

Nov 04, 2016 by [Caitlin Byrne](#)

The Force of Rudd: Promoting Australia's Campaign for the United Nations Security Council ^[1]

Australia's Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd is pressing ahead on a high profile public diplomacy campaign to secure support for Australia's bid to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2013-14. There is much to be said about the public diplomacy value of political leaders in such campaigns. Kevin Rudd is a case in point. Previously Australia's Prime Minister, Rudd is already well known and regarded among political and intellectual elite audiences across the globe. Despite fall-out within Australia's domestic political environment that saw him removed from the post of Prime Minister (and replaced by Julia Gillard), Rudd has slotted seamlessly into his preferred role of Foreign Minister and has continued to promote, almost single-handedly, Australia's international ambitions, particularly regarding the UNSC.

Rudd's agenda over the past eight months has been relentless, including visits to some 43 nations (totalling some 385,000 kilometres). Each visit has been coordinated with an event, meeting or the official opening of a new embassy (including those opened in Addis Ababa, and belatedly in Amman), and involved a constant program of engagements with political and intellectual elites as well as expatriate audiences, student audiences and broad public audiences. On each occasion the message is clear: 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. A powerful message usually mixed with a well crafted personal touch, to build upon Australia's established reputation as a good international citizen, renewed commitment to active international policy, and overall likeability.

Will the formidable force of Rudd be enough to secure Australia's place at the world's pre-eminent decision-making table? The competition is tough and outcomes in Security Council campaigns are notoriously unpredictable. The two other WEOG (Western and Others Group) competitors, Luxembourg and Finland have put forward strong claims to the international community. Luxembourg, a founding member of the United Nations has never sat on the Security Council; and Finland has established over time a solid global reputation for its commitment to peace and security. Both competitors entered the race long before Australia and secured support within the WEOG group and elsewhere quickly.

Furthermore, recent media coverage of Rudd's hectic international travel agenda and footprint alongside a campaign budget estimate of \$25 million have sparked domestic criticism about Australia's bid for the Security Council, and provided an opportunistic political wedge for the Opposition. While travel is an implicit part of the job for any foreign minister, the tenor of the recent domestic response to Rudd's recent travel agenda is influenced by a current climate of economic uncertainty. However, if Australia is to learn from the campaign lessons of others (particularly from Canada's 2010 defeat), such domestic rumblings must be addressed, and

quickly.

What is clear is that Rudd is now quite rightly turning his attention to re-engaging the Australian public in discussion about the importance of this campaign – not just for the potential success it may deliver in the requisite number of votes, but more importantly for Australia’s ongoing international positioning. In a speech delivered to the National Press Club on Monday, Rudd reminded the audience that ‘Australia represents a positive international brand - a significant force for good in the world where we are rightly seen as not just prosecuting our national interests, but equally promoting the global and regional order that supports us all’. This is a significant race for Australia. Let’s hope Rudd can sustain the current momentum – both on the domestic and international fronts.
