- iv Madeline Albright, US Ambassador to the UN during the Rwanda Genocide later said that her "deepest regret from [her] years in public service is the failure of the United States and the international community to act sooner" to halt th[e] crimes" in Rwanda. Madeleine Albright *Madam Secretary : A Memoir* (Miramax Books, New York, 2003) p 147.
- v Prosperity and Upheaval: The World Economy, 1945 – 1980 (History of the World Economy in the 20th century, Vol 6; page 347); Hermann van der Wee; University of California press; 1986.]
- vi Locksley Hall; Alfred Tennyson; 1835; published in *Poems (1842)*; expressing the emotions of a weary soldier but also speculating about a possible future world government.
- vii Winston Churchill; remarks at White House luncheon, 26 June 1954; reported in *The New York Times*, 27 June 1954.
- viii The World Trade Organisation, related to the UN, is instrumental in removing trade barriers – vital for us as an exporting nation
- ix Baroness Ashton "Presenting the New EU Diplomatic Service" Wall Street Journal, 27 July 2010; see <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703700904575391090464445532.html?mod=goo> glenews_wsj
- x In 2007, in Gaza, in mid-May when Israel responded to Palestinian militant groups with air strikes. Palestinians fired more than 220 rockets at Israel in over a week, and the Israelis retaliated with missiles and bombs. The fighting occurred amidst Palestinian factional violence and an evolving humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Security Council held emergency sessions and joined the Secretary-General to condemn the violence. The conflict ended in 2008, with a six-month ceasefire coming into effect on 19 June 2008.
- xi S/RES/435 (1978).
- xii S/RES/693 (1991).
- xiii The Security Council authorised an international force for East Timor (INTERFET) on 15 September 1999 (S/RES/1264). On 25 August 2006 the council created the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Lest (UNMIT) (S/RES/1704). Its mandate was most recently renewed on 26 February 2010 (S/RES/1912).
- xiv See S/RES/1929 (2010).
- xv Colin Keating "The United Nations Security Council: Can an Elected Member like Canada Hope to Make an Impact?"; speech to the Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa, February 2010; <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/22%20Feb%202010%20Speech%20at%20University%20of%20Ottawa.doc/>
- xvi The UN is the principal source of legitimacy for the use of force in this way, either through UN-led operations or through operations authorised by the United Nations but not UN-led (the balance of New Zealand's military commitments is currently weighted in favour of the latter).
- xvii While it's easy to count civilian, UN and UN-mandated peacekeeper casualties in troubled places like Afghanistan, the alternative toll, if the UN was not there, would often be exponentially greater.
- xviii "Can UN Keep the Peace" PBS television interview, available at <http://www.pbs.org/shows/520/index.html>; Geoffrey Robinson QC^{xviii}
- xix The AU's Ezulwini Consensus calls for two African permanent and five non-permanent seats.
- xx Colum Lynch and Glenn Kessler "UN imposes another round of sanctions on Iran" *Washington Post*, 9 June 2010, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/09/AR2010060902876.html>
- xxi "Security Council blinks" *New York Times*, 11 July 2010, at http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/opinion/11sun3.html?ref=cheonan_ship
- xxii New Zealand argued that it's in everyone's interests that the Council be credible, effective and strong; and suggested that it adopt an outcome-focussed approach, to avoid "a day's worth of bland statements"; that it engage directly with states on its agenda (as it did recently with Sri

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- Lanka and Chad); that it meet regularly with countries that contribute troops and police to peacekeeping missions; and that systematic information sharing is essential, with publications and websites like *Security Council Report run by Colin Keating* - being a useful step in that direction.
- xxiii Karel Kovanda, Former Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United Nations "The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council - The Rwanda Genocide"; *Journal of Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 2010.
- xxiv New Zealand abstained on Article 27(3) of the Charter (which conferred the veto), but voted in favour of an Australian amendment which restricted the veto to Chapter VII.
- xxv UK, US and USSR
- xxvi Brian Urquhart *Hammaraskjold* (Knopf, New York, 1972) p 58.
- xxvii Keith S Petersen "The Business of the United Nations Security Council: History (1946-1963) *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Nov, 1965), pp. 818-838
- xxviii Carl Berendson *Mr Ambassador - Memoirs of Sir Carl Berendson*; edited by Hugh Templeton; Victoria University Press; 2009; pages 123 - 125.
- xxix Although not related by Berendson, our delegation was bullied on that by Anthony Eden
- xxx *Op cit*; page 129.
- xxxi 30 June 2010: 'Prospects for International Co-operation and NZ Foreign Policy' by Terence O'Brien, former NZ diplomat.
- xxxii "New Zealand-US bond to step up with talks" New Zealand Herald, 4 August 2010, available at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/politics/news/article.cfm?c_id=280&objectid=10663621
- xxxiii Since the "hybrid" of Korea, we have been substantively involved in XX9 peacekeeping missions/operation [check - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_New_Zealand#Peacekeeping_and_Observer_Missions].
- xxxiv All Council members preside for a month-long term, by rotation in alphabetical order; so, over a two year period, each member occupies the chair at least once - and often twice.