

New Zealand Experiences in Collective and Common Security; Opportunities for the Future

A discussion Paper

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Executive Summary

New Zealand's experience in working with a wide range of countries in a variety of circumstances has provided the capacity to pursue a strategy of common security based on enhancing respectful relationships throughout the international community. Such a strategy could involve actors throughout government, business, community and NGOs as well as the traditional diplomatic, military and security services. It would be expected to have substantial benefits by enhancing our standing internationally, enriching our society domestically and building in resilience throughout. It would require a major initiative and significant changes in thinking, but would be consistent with many of our national values.

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Abstract

New Zealand's security history has been characterised by working cooperatively with other nations. The nature of these efforts has changed over the years in scope and style, from collective security within the British Empire, fighting military campaigns, to common security within the United Nations, banning nuclear weapons. These efforts have served to develop a capacity for working with a variety of other countries in pursuing many types of goals. In doing this, New Zealand has gained a reputation for being independent, practical and fair-minded. It has developed a wide range of constructive relationships, resulting in a common perception that it has no enemies. Thus NZ is placed in a good position to address a wide range of security challenges in cooperation with other nations.

This situation opens up the possibility of developing a stronger security strategy based on a more extensive, coordinated society-wide engagement with other nations aimed at comprehensive and respectful exchanges. This strategy would involve enhancing many of the current activities engaging other countries as well as optimising the role of the more established activities, particularly diplomacy and military.

Introduction

National security is the fundamental expectation of the nation state and a major factor in international relations and national self image. It is usually the main justification for a military establishment. New Zealand is a small country in a remote part of the world. This presents it with particular challenges which it has responded to in a variety of ways, often taking quite distinctive initiatives. While NZ maintains traditional military associations and alliances to provide collective security, it also has broadly based trading relationships and strong diplomatic programs through multilateral organisations undertaking common security initiatives which at times have been at odds with military links. We need to consider what strategies beset serve our long term security interests.

Collective security and NZ

New Zealand has long had a history of pursuing its security through working with other countries, developing relationships that can be trusted and making appropriate contributions to ensure reciprocal support. The British Empire was originally the basis of our collective security and we made our contributions in the Boer War, WW I and WW II. We recognised that we were a small part of the picture, but we took on our roles bravely and distinguished ourselves by our effectiveness. Important characteristics were our pragmatic focus on results and our readiness to bend the rules if necessary.

Alongside these military contributions we took a broader diplomatic approach to common security in contributing to the formation of the League of Nations. This took us beyond the confines of the Empire, adopting the role of an independent nation, which we weren't at the time. Nevertheless we fought hard in that forum for what we considered as just outcomes, including the self-determination of colonial territories, which may not have been consistent with the interests of our colonial masters. When the League failed to curb the threat of Germany under Hitler, we resorted to armed action once more and contributed to the Allied defence of the "Free World". With our armed forces fighting in the European theatres, we had to rely on a relatively new ally, the United States of America, for protection from the Japanese forces.

As global power structures shifted our alliances changed, placing a much greater emphasis on the US and Australia in the form of the UNZUS agreement. At the same time we continued our broader commitment to collective global security through the development of the United Nations and its programs, particularly human rights. In doing so we took principled positions against the interests of our close allies in opposing the Security Council Veto and promoting decolonisation. We took these positions in the belief that they were in the broader international interest.

Our commitment to working with others was enhanced and refined by the work of PM Norman Kirk, who expanded our connections around Asia and Africa. He also distanced us from US policy, removing us from the Vietnam war and protested nuclear testing in the Pacific. The anti-nuclear theme was continued by PM David Lange, whose rejection of visits by potentially nuclear armed ships once again placed NZ against the interests of our allies, for what we believed was the common good. Such a principled approach was further demonstrated in our cautious approach to the Afghanistan invasion and refusal to participate in the following war on Iraq. These positions were, in general, supported by New Zealanders and stood us in good stead in our subsequent endeavours in diplomacy and trade. Consequentially, New Zealand has been able to develop successful political and trade relations with most of the world's nations, despite our small size. The impact of these effects was made manifest in the exceptional first round election of New Zealand to the UN Security Council in 2014. A contrasting achievement was a spectacular celebration of President Trump's inauguration in the NZ embassy in Washington to facilitate access to that administration.

This commitment to constructive international engagement has been contributed to not only through military and diplomacy activity, but also trade, academic and community arenas. A wide range of New Zealanders in different spheres of life have sought to reinforce the roles established for New Zealand by successive governments as independent, fair minded and constructive players in the international scene.

Our official security strategy is aimed at "Preserving a rules-based international order which respects national sovereignty", and "a network of strong international relationship".¹ Recently, the NZ Minister of Defence² has affirmed the central importance of the country's persistent pursuit of cooperative, multilateral initiatives within NZ's regional security strategy. Further confirmation of this approach comes from a US diplomat, Andrew Hyde³ and NZ academics Brian Lynch⁴ and Reuben Steff⁵. Such an emphasis in security is also consistent with a growing shift in security highlighted by Tang Shiping⁶, and explored in the recent NZ compilation "New Zealand National Security"⁷. Political

support for strong international relationships have been confirmed in recent statements from the National⁸, Labour⁹ and Green¹⁰ Parties. Despite a complex and contentious international environment, it has been commonly accepted that we have no enemies.

In effect, New Zealand has been able to base its security to a considerable extent on widespread engagement with the international community, addressing threats through concerted collective effort to avoid combat where possible. Reputation is of central importance, as is a level of independence from the vagaries of world powers and their leaders. We have, for instance, had considerable success in balancing the contrasting interests of the United States and China in the light of our alliance with Australia, despite its close ties with the US.

Security for NZ.

New Zealand's National Security Handbook defines national security as "the condition which permits the citizens of a state to go about their daily business confidently, free from fear and able to make the most of opportunities to advance their way of life. It encompasses the preparedness, protection and preservation of people, and of property and information, both tangible and intangible."¹¹ Seven key objectives underpin this approach:

- **Ensuring public safety** — providing for, and mitigating risks to, the safety of citizens and communities (all hazards and threats, whether natural or man-made);
- **Preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity** — protecting the physical security of citizens, and exercising control over territory consistent with national sovereignty;
- **Protecting lines of communication** — these are both physical and virtual and allow New Zealand to communicate, trade and engage globally;
- **Strengthening international order to promote security** — contributing to the development of a rules-based international system, and engaging in targeted interventions offshore to protect New Zealand's interests;
- **Sustaining economic prosperity** — maintaining and advancing the economic wellbeing of individuals, families, businesses and communities;
- **Maintaining democratic institutions and national values** — preventing activities aimed at undermining or overturning government institutions, principles and values that underpin New Zealand society;
- **Protecting the natural environment** — contributing to the preservation and stewardship of New Zealand's natural and physical environment.

The management of such risks rely principally on well developed international relationships, often through regional or global supranational institutions. They also require high levels of technical expertise, as well as diplomatic capabilities to deal with the diverse cultural and political environments involved. While military combat action may have a role, that is only likely when diplomatic or other non-violent initiatives fail.

The actors involved in addressing these issues are similarly diverse:

Diplomacy, both professional and political is the basis of establishing and maintaining relationships between governments. It also deals with common challenges which have security implications, often through multilateral institutions, as well as dealing with conflicts between nations, calling on military power when they consider that necessary. A key challenge is in seeking out communication channels in the most contentious situations. While New Zealand has a great reputation in this area, the continuing maintenance of the competence and professionalism of our staff is of utmost priority.

Defence Forces have traditionally been considered to be the basis of our security, but the scope of security issues now go considerably beyond defence capabilities. Thus many other government departments contribute to security.¹ Also Defence Force activities go well beyond combat roles,

responding to emergencies in a range of situations, both within NZ and in other countries, particularly the Pacific Islands. They also provide regular support for surveillance operations and Antarctic operations. Defence forces may also undertake diplomacy with other defence forces, such as in the Shangri-La negotiations,² discussing regional issues and seeking to resolve conflicts. New Zealand defence forces have a reputation for their low key approach to conflict, sensitivity to cultural issues and adaptability to diverse situations.

While the defence forces are competent, their size limits their capabilities as a stand-alone defence force and they need the support of a major ally to enable our defensive capability to be credible. Thus we maintain a formal alliance with Australia and close links with the United States forces. These relations are supported by contributions to the military endeavours of these countries.

Intelligence provides analyses of our overall national security position and involves diplomatic, political and military contributions. An important component is participation in the electronic surveillance alliance called the “Five Eyes” network which has made important contributions to anti-terrorism activities. While this process is overseen by a political committee, it is highly confidential and has been known to be quite intrusive.

Trade underpins our national wealth but can also provide valuable insight into the needs and character of the countries that we deal with, as well as the opportunities for improving relations. The ability of our businesses to operate respectfully and effectively provides examples of good business operations, thus strengthening the stability and health of the nations we work with, as well as our own.

Academic institutions strengthen the depth of understanding of ourselves and our neighbours and educate New Zealanders and overseas students in dealing with the complexity of international relations. Regular international exchanges between staff and students can enhance understanding of many aspects of other countries. Institutions provide valuable support for trade and diplomatic activities and participate in ‘track 2’ diplomacy, which provides additional richness and perspective to formal diplomacy. Disciplines such as international relations, cultural studies, history, literature, languages and many others contribute to our understanding of other countries.

Community. A complex of formal and informal relations between countries link respective communities of many countries at several levels, contributing to the richness of our relationships. Friendship Associations, migrant communities, both immigrant and emigrant, can provide particularly rich sources of understanding. Tourists and the tourism industry, our “OE” tradition, student and sports exchanges can also play a role in promoting our international profile and understanding.

Non-Government and Supernational Organisations. A broad range of international organisations, from the United Nations to bilateral NGOs, are increasingly influential in understanding our world and in addressing its many challenges. While approaches and objectives may be diverse and at times in conflict, many can make valuable contributions.

Currently these activities take place with limited coordination, many driven by quite different objectives and diverse approaches. They are often related in general ways to human development, but may not be seen as contributing to security as such.

Opportunities for New Zealand’s Security Strategy

New Zealand is well placed to use its strengths in international relations in conjunction with other countries and institutions so disposed, to pursue a national program of international engagement directed towards a safer international community. The emphasis would be on open, respectful, multifaceted, cooperative activities at all levels. Much of this activity is currently being undertaken in

regular commercial, recreational, intellectual and cultural pursuits, but would take on a greater purpose in enhancing collective security by addressing common interests in promoting global peace and cooperation. Relevant processes would be recognised, many supported, some expanded, and others introduced to produce a wide ranging, nationally recognised program which is central to our security.

This could be a wide-ranging national endeavour – far surpassing our current international activities involving people and organisations at all levels, and coordinated at all levels to be a coherent complex of activities.

A major challenge with such a system would be bringing coherence to such a broad range of activities and interests.

A key coordinating process might be public conferences focusing on a specific country or region which would enable the sharing of views and experiences of those interested in that area. They could include members from the area in questions, such as academics, ambassadorial staff, or even members of relevant governments. Such events might be sponsored by the NZ government, with specific support to ensure an optimal variety of participants. Emphasis would be on enhancing the quality of engagement over the whole range of activity, including, of course, trade and tourism. In the case of specific threats, conferences might examine the potential for constructive action. NZ might even sponsor conferences in other countries or regions of particular concern to facilitate the wide involvement of relevant people.

Public education would also be a prominent part, informing people about activities through the media as well as local meetings, and providing means for the community to participate.

Central intelligence services would be required to integrate the diverse range of information, to undertake efforts to obtain information where significant gaps occur and to initiate processes to develop relationships that would address any suspected threats that might be identified.

Honest sharing requires trust, which needs to be carefully nurtured and factored into these activities. At times maintaining trust may require discretion, but any secrecy excludes other parties, which undermines their trust. A policy of openness facilitates a much broader participation in the trusting relationships, and thus a stronger and more enduring culture of trust.

Such a complex of relationships and knowledge would provide enormous benefits to many aspects of our society and economy, contrasting dramatically with the current militaristic approach to addressing many conflicts. It would feed back into our cultural, trade, and economic enrichment of our society, particularly engaging a wide range of specialists, including migrants, in the in-depth appreciation of our neighbours. While this process would require substantive resourcing, and consume considerable time by many people, it would make a substantial contribution, not only to our national security and international reputation, but also to the richness of domestic and international, academic, cultural and commercial life.

We would also have the knowledge to foresee the dissatisfaction that would lead to conflict, understand the many factors that could lead to resolution and have the connections to make constructive contributions.

Is it possible that our independence, our depth of understanding and appreciation of our neighbours, diplomatic and otherwise, our kiwi sense of fairness and practical generosity, could be our key security asset? Could this be the key to maximising the quality of our relations, ensuring mutually productive economic, academic, cultural, sporting and exchanges and pre-empting any motivations for military or other offensive actions well before any substantial threat develops?

Challenges and opportunities.

While this strategy of respectful engagement is, in many ways, just a shift in the emphasis in our security strategy, it would require a substantial change in perception and the re-evaluation of some of the traditional roles.

Changes would be needed from many participants, especially in ensuring the highest standards in respect and openness. Diplomats may need to be more willing to engage with the community and business more willing to share its activities. Universities and other tertiary institutes may need to shift their priorities, increasing their emphasis towards international perspectives and enhancing their engagement with the community. A key opportunity would be to expand International and Peace Studies and establish Centres for the study of Multilateral Institutions.

Organisations such as friendship associations would need to be promoted, and many communities encouraged to consider ways in which they can promote effective relations between their countries.

With such a shift in the basis of our security, the role of the defence forces would need some examination.

A number of factors arise here:

1. The defence force engagement with other forces in the region is an important contribution, in part because of the central role that many military play in governance. Optimising the contribution of these activities to the new strategy may require greater openness to other interests.
2. The impact of military alliances on our independence and openness in our engagements with other countries needs to be understood. Malcolm Fraser, for instance, has pointed out the hazards that Australia faces from its major alliance.¹²
3. The extent to which the maintenance of combat capabilities imply a commitment to violence in the resolution of problems, and the subsequent impact this has on the respectfulness of our relations between countries.
4. The economic costs of maintaining our combat capabilities, in addition to our non-combat capabilities, and the subsequent opportunity costs.
5. The impact of military power on overall collective security, both between and within nations in our region, and the way New Zealand's military capabilities affect this situation.
6. The impact of the presence of a military services within New Zealand's society in legitimising the role of violence in addressing problems domestically.

Similarly, our current intelligence services need some scrutiny:

1. The impact of our participation in the "Five Eyes" alliance on our ability to maintain our independence and to develop trusting, open and respectful relations with other countries.
2. The options for configuring any electronic surveillance systems to support the relationship strategy.

Such questions are not easy to address and may be approached differently by people with different backgrounds. However, it is important that we are able to adapt to changing circumstances and to answer the hard questions that ensure that our systems are effectively supporting our overall security strategy. The world is changing rapidly and we need to be able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise and not be impeded by established assumptions. In particular, we need

to be adept at building relationships and trust in unlikely places and not rely on outdated assumptions about the value of our traditional associations.

We need to be considering new ideas such as the role of social resilience in responding to any un-anticipated threat. This would be based on in-depth knowledge of the environment and possibly non-military approaches such as non-violent resistance. These have been demonstrated to be more effective than armed responses to military threats in many cases.¹³

The path of shared security based on open relationships is one that can only advance our common security as it expands and nations both contribute and gain from the process. No-one is our competitor in this process; everyone is our partner in building a better world. There will be many countries that find it difficult to lower their military protection and open up communication, but we need to be persistent in pursuing a multifaceted approach in developing avenues. As the Hon Mark Mitchell wrote:

“We take an optimistic view, and reject the thinking that we have reached a point where our threats have overwhelmed our opportunities. That optimism is the story of the Asia-Pacific region, the engine of world economic growth for the last 50 years.”²

There will also be those in New Zealand who find it difficult to not have a military combat capability with alliances as the central basis of our security. As a nation we need to face the choice between a reliance on uncertain technology and alliances against unknown forces, or on our own understanding of a rapidly changing security environment in conjunction with nations with which we can build in-depth trusting relationships. Where is our money and effort best spent? On military hardware and activities, or on understanding the world around us, actively engaging with our neighbours, socially and commercially, and in practical, constructive conflict prevention work?

Conclusion

New Zealand has an opportunity to build on its long standing tradition and experience in participating with other countries in both collective and common security; a history that has provided the skills and culture required for it to develop close relations with a wide range of countries. The changing nature of international relations provides the opportunity to shift our emphasis from military defences to more constructive diplomatic and community approaches that can better address our security challenges through respectful relations between countries. Such a shift could enhance our capability to contribute to international stability and resilience, improve the standing of New Zealand in the international community, enrich the depth and quality of our culture and prosperity and enhance our overall security.

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