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**Campaigning for a Seat on the UN Security Council:
A Middle Power Reflection on the Role of Public Diplomacy**

By Caitlin Byrne

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CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy

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Abstract

For active middle power states like Australia, securing a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is indeed a ‘prize to be pursued with vigour’.¹ In today’s complex and interdependent world, pursuit of this prize requires more than just intense diplomatic lobbying within the corridors of the UN in New York. Successful election to the UNSC turns upon the broad notions of international reputation and image. The campaign itself is a significant exercise in the engagement and persuasion of wider international audiences who have interests in and expectations of the UNSC candidate nations. Drawing in particular upon the past and current UNSC aspirations of Australia, this article examines how and when middle power states might effectively apply the wide-lens of public diplomacy alongside traditional diplomatic practice to improve the likelihood of election to the UNSC, but also to maximise soft power outcomes of the campaign well beyond the election timeframe and result.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Kevin Rudd, in his former role as Prime Minister, announced Australia's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2013–14 term. The announcement flagged Australia's renewed commitment to middle power diplomacy and ambition to actively prosecute its regional and global policy agenda. Considered to be the world's pre-eminent crisis management forum, the UNSC plays an increasingly visible and authoritative role in global politics.² Empowered by the United Nations (UN) Charter, the UNSC holds the authority to impose sanctions and exercise the use of force in response to threats to international peace and security; an authority that is exercised with increasing regularity. A seat at the UNSC table provides the elected states with an opportunity to have a voice in shaping global agendas and responding to global issues, to engage and negotiate with significant international powers on a regular basis, and consequently to raise their own medium and long-term international profile and standing. For middle power states like Australia, a non-permanent seat on the UNSC is widely regarded as 'a prize to be pursued with vigour'.³

Securing a UNSC seat is a competition that many diplomats consider to fall exclusively within the domain of their profession; that is, a competition waged between official diplomats, via formal channels taking place primarily within the inner corridors of the UN Headquarters (HQ) in New York. Sitting at the epicentre of the UN, the UNSC operations, shrouded by complex and official protocol and language appears as a stronghold of traditional diplomatic practice, reinforcing such views. Australian diplomatic and policy

officials engaged in Australia's current UNSC campaign confirm this traditional view, asserting that the task of winning a seat on the UNSC requires visible and official participation in multilateral forums, the development of positive bilateral relationships with large range of states voting on the election, and lastly strong personal relationships within the formal diplomatic corps, particularly in New York.⁴ Quite appropriately such a campaign must require intense diplomatic lobbying. However, the diplomats' view leaves little room for dialogue and engagement with publics outside the closed diplomatic network.

Is traditional diplomatic effort enough to secure a seat on the UNSC? Perhaps this was the case in the past. However, in today's deeply connected world a campaign confined to the parameters of traditional diplomacy is a limited one. Election to the UNSC 'can be seen as a measure of international standing'⁵ and respect accorded to a state and its corresponding policies by the international community. Successful election turns upon notions of international reputation and image, the very currencies of soft power, and as such is connected to the influences, interests and expectations of a wider international public that exist beyond the traditional diplomatic network.

For middle powers, the imperative to engage in the international agenda is acute. While not large or powerful enough to impose their will onto other states, nor so insignificant as to escape responsibility for involvement in international policy-making and action, middle powers play an important role in the dynamics of the international system. As Richard Woolcott articulates,⁶ middle powers also have a responsibility to actively participate in global decision-making whereby, 'in the modern world it's beholden on all middle-sized powers of Australia's influence to try and play a constructive role in whatever situation develops'.⁷ Characterized by their 'tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, their

tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and their tendency to embrace notions of “good international citizenry” to guide their diplomacy’,⁸ middle powers, like Australia and Canada, have been well placed in the past to exert creative and technical leadership and coalition building skills to address regional and global issues. Traditionally, because of their relative power in the international system, this role has been determined primarily by the skill and competency of official diplomats.

However, in today’s more complex and interdependent world, the practice of diplomacy is, by necessity, changing shape. Public diplomacy, defined broadly as ‘the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented’,⁹ is of increasing significance as an instrument that can facilitate a state’s long-term strategic international positioning. Within this environment, international relations academics and practitioners are recognising that there is value for middle powers to pursue foreign policy objectives and addressing global challenges through collaborative approaches that engage with broader foreign audiences, including foreign publics with the intellectual, political, commercial and social capacities and focus to influence outcomes.¹⁰ Public diplomacy as an instrument of soft power therefore is increasingly recognised by other nations facing similar global challenges as the diplomatic tool of choice.

Indeed, in his analysis of middle power diplomacy, Gilboa suggests that it is ‘public diplomacy [that] provides middle powers with ample opportunities to gain influence in world affairs far beyond their limited natural capabilities’.¹¹ Therefore, for middle powers in particular, success in the UNSC, as with other foreign policy objectives, ‘depends on the ability of a state to influence its external environment in order to secure support for its international interests and values’.¹² Practitioners who fail to acknowledge the

relevance of innovative diplomacy that captures and harnesses wider audience interests, underestimate the soft power opportunities and benefits that might be realised through the campaign and beyond.

This article contributes to the growing body of knowledge about the field of public diplomacy, by taking the less-travelled route to examine the relevance and role of public diplomacy within the context of a specific foreign policy priority: pursuit of a seat on the UNSC. In doing so, practitioners are challenged to apply a wide-lens view of public diplomacy, without losing sight of the core aspects of traditional diplomatic practice. Importantly, such a shift might also allow recognition of the value of the campaign as a public diplomacy program in and of itself, which contributes to the long-term strategic international position of the campaigning state, regardless of outcome at the UNSC election. To this end, the first section reviews the limitations of traditional diplomacy within the UNSC election process and establishes the grounding for public diplomacy as a complementary approach to traditional diplomatic activity. The second section drills further into the functions and corresponding types of public diplomacy activity that are most relevant to the campaign context, with particular regard for those public diplomacy activities that are directly associated with or initiated from within the campaign.

There is very ‘little understanding of what bidding for the Security Council truly means’¹³ and even less literature about the generic nature of campaigns. This article is therefore informed primarily by the experiences of middle power Australia, a founding member and longstanding supporter of the UN, with past and current aspirations to sit at the UNSC table. Australia’s current campaign will continue until the UNSC election, scheduled for October 2012. The perspective provided by Australia’s campaign, now progressing at a steady pace, but not too close to conclusion as to be tainted by intense speculation, is valuable. The experiences of other small

to middle powers particularly from the same UN voting block, including those of Ireland (UNSC elected member from 2000–02), and Canada (defeated in the 2010 UNSC elections) are relevant and provide essential touchstones within this discussion.

Background: Membership of and Election to the UNSC

The UNSC is made up of fifteen members. Five of those, the United States, China, United Kingdom, France and Russia (the P5) hold permanent membership with an associated veto privilege. The remaining ten are elected as non-permanent members from within the UN's various geographically assigned voting groups for a two-year term each. The distribution of seats means that five seats are allocated to states representing Africa and Asia, two to Latin America and the Caribbean, one to Eastern Europe, and two for the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG). Australia falls, perhaps inconveniently from a geographic perspective, into this latter grouping.

Past UNSC elections indicate that the competition for a non-permanent UNSC seat is most intense among the WEOG nations, 'not least because of the disparate interests of members'.¹⁴ WEOG itself operates via a web of internal factions and coalitions, including the Nordics (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland), the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), and the CANZ countries (Canada, Australia and New Zealand), all overlaid by European Union (EU) and non-EU ties. Dynamics amongst the EU members, making up 50 percent of the WEOG membership base, are further complicated by tensions between those states holding permanent UNSC membership (France and the UK) and those that either aspire to (Germany) or wish to reform such membership (Italy and Spain).¹⁵

In order to win a contested seat, the General Assembly Rules of Procedure require that candidates secure at least two-thirds of the

available and eligible General Assembly votes.¹⁶ The first state to achieve the required number of votes, usually 128, is successful. If two or more candidates continue to contest the remaining seat the voting process can continue indefinitely until either one of those candidates receives the requisite number of votes or alternatively withdraws. States might withdraw from the contest where a declining trend in votes becomes evident, as Canada did after the third ballot round of the 2010 election, thereby allowing Portugal to secure the second seat.¹⁷ Precedent provides for many ballot rounds to determine a clear position.¹⁸ However, in the case of ongoing inconclusive voting rounds, the Rules allow for an unrestricted ballot, introducing completely new candidates for the seat, thus breaking the stalemate and providing a resolution, but potentially leaving the existing candidates in the cold.

Through the campaign, diplomats expend significant time and effort working through their networks to collect and confirm as many formal diplomatic pledges of support for their state as they can.¹⁹ However, such endorsements, no matter how formal, are by no means secure. Woolcott notes from his own experience leading Australia's successful campaign for election to the UNSC in 1985–86, 'as it was a secret ballot, it would be prudent to discount pledges of support, especially oral pledges by about 10 or 12 percent'.²⁰ Even written commitments can waiver or disappear altogether through a drawn out secret ballot process. Australian representatives to the UN experienced the vagaries of diplomatic commitment relating to UNSC membership quite sharply when in 1996, despite the confidence of the campaign team in their lobbying efforts, Australia was defeated over three rounds by unlikely competitors Portugal and Sweden. Consequently, Australia's permanent representative to the UN at the time, Richard Butler famously labelled the 'rotten lying bastards' syndrome,²¹ pointing to 'lying on an unprecedented scale'²² within the corridors of the UN.

There are many variables that influence both the process and outcomes of each UNSC election differently. Shifts in the international environment and challenging UN dynamics combine with the opaque nature of the secret ballot process to impact on the way that member states vote. Regardless of diplomatic lobbying, the results of UNSC elections can be notoriously unpredictable.

Past campaigns illustrate that when viewed through the prism of traditional diplomacy only, the campaign outcome, culminating in either success or defeat in the UNSC ballot process can take on a mesmerising yet artificial significance for a nation's foreign policy. In terms of its place within a foreign policy agenda, securing a UNSC seat is not generally considered as a policy endpoint, but one of a range of available strategies that contribute to the realisation of significant foreign policy objectives. As Thakur affirms, 'the UN is a useful adjunct of ... foreign policy, not the centrepiece'.²³

Thakur further cautions 'diplomats cocooned in the arcane world of the [UN] organisation' can easily lose sight of the UN as a 'means to broader goals of foreign policy'.²⁴ It is not surprising then that, while disconnected from the strategic foreign policy context, those diplomats working the halls of the UN HQ to secure official support for their campaign feel an intense responsibility for and ownership of the election outcome. When the bid itself becomes the foreign policy objective, the campaign has the potential to distort foreign policy interests and objectives, rather than support the broader foreign policy objectives. When such a view takes hold, defeat in the UNSC election, like that experienced by Australia in 1996 and Canada in 2010, can be especially traumatic potentially resulting in an unwarranted loss of domestic and bureaucratic confidence in traditional diplomatic performance and international standing, and a withdrawal from opportunities for multilateral engagement on global issues of significance.

Public diplomacy: a complementary approach

Scholarship surrounding public diplomacy has moved quickly in recent years, and both scholars and practitioners continue to develop their understandings of the conceptual, definitional and multi-disciplinary aspects of the field.²⁵ Current trends in scholarly thinking indicate a move away from consideration of public diplomacy as an activity standing on its own, distinct from traditional diplomacy.²⁶ As Melissen suggests, diplomacy itself is becoming ‘societized’,²⁷ whereby the individuals across the public arena hold interests in and expectations of international policy, and as a result can wield greater influence over the foreign policy direction of states. Public diplomacy brings a distinct quality into broader contemporary diplomatic practice, in that it ‘helps to entice diplomats out of their narrow domain of officially accredited representatives, ruling elites and others’²⁸ to understand, and engage with the interested and expectant wider public audience in order to progress their foreign policy goals.

Yet, when it comes to the UNSC, diplomats tend to guard their practice and profession closely from outside interests and influences. For many practitioners, the traditional distinctions between diplomacy and public diplomacy hold firm, as if physically maintained by the walls of the UN building itself. Wiseman challenges this perspective of the UN as a closed world of diplomacy, observing from his own experience that the UN provides a ‘world stage’, where apart from the negotiating and deal making that occurs in private, ‘much UN activity is conducted in public’.²⁹ Wiseman further suggests that ‘UN diplomats are often ‘performing’ in plenary and committees, for each other and for wider world publics through television coverage, the press corps, and even visitors in the gallery’.³⁰ To continue this line of thought, the UNSC exercises far-reaching powers of intervention that can and do impact on a daily basis on the lives of millions of ordinary, though frequently vulnerable people, in

all corners of the world. Individuals across government and non-government, private and community sectors are more aware and involved in the impacts of international policy, including that implemented by the UNSC. They are also more willing, including through the enabling tools of social media, to mobilise their interests and influence the way that governments and institutions develop and implement that policy. Given this context, membership (both permanent and non-permanent) of the UNSC must be considered an issue of wider interest.

The public nature of the UN and potential impact of UNSC decisions on global populations underscores the public diplomacy dimension of states' UN-related activities. While this may be refuted by those working within the cocoon of diplomacy, recent UNSC campaign efforts reinforce the need for states to engage widely with influential and opinion-leading publics who operate outside the diplomatic corridors. Following a successful election to the UNSC in 2000, Ireland's Foreign Minister pointed out that: '[Our] success today is also a tremendous acknowledgement of the fine work and dedication of Ireland's unofficial Ambassadors around the world, the diaspora and Irish missionaries and aid workers'.³¹

Defeat in the UNSC contest provides the opportunity for reflection upon the role of public diplomacy, not just as a driver of campaign activity, but also as providing the strategic context for the campaign itself. Because UNSC campaigns revolve around notions of international standing and prestige, defeat can be extremely unattractive, and is frequently viewed by the campaigning state as rejection by the world community. Former Prime Minister John Howard felt the humiliation of Australia's defeat in the 1996 UNSC elections sharply.³² Howard's sentiment aligns with that of Canada's representatives following their 2010 defeat.³³

Election to the UNSC does not have to be an either/or proposition, and this paper does not refute the validity of traditional diplomatic practice in the campaign process, but urges practitioners to recognise the relevance and value of public diplomacy in extending the visibility, reach and impact of a UNSC campaign. Securing a seat on the UNSC requires a multi-faceted approach where traditional diplomatic activity is underpinned both at the strategic and tactical levels by a complementary range of public diplomacy activity; activity which can continue with vigour regardless of the outcome of the UNSC votes. Fiske de Gouveia reinforces this complementary interplay between traditional and public diplomacy noting, public diplomacy ‘paves the way for traditional diplomacy: it lays the groundwork, like a sapper’.³⁴ Fiske de Gouveia’s analogy builds upon the earlier observations of Leonard who suggests public diplomacy is increasingly relevant as an enabling tool of diplomacy, providing pathways that might complement (or even circumvent) the traditional pathways for advancing foreign policy priorities.³⁵ Indeed, it aligns with Tuch’s assertion that public diplomacy ‘does not in any sense replace the discreet and confidential relationships between state representatives’.³⁶ The practitioner should nonetheless be alerted to the increased significance of the scope and role of public diplomacy as a support or buttress for traditional diplomatic practice.

Reputation and Image in the UNSC Campaign

Article 23(1) of the United Nations Charter requires that when voting on the non-permanent UNSC seats, 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 organisation, and also to equitable geographical distribution’.³⁷ Guided by Article 23(1), the UNSC election then turns firstly upon the dual dimensions of a nation’s reputation and image, the very currencies of soft power and

as such connected to the influences, interests and expectations of the wider international public.

A positive international reputation speaks for the nature, values and intent of a state. As Anholt observes, when it comes to global institutions such as the UN reputation counts for a great deal:

the only sort of government that can afford to ignore the impact of its national reputation is one which has no interest in participating in the global community and no desire for its economy, its culture or its citizens to benefit from the rich influences and opportunities the rest of the world offers them.³⁸

Positive national reputations are hard-earned and long-standing; they evolve from years, not moments, of consistent behaviour and communication.³⁹ Indeed, to draw from a corporate marketing perspective ‘a positive reputation established over time can deliver acceptance and legitimacy and can therefore provide a competitive advantage’.⁴⁰ No aspect is more important to national reputation than credibility in performance and action, and nothing speaks more clearly to this end than the development and delivery of good policy and performance. For states engaged in a campaign for the UNSC, reputation is primarily derived from knowledge about how states have actually performed in their contributions to international peace and stability, including through peacekeeping, development assistance programs, financial support of the UN, and attendance to UN matters. Increasingly, domestic policy actions are relevant and noticed by the international community particularly where there is a real or perceived gap between a state’s policy approach to issues of global interest such as human rights, refugees and environmental action.

In Australia's current campaign, efforts to lift its otherwise lagging reputation were implemented in line with the announcements of its UNSC candidacy.⁴¹ Repositioning of international policy positions for example, with regard to climate change through the signing of the Kyoto Protocol; improving Indigenous outcomes through the national apology; and commitment to the Millennium Development Goals by bringing its projected development assistance contributions to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015, have all reflected well upon Australia's international standing.⁴² More recent efforts to deliver a price on carbon, secure animal welfare outcomes in live cattle trade and build a regional solution to people smuggling and refugee processing have not been as easy to resolve, and may continue to attract criticism through the campaign. These issues will continue to test the policy development, engagement and advocacy skills of the current government. Looking to policy challenges ahead, Australia's response to Palestine's bid to upgrade its status at the UN, both through formal diplomatic channels, but also through wider public (domestic and international) networks will also form part of the broad policy narrative of this UNSC candidate. The latter in particular is an issue to which the public—both domestic and international—is deeply connected. The policy stance articulated by states is of particular relevance to and interest in the UNSC campaign, and will signal much about the way a campaigning state might behave as a member of the UNSC.

Yet, as Malone observes 'broad reputation alone is a poor guide to the likely success of Security Council candidates',⁴³ and this is particularly the case where a positive reputation is not widely known or if reputation lags behind actual performance. By contrast, image relates to active promotion through external statements or messages. The projection of a nation's reputation and identity, as a method of reputation management, is not new to the tradition of diplomacy. Szondi reminds us that 'nations throughout the world have long

engaged in image cultivation',⁴⁴ and today it is increasingly associated with the practice of public diplomacy.

Positive images can promote and build upon a nation's positive reputation. As Ireland discovered when running their successful UNSC campaign, noting that, 'Although we had long been a leading contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, our electorate did not always show awareness of this fact...we took care to draw it to the attention of our interlocutors in discussions and in our printed electoral material'.⁴⁵ However, Szondi cautions, image alone is a poor substitute for reputation, and because images can be created and manipulated they do not always reflect reality.⁴⁶ Indeed Canada was exposed through its UNSC election defeats of 2010 for serious credibility gaps in its international and domestic policy approaches, and leadership commitment towards the UN. Such gaps not only undermined Canada's positive reputation and indeed its efforts in traditional diplomacy, but also demonstrated that Canada's campaign messages were simply lacking in substance and credibility.

Images of a nation that are distorted from its foreign policy interests and actions and therefore not based upon a credible reputation will attract the scepticism that is afforded propaganda, potentially undermining any existing positive reputation of the state. As Seib states, public diplomacy should not be seen as a 'smokescreen for ineffective or wrongheaded policy.... It must be directly linked to policy and enhance that policy'.⁴⁷ Publics are savvy and will generally see through a manipulated, inconsistent and shallow image, particularly where it does not align with the real time policies, actions and performance of the state either on the domestic or international fronts. But image projection that is consistent and credible, and aligned largely to a nation's reputation, fitting with its domestic and international policy approach is more likely, in the race for a UNSC seat to make a difference to the overall outcome.

Timing

The timing allowed for a UNSC campaign can be an important factor in this interplay between reputation and image. While in years past, candidates would announce their candidacy only days ahead of the UNSC election, today it is not unusual for candidates to do so ten years or more in advance of the voting rounds, as Switzerland has for the 2023 UNSC term. A longer lead time will allow the campaigning state to firmly establish their reputation through credible and consistent messages, behaviour and performance. States will inevitably ramp up their image campaign in the final months leading into the UNSC elections, but as Ireland's UNSC campaign team would testify, those states which have already established relationships and credentials will be at a clear advantage in the final stages of the campaign. When states enter the campaign at a late stage they face greater pressure to project their credentials and image. The shorter the time frame the more intense in visibility, reach and impact, the image projection campaign needs to be.

Many Australian commentators fear that Australia's bid will fail simply because of a late entry into the race.⁴⁸ Indeed, Australia has missed the opportunity to garner diplomatic support for its bid from a range of key nations, both within the WEOG group, but also from those nations closer to home, such as Indonesia. The stakes are raised, yet as noted earlier, the secret and continuous ballot process in the UNSC election reflects the limitations of a traditional campaign, and provides scope for nations to work around those diplomatic pledges. Where time is short, nations like Australia must simply work harder to ensure the visibility, reach and impact of their campaign through both traditional and public forms of diplomatic practice.

Domestic Political Commitment

The blurring of international and domestic policy issues, coupled with the increasing democratisation of foreign policy, and the intensity with which political and media opportunism are pursued, bring the domestic policy dimensions of the campaigning state into focus. Uncertainty and speculation that Canada had not secured bipartisan support for its UNSC campaign (or broader foreign policy) alongside Prime Minister Harper's seeming disinterest in the UN itself damaged Canada's image as a UNSC candidate.⁴⁹ Canada's former Permanent Representative to the UN, Paul Heinbecker summarises 'We were rejected on the basis of our indifference to the UN and the policies we've been following'.⁵⁰

Similarly, lack of bipartisan support for Australia's current UNSC bid during the 2010 national elections was picked up vigorously by rivals Finland and Luxembourg as evidence of Australia's own lack of commitment to the UN.⁵¹ Political bipartisanship and reasonable domestic support appear to be hygiene factors in the context of the UNSC campaign; that is, they may not drive or motivate the campaign, but are necessary features underpinning the campaign itself. Where they waiver or become the subject of media controversy or speculation, particularly towards the latter end of the campaign, the chance for a negative impact on the voting outcome appears to increase.

The Shape of Public Diplomacy in the UNSC Campaign

To this point, the focus of this article has been on establishing the legitimate role for public diplomacy, alongside traditional diplomacy in the campaign for a UNSC seat, without specific attention to the shape that the public diplomacy activities might take. When it comes to defining the shape of public diplomacy, the consensus stands that public diplomacy is far from uniform in its manifestations

and therefore is ever-elusive to practitioners and scholars alike. Such difficulties are not inconsistent with the nature of public diplomacy itself, as ‘there is no common approach or established method around public diplomacy, rather interests, values, memories and geostrategic contexts shape both public diplomacy scope and practice’.⁵² Because there is simply ‘no one-size fits all approach to public diplomacy’,⁵³ the shape of public diplomacy activity must be crafted to take account of several factors, including: strategic foreign policy purpose, contextual factors relating to the environment and audience, organizational and operational parameters and the relevance of and access to enabling technologies.

In order to establish a logical approach to this ever elusive concept, scholars and practitioners continue to develop thematic and functional frameworks within which classifications of public diplomacy might be applied.⁵⁴ Zaharna identifies public diplomacy activity as falling into one of two distinct framework sets. The first is the informational framework which focuses on the ‘design and dissemination of messages to advance political objectives’,⁵⁵ and incorporates such activities as branding activities, international broadcasting and information campaigns. The second being the relational framework, which incorporates activities aimed at ‘relationship-building, and the construction of social structures to advance political objectives’,⁵⁶ such as cultural and educational exchange programs, leadership visits and development assistance projects, networking schemes. Zaharna also notes that to be strategic, public diplomacy ‘needs to include *both* information transfer *and* relationship building’,⁵⁷ a point of salient value to a specific foreign policy priority such as the UNSC. Caution should be applied to cultural programs which, though appropriate to the long-term public diplomacy strategies of states, do not ‘constitute the most sophisticated relationship-building strategies’,⁵⁸ and are therefore are less likely to play a strategic or prominent role in a UNSC campaign.

Building on Zaharna's frameworks, effective public diplomacy in the UNSC campaign can be incorporated through the crafting of the campaign message, political leadership, formal networks and special envoys, events, exchanges and informal networks.

Crafting the Message

Malone notes that 'candidates need to develop one or two themes on which they can hammer away consistently over the months (and increasingly years) of the campaign'.⁵⁹ Indeed in the spirit of image cultivation, the majority of states competing for a place on the UNSC will produce some kind of information collateral as the baseline for the campaign. The development of recurrent campaign themes and messages are evident in brochures, speeches and public statements of diplomatic representatives. However, Malone's appraisal overlooks the key relationship-building opportunities that arise through the crafting and delivery of such a message. Information alone, regardless of how glossy the brochure it appears in, holds little appeal or impact if the relationships and dialogue are not present to support the associated understanding and engagement, and to attract audiences to the campaign. For Cull, the key to crafting a message lies in actively listening to audiences, whereby 'listening is an actors attempt to manage the international environment by collecting and collating data about publics and their opinions overseas, and using that data to redirect its policy or wider public diplomacy approach accordingly'.⁶⁰ That means listening to understand the concerns of others and building this knowledge into a broader campaign message.

The task of listening can take on a far more personal and high profile nature falling not just to diplomats but to political leaders, special envoys as well as other government and non-government partners and indeed individuals who share a stake in the international positioning of the campaigning state. Whelan notes that:

the exercise of listening was not only appreciated by our interlocutors, it also provided a unique opportunity for Irish Ministers and officials to learn at first hand of the problems faced by countries throughout the world. It provided a better understanding of the reasons for the often inadequate response of the international community to crises.⁶¹

The ability to listen and take account of views through the campaign sends a positive message about the way that a state might operate within the UNSC. According to a senior Australian diplomat, the fact that representatives of the campaigning state make the effort to engage directly with diverse audiences outside the traditional networks is noticed and appreciated.⁶² In this way, the real value from special envoys engaged through the campaign derives from the public demonstration of interest and engagement in the full range of voting states. Audiences will be inclined to deal with states ‘that listen rather than preach at others. The listening mode, the lack of arrogance and self righteousness...are essential characteristics of skilful negotiators and for those who seek to build international alliances’.⁶³

Conversely, where high profile representatives of the campaigning state do not listen, but rather force their views, bully or coerce, states are likely to demonstrate their disapproval through the UNSC voting rounds. Media reports following Australia’s 1996 defeat focused in particular on the personality and style of Australia’s then permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Richard Butler, who was by most accounts an effective diplomat. However, later accounts relayed through the media indicated that Butler’s arrogant and aloof style, not only limited to diplomatic contacts, had much to do with perceptions of Australia and therefore contributed to Australia’s defeat.⁶⁴

Political Leadership of the Campaign

Political leaders can play a central and direct advocacy role in either cultivating or undermining a state's reputation and image. For example, Canada's Prime Minister Harper was sharply criticised for an apparent lack of regard for or commitment to the United Nations, missing key sessions of the General Assembly for media opportunities back home. A more remarkable example is found in the contribution made by President Chavez to Venezuela's defeat in 2006. Indeed Venezuela's defeat was attributed to the public (mis) use of the General Assembly Forum (or, as Wiseman reminds us, 'the world's stage'), by then president Chavez for his 'mass appeal diatribe ridiculing President Bush as the devil'.⁶⁵

The current campaigns of both Finland and Australia appear to be propelled by the visible and aspirational campaign leadership of Finnish Prime Minister, Tarja Halonen, and Australian Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd respectively. For Halonen, securing Finland's seat on the UNSC would mark the culmination of her twelve years of political leadership and active internationalist approach.⁶⁶ Rudd, having spent time as Australian Prime Minister brings significant international appeal and a unique set of influential networks to the Australian campaign.

Rudd, in particular, has a strong record for engaging publics outside traditional networks, emphasising the personal connections that Australia has with the rest of the world. Some commentators have expressed concern that Rudd's over-attentiveness to far-removed international matters, such as the civil turmoil in Libya and Syria, in which Australia can only play the role of a 'vocal bystander'⁶⁷ occurs at the expense of engagement within regions closer to home, including in the Pacific. Rudd is clearly at ease contributing to matters of intense international significance and debate, and through recent months has signalled that Australia can

contribute to such matters that are the staple of the UNSC agenda. However, perceived imbalance in the distribution of his attention is no doubt a consideration if he is to combat criticisms of UNSC driven policy distortion and maintain the long-term credibility and standing in the eyes of Australia's regional partners.

By contrast, Australian Prime Minister Gillard signalled early on in her tenure that she was not entirely comfortable in dealing with matters of foreign policy,⁶⁸ and has subsequently been slow in her uptake of opportunity to engage with international counterparts and press Australia's interests, including the UNSC. Some have commented that Gillard appears unaware of the immensity and immediacy of Australia's international challenges; a sentiment that might have been easily applied to her commitment to the UN.⁶⁹ However, Gillard's performance has gathered significant momentum through 2011 and has included speeches and engagements delivered to influential audiences from the African Union and Commonwealth Nations at the UN HQ, as well as a series of successful bilateral visits which have allowed her to engage more directly with publics in New Zealand, the United States, Japan, China and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, Gillard's Finnish counterpart, Halonen, has set the benchmark for strong campaign leadership in this UNSC campaign. Gillard's ongoing attentiveness to Australia's international role and her ability to engage through bilateral and multilateral processes with regional and global audiences must continue to be a central plank of the public diplomacy campaign.

Formal Networks and Envoys

Diplomats at the frontline of the UNSC campaign play a central and coordinating role in the public diplomacy activities of the state abroad; a role that extends well beyond the handing out of glossy brochures. As the nature of diplomacy shifts to meet the demands

of the contemporary, globalized world, diplomats must engage and influence the wider group of publics including the general public, advocates and opinion leaders. This broader public audience is not always as accessible, nor as recognisable as the diplomatic audience, and diplomats have to work more creatively to identify, reach out and engage with the right people in an appropriate way. While new technologies enable faster, more interactive methods of communication and play a role within the UNSC campaign, there is no amount of virtual technology that can replace the soft power value of strong personal contacts, relationships and effective performance on the ground. States that support a wide-reaching diplomatic network, with appropriately resourced diplomatic assets on the ground, in terms of the human, built and intangible relationship assets, are increasingly at an advantage in the practice of public diplomacy.

Many states, upon entering a campaign for the UNSC will immediately devote resources to building up their visible diplomatic assets on the ground, not just because of the increased volume of traditional diplomatic work that comes with a UNSC position, but also to improve their public diplomacy reach and impact. Canada proved to be an exception to this model. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) faced significant budgetary cuts even through the UNSC campaign timeframe which not only marginalised DFAIT's role and influence in international policy decision-making, but also undercut its public diplomacy capacity. Copeland suggests that these factors contributed to Canada's defeat in the UNSC elections.⁷⁰ More importantly, Copeland also notes that factors associated with such 'institutional rust-out',⁷¹ compounded by the UNSC defeat will impact negatively on Canada's reputation and image for some time to come.

There are important lessons for Australia in Canada's experience. Australia's diplomatic representation overseas has been declining

steadily, having been reduced as a result of budget cuts by some 18% from 1990 levels to provide for ‘the smallest diplomatic footprint of all the G20 countries’.⁷² The Lowy Institute for International Policy has further highlighted the depth of Australia’s diplomatic deficit pointing out that ‘Australia’s network of overseas diplomatic missions—the government’s most important point of immediate contact with the world, and the best way it has of influencing it—is overstretched and hollowed out’.⁷³

A brief scan of the Australian embassy websites further reveals that Australia’s public diplomacy efforts in-country are inconsistent and patchy and depend to a large extent on the inclination of the Ambassador and staff. The resourcing of diplomatic capacity is a central issue for such a campaign, both during and after the campaign. Where permanent diplomatic representation is at issue, states might utilise other public diplomacy mechanisms, including political visits, the appointment of special envoys and international visits programs all of which provide opportunities for genuine engagement with foreign audiences.

Special envoys, being experienced politicians or diplomats ‘generally chosen for their personal links to the countries involved and for their prominence’⁷⁴ are appointed on an ad hoc basis to provide additional reach and capacity for engagement with foreign audiences, particularly where formal diplomatic representation is otherwise weak. Canada, Greece and the Netherlands employed special envoys effectively when campaigning for the 1999–2000 UNSC term.⁷⁵ Ireland also attributed much of its campaign success to the highly visible efforts of recognisable special envoys, which extended its otherwise modest diplomatic spread.⁷⁶

To assist in its current campaign Australia has appointed several special envoys from both inside and outside its foreign service, to target audiences where the diplomatic capacity is thin. These envoys

appear to have been assigned to strategic alliance groupings rather than individual states, where traditional diplomatic representation is weak.⁷⁷ Other experienced political figures are working alongside diplomats and former diplomats on an ad hoc basis to provide increased weight to Australia's presence at overseas meetings and gatherings, particularly in the Pacific Islands, Africa and Latin America, to progress Australia's case for a UNSC seat. The real value from special envoys derives from the public demonstration of interest and engagement in the full range of voting states. Making an effort to engage with foreign publics on matters of mutual interest signals a willingness to work for common outcomes, including through the UNSC and can boost the likelihood of votes at election time. If chosen wisely, special envoys can reinforce established relationships which remain relevant and significant beyond the UNSC elections regardless of the outcomes.

Events, Exchanges and Informal Networks

International reputation in the wider world is 'built by international engagement across spheres of human activity be it diplomacy, trade or simple people-to-people outreach'.⁷⁸ Engagements that bring both the potential for visibility and impact include inbound and outbound exchanges for high profile individuals, government and non-government representatives might include parliamentary visits, international education opportunities and media tours. Additionally, officials, volunteers and diaspora from the campaigning state can contribute, (albeit indirectly) to the representation of the state. The public diplomacy dimensions of each of these modes of exchange, potentially create greater awareness and connection to the values, institutions, policies and marketplace of the campaigning state. In addition, there is value to be derived from activities that also build and consolidate support among domestic publics (both on shore and off-shore) for the UNSC aspirations of their state, thus resonating

with Evan Potter's observations that, 'public diplomacy is not just a foreign policy challenge, but a national challenge'.⁷⁹

Within the context of the current campaign, both high profile events and low-key exchange opportunities appear to have been initiated by the Australian Government with the UNSC campaign in mind. The biennial meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) brought the leaders of 54 Commonwealth nations from across all regions of the globe together in Perth in October 2011 was a highlight event, supported by parallel events engaging business, youth, sporting and cultural communities to occur through the campaign timeframe.⁸⁰ While separate from the UNSC campaign, the timing and staging of CHOGM and associated events in Perth is likely to consolidate and deepen Australia's connections and relationships across diverse audiences across a range of small and middle states including those from the African, Caribbean and Asian regions, indirectly maintaining the visibility of Australia's campaign for the UNSC. The challenge for practitioners and envoys will be in maintaining both connections and momentum outside of and beyond CHOGM, to ensure that those international and domestic audiences not included in the CHOGM event, are not further excluded from future Australian engagements.

Other discreet initiatives have included the coordinated visit of several media representatives from African nations, a separately coordinated visit of United Nations envoys to Australia, and a parliamentary delegation tour to Africa. Each of these initiatives has occurred as a discreet activity with a specifically targeted audience, and (with the exception of media visits that tend to generate positive publicity for a subsequent period), a potentially finite reach and impact.

Other programs, including international education programs sponsored from within Australia's Overseas Development Assistance

(ODA) budget, with a focus on knowledge transfer, exchange and capacity building can contribute albeit indirectly, to building Australia's national reputation and image on a much larger scale. Indeed, 'the global education program enables the government to directly target tomorrow's leaders and create aid advocates among Australia's teachers who will promote the activities of the aid program and an awareness of global issues year after year'.⁸¹ The education programs and resources offered by as part of Australia's ODA 'are made available to a wide audience of international publics, including the Pacific Island nations, Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam and [more recently to] a number of African nations'.⁸² Of particular interest, the Australia Awards for Africa program initiated in 2009, will provide approximately A\$346.9 million in ODA over four years to deliver African development scholarships to up to 1000 individuals annually from across 25 African nations.⁸³ Once scaled to capacity by 2012, this initiative will represent a 'ten-fold increase in the Australia Awards program to Africa' over 2008 scholarship levels.⁸⁴

Some commentators suggest that Australia's recent shifts both in the volume and direction of aid commitments particularly given increases aided towards the African and Caribbean nations reflects a distortion of foreign policy, and grab for votes in the UNSC race.⁸⁵ Importantly, development assistance programs have been initiated in consideration of the importance of aid in addressing a changing global environment and indeed progressing and Australia's wider foreign policy and security objectives. Current trends to increase Australia's aid budget can be traced back to 2006, some two years ahead of Australia's UNSC nomination, and during the administration of the previous government.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the direction of aid has been aligned to the long-term predictions regarding global development challenges and their implications for Australian national interests.⁸⁷

Conclusion

The global public are inexorably connected to the decisions, actions and outcomes of the UNSC, and therefore have interests in and expectations of its membership. There is significant scope for public diplomacy to underpin, and indeed extend a state's bid for a non-permanent seat at the UNSC. Kevin Rudd, Australia's Foreign Minister, is making up for lost time in Australia's campaign, drawing upon the networks and engagement skills of special envoys and diplomatic officers to meet and engage with diverse groups outside the traditional networks in order to project Australia's positive reputation and build its image. Despite assertions made by practitioners to the contrary, the small campaign taskforce established within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has taken note of past experiences. As a result, it appears that the current campaign is moving along a trajectory that does indeed involve a measure of public diplomacy. The campaign message, 'Australia is a middle power with global interests; Australia makes a difference for small and middle powers, and Australia does what it says it will do'⁸⁸ has been refined through the short life of the campaign to engage and resonate with the expectations of small and middle developing states. Where this message is accompanied by credible relationship building measures, it is likely to resonate. These direct campaign measures combined with less direct, but highly strategic and influential measures such as hosting of diverse audiences through events such as CHOGM and educational opportunities offered under Australia's ODA program, extend the visibility, reach and impact of Australia's UNSC narrative.

A lack of understanding or consideration for public diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy can undermine the diplomatic efforts of any state in seeking election to the UNSC, and can have lasting repercussions for that state. For small and middle power nations in particular, the importance of reputation and image projection well

beyond the corridors of traditional diplomatic practice is critical to securing not just a seat at the top table, but also to longer-term strategic international positioning. A well-timed, well-resourced, and credible campaign based on good reach, effective dialogue and goodwill carries with it a potential that extends beyond the two-year UNSC term. To this end, the UNSC campaign might be considered a public diplomacy program in and of itself. Others will be watching not just the outcome of the election, but the reactions of the successful and unsuccessful candidates alike. As with the Oscars, gracious public acceptance of success or defeat is noted. The reality is that in an unpredictable and opaque competition such as this, some states will achieve the desired outcome of a UNSC seat, and others won't. Foreign Minister Rudd has made no secret that the current campaign will be a tough venture for Australia, noting to an influential domestic audience that 'success in such ventures is never guaranteed'.⁸⁹ A defeat in the voting end of the competition while not to be discounted, is not a reason to withdraw in shame or dismiss what has been achieved through the campaign. Indeed it might be built upon to continue that process of international positioning—preparing for a positive outcome regardless of the voting outcome is a public diplomacy challenge in itself.

The wide-lens view of public diplomacy can provide both the strategic vision and operational momentum to a UNSC campaign in a way that complements, but is not constrained by the parameters of the traditional diplomacy, and aligns with the broader international policy program of the state. To this end, the reputational or soft power benefits that can flow from effective public diplomacy efforts through the campaign might be leveraged well beyond the contest closure, and regardless of the outcome.

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Caitlin has recently joined the academic profession, having established her credentials as a policy practitioner. She began her professional career with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Caitlin received both her LLB and Ph.D from Bond University in 1993 and 2010 respectively.

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Public Diplomacy

La Diplomatie Publique

الدبلوماسية العامة

Общественная дипломатия

Publieksdiplomatie

PUBLICZNA DYPLOMACJA

הסברה

Diplomacia Pública

公共外交

Λημόσια Διπλωματία

Публична дипломация




USC Center on
Public Diplomacy
at the Annenberg School